

A goss fest? Please! I'm a serious writer



DIARY
KATE VEITCH

THURSDAY

Twenty minutes into a serious facial, my mobile rings (new ringtone is a big hit, sounds like I'm in a Shanghai brothel). I answer it, dripping precious unguents, dreading that my boyfriend's flight from New York has been further delayed. But it's just my brother, Michael, checking when we can go over what we'll talk about on stage at the Melbourne Writers Festival on Saturday. We're supposed to be interviewing each other about our respective new books. Mike seems nervous that I'll treat it as a public goss fest. As if I would!

Back to the facial. Vicki, the beautician, is thrilled by the photo of me in the *Women's Weekly*. "Those are MY eyebrows," she keeps saying.

FRIDAY

Phillip's plane is due at midday. I've been up since dawn, jumpy as a cat on a windy day. My ex-husband is on a trestle outside my bedroom window, renovating the front of my house. Downstairs, a throng of black-clad students is shooting a short film in the living room. Could it be that my life is unnecessarily complicated?

Good meeting with Mike. He is effortlessly persuaded that a public goss fest is just the ticket.

Phillip's plane arrives at last and he has remembered to bring the DKNY skirt with the complicated pleats that I want

to wear tomorrow. What a guy!

SATURDAY

I fling open *The Age's* book section and Mike's book, *Flak*, and my novel, *Listen*, have these wonderfully enthusiastic reviews. I take back every mean thing I have ever said about Australian reviewers: clearly they are paragons of perceptive wisdom. Especially these two reviewers.

Off to the Malthouse. The session with Michael is great fun, though I may have done TOO good a job of lauding his book: his queue at the book signing is much bigger than mine. This seems unfair. His book has photos, true, but mine has what the *Weekly* terms "classy erotic scenes". Perhaps I should read from them. Now. Loudly.

SUNDAY

Wake just before dawn with sore throat, stuffy nose. This is alarming: I have approximately 43 radio interviews scheduled for tomorrow, blessed as I am with the world's most diligent publicist. Stock up on lozenges, gargles and decongestants. Phillip discovers my TV sitting in a corner with a cloth over it and plugs it in. We watch hours of footy, cosied up on the couch. He is football deprived. I remind him yet again that Melbourne has it all over New York.

MONDAY

My first interview starts at 9.30am, the last one finishes at

11pm. Radio people are gratifyingly interested in my book, though in wildly different bits, and I am so woozy with decongestants that I suspect I may have written several books without noticing. Sadly, no one mentions the dirty bits, or asks me to read from them.

TUESDAY

Wake in the small hours, whimpering from a nightmare in which the elegant launch Penguin has planned for my novel this Saturday has morphed into a tired do in the cafeteria at the old Showgrounds. The food is mostly cabbage and has been sitting in a bain-marie for days; when I go to the grotty toilets to change into my party clothes, I find that all I have in my bag is a pair of purple corduroy jodhpurs and a bright pink shirt. Even in this awful dream, I know this is not suitable attire for the occasion.

My whimpering wakes Phillip, who laughs and then consoles me. I had no idea I was this anxious.

WEDNESDAY

The sun is shining and when I check my outfit for the launch it seems entirely suitable. Elegant, even. I don't think Tim Winton worries about things like this. Perhaps I should take to wearing flannelette shirts.

Kate Veitch's novel *Listen* is published by Penguin.



Kate and Michael Veitch, siblings on the writers' circuit.

Picture:
PENNY STEPHENS