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How do you bring a sorority of Jewish and Pagan girls together?
You make Jesus jokes.

On an average day, Meredith wears baggy, size 18 dark green khakis, a black t-shirt with spiderweb fishnet sleeves, and a silver pentagram necklace. Her sorority sisters wear tank tops, sweater sets, small, tight-fitting jeans, wool jackets, and on occasion, a necklace with the Star of David.

Though she might harbor some regrets about it now, Meredith, a gothic Wiccan, joined an almost all-Jewish sorority in the fall of 2000. While remaining a very independent personality, Meredith still felt the need to fit in with a group. Since becoming part of the sorority, however, she has found herself increasingly isolated, finding it hard to connect with such diverse people.

The blinds are closed tightly, allowing only a few rays of sunlight to illuminate Meredith's bedroom. Tori Amos posters and comical stickers, including one that shouts, "I'm so gothic, I'm dead," line every wall, leaving hardly any white space. Hiding on the shelves, several candles peer out, covered with Greek sorority letters. They're almost begging not to be noticed, placed between books and stuffed animals, but they're still there, even though Meredith would rather hide them away in boxes.

When Meredith first joined the sorority of less than 20 sisters, she was excited and happy to be a part of them. "I joined because I had an identity crisis, and it definitely didn't help me," she commented.

One bitterly cold afternoon, Meredith reluctantly tagged along for a few hours of bowling with her sorority sisters. Across from her

on the bus sat twelve girls, all wearing nearly identical black wool coats, and light-colored lipstick and eye makeup. A good number of them had the same short, dark, permed hair filled with tiny ringlets. "You know you're a freak when all you have in your freezer is veggie corn dogs and acid," she stated, reiterating a friend's comment about her. The girls paused from their discussion, looked over at her and smiled, desperately glancing back at one another for some response, before giving up and smiling back at Meredith again. Each of them then returned to quietly chewing and popping their gum, almost completely in sync with each other.

"They're all their own people," Meredith said. "But they're all the same kind of people. They're very much into the mainstream, more superficial world. They have a tendency to be very self-absorbed."

She entered a small bowling alley, last renovated in the late 1970s. The beige and white room distinctly smelled of sweat socks and Meredith quipped, "gym class." While the girls went ahead and bowled, Meredith sat apart and slowly drank a soda.

As she watched the rest of the group laugh and take photos, Meredith attempted to smile whenever they looked over. "I don't really hang out with the girls, and they don't ask me to do things often, so I never see any of them unless I have to. When we do hang out, it's always some stupid activity that I don't enjoy. They go to frat parties while I go dancing at Goth Night. Their world is a meat market. They wear tiny little clothes and I can't."

Meredith paused and looked over at the girls, rolling her eyes and laughing quietly. "And they insist on taking a thousand dumb pictures of every activity, and I hate getting my picture taken!"

"I wanted to be part of a group," she continued. "I wanted to see if the mainstream was really all that, and I found out that it's not. I

hate their tastes in music and clothing, and they don't understand mine. Sometimes I really feel alienated. Right now I feel alienated, but maybe that's because I don't want to be here to begin with. My priorities are so different from theirs. Their lives revolve around the Greek system, and that's not true for me. I have so many other things in my life more important than this, and they don't seem to see that."

After about an hour alone, Meredith moved closer to the group as they bowled. At that point, she seemed to connect more with the sisters when she began mocking one very intense-looking professional bowler on a TV above her head. "This guy is way too into bowling," Meredith laughed. "My alley is my church! Jesus, guide my hand! I'm bowling for Jesus!"

"I don't get it," one girl with long brown hair stated.

"You're scary, Meredith," said a girl, laughing.

"You are so funny!" another girl with short, brown hair in ringlets added.

While some of the girls looked at Meredith strangely at first, the majority tried to go along with the joke. After a few minutes, the group dubbed themselves the "Jews for Jesus" bowling league. For the first time all day, Meredith was able to connect with her group, and she continued to smile and laugh with the rest of the girls.

While she is still uncertain about her future with the sorority, Meredith believes there is still some connection between her and her sisters. At least Christian jokes work every time.

Author's Note: While remaining friends with many of the sisters, Meredith has since left the sorority.