

## **Tour**

Sherilyn Connelly

2004

### **Departure.**

Lynnee and I leave for El Lay this afternoon. While it's only been a few months since I got the idea to do this in the first place, it still feels a long time coming. Odder still is the thought that seven days from now I'll be back at work, business as usual. Gotta make this time away count.

I have no idea what my internet access will be like. Dialed up late at night on my laptop at Anna's or Flipper's homes, perhaps. Or maybe not at all. This was one of the reasons I'd wanted wireless access through the Treo (my codependent side especially likes the idea of being able to keep in touch with Maddy on IM, or at least send text messages back and forth) but it simply wasn't to be. I'm sure I'll survive somehow.

*sometime after midnight*

There's a palm tree in front of Flipper's house. We're staying in a bungalow behind the house.

Yep, this is Hollywood.

### **Whoring for the road.**

Waking up in a different climate is always a shock to my system. Unlike San Francisco, it's actually summer in Los Angeles.

There are frequently helicopters overhead. Sirens and car alarms sound louder, for some reason.

The trip down here wasn't so bad. It's like driving to Fresno, only moreso. I've always found it odd that so beautiful a state as California is so ugly and boring to travel through.

I had a Moment in the parking lot of a truck stop. I have no idea which one; just an anonymous huddle of service stations and fast food joints somewhere between Northern California and Southern. The moon was a thin, gorgeous waxing crescent, the kind where you can see just enough of the rest of the surface to make it look fake, a cutout on a theater set. The air was warm with a slight, refreshing breeze. We were in the middle of Nowhere on our way Somewhere...and I felt wonderful. Content. Everything was right. It was an odd place for a spurt of transcendence, but there it was.

Not really sure what we're going to be doing during the day this week. I know Lynnee has people he wants to see, so I'll probably be tagging along with him. Most of the people I know down here didn't respond when I told them I'd be in town, so I'm open. There are certain places I'd like to visit, but a lot of them wouldn't feel right without Maddy, and I doubt Lynnee would be all that interested. Besides, Maddy made me promise not to go to the Vasquez Rocks, aka "The Star Trek Rocks," without her.

### **Above the border.**

Experienced friends have suggested an inevitability of touring is accidentally leaving something behind somewhere. I'd hoped that the fact that I was going to be gone for barely a week and only be staying in two places—hardly even qualifying as a tour—would greatly reduce the chances of that happening, but, well, I am a tard. That little detail changes everything.

We're at Anna Joy Springer and Ali Liebgott's house in San Diego, and I'm using Anna's laptop instead of my own. Why? Because it has XP? No. (It's refreshing, though. I like our PowerBook with Mac OS X well enough, but I

simply prefer Windows. It's more intuitive for me. Deal with it.) (Actually, what I'm really missing is the Linux Mandrake 9.2 on my computer at work. It's a sweet ride.) (Which does not mean I'm missing work. Far, far from it. Don't wanna go back.) Because she has a cable modem? No, although the 1771.6 kpbs transfer rate is making me seriously squishy inside.

No, it's because I left the friggin' power cord for my laptop at Flipper's house in Hollywood. It'll be easy enough to pick up on the way home tomorrow, and I know Lynnee won't give me any shit about it given his own not-so-ancient history of misplacing things, but still. Fuck. I am Megatard. Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair.

Other than that, things have been remarkably well. So well, in fact, I worry that our luck peaked last night with our rock star turn in Orange—they loved us, and I received one of my greatest ego-strokes ever—and it's all downhill from here. Certainly Thursday has gotten off to an ignominious start, what with me discovering my lack of a power cord, and then Anna missing a call because I was bogarting her phone (I didn't know Lynnee's cell was deep in his bag, and being a normal human being he was still asleep), and...feh. No. I'm not going to think like that. We have less than thirty-six hours left, and they are not going to suck. We're going to make the most of them, and have another great show tonight. Neener.

I'll be writing about these last few days soon enough; I'm still scrawling details into my notebook as fast as I can think of them. Ideally, I'd be already typing them out into something quasi-coherent, but, well, as has been established my personal laptop time is of course limited, and...have I said feh yet?

However today and tomorrow may go, the first three days of this little adventure rocked. So I'll consider it a success no matter what.

**Solace.**

Found on Anna and Ali's fridge. The original author is unknown. (But I'll bet someone reading this can tell me.)

*Solace*

*I know, I know, it's tough.*

*I know. It's tough. I know.*

*It's tough. I know it's tough.*

*I know. I know. It's tough.*

*I know it's tough. I know.*

*It's tough.*

*I know.*

Anna says it's the greatest poem ever. I am inclined to agree. I wish I'd written it.

*sometime after midnight*

Tomorrow (that is to say, in about ten hours), Lynnee, myself, Anna Joy, Rocco and Michelle will be talking to a class of teenagers in drug rehab. Nutty.

The afternoon itself was questionable, but Thursday evening at Siren was terrific.

I think Lynnee and I will be doing this again.

**Arc descents.**

Lynnee and I got in at half past four this morning, after a thirteen-hour drive from San Diego. (According to Yahoo!, the trip should have only taken eight hours. It was not the smoothest part of the week.) Tired, alert, fulfilled, hungry, happy to be home, sad to be home, forever changed. Returning in November, we hope. Longer, surely fragmented report to follow.

## Hollywood.

1. Small crowd at the Parlour Club on Tuesday night, composed largely of friends and allies. In spite of the neat flyers, the actual promotion of the show left something to be desired. Then again, I know you can promote a show like mad and still be ignored. Never any telling.
2. Of all the people I told about the show, only one (1) showed up, Ryka. Hadn't seen her for a while, and she was looking quite good. She invited me back in November to perform at a quarterly event she hosts called Transgiving. I'm going to try my best, and hopefully Lynn can make it too. We've come to the conclusion that we're a pretty good team, both in terms of traveling and performing.
3. I need to not be so hung up about the people who weren't there. So he doesn't give a shit. He couldn't even be bothered to tell me he wouldn't be there, to pretend like it matters to him, if only to reciprocate for being such a supporter of his music when I was a teenager. But that's different, isn't it? That's rock and roll. You know, the good shit. Not boring stuff like spoken word or, god forbid, poetry. (Neither Lynnee nor I do poetry, but pick pick.) Is that news? Was I not aware of this before? No, it isn't, and yes, I was.
4. Guinevere Turner came to see Lynnee, but she liked my work, too. When I can actually distinguish faces in the audience, I select three or four people as gauges for how I'm doing, and she was into it. Even left with some chapbooks.

5. We moviegeeked in unison, as Lynnee was trying to remember that movie with Angelina Jolie and the Mini Coopers: "Actually, that was Charlize Theron in The Italian Job." She laughed and said we should go on a game show together.
6. Also in the audience was Deadlee, an openly gay gangsta rapper. At first Lynnee and I were a little suprised to see this hardcore thug guy come in and watch the show, until he introduced himself. That's the beauty of it, really; I wonder how many people refuse to believe he's queer. He has his own very gay club—no fagz allowed, though. Heh. Him and Lynnee talked about doing a track together.
7. There's a lot more drinking at spoken word events in LA. Before the end of the evening—hell, before the show even began—everyone but Breedpal and I seemed sloshed. Hey, if that helps them enjoy it more, so much the better.
8. Teetotaler or not, the inebriation was contagious. I talked to Ryka after the show, who admitted to being a little on the schnookered side herself.
9. Before long I found myself thinking, i am way too baked to be having this conversation. Except that I was not, in fact, baked. Although I had some marijuana biscotti in my bag, I remained straight throughout the entire trip. I just felt stoned.
10. After my set, Vaginal (in boy mode, sadly) led the audience in a chorus of "Hosanna" from Jesus Christ Superstar. If you've seen me read recently, you know why.
11. At a novelty store earlier that day, a woman asked how tall I was. She said her first son was really tall, and she was planning on having another

child, and...naturally, suspecting that she was reading me as male, I went into heavy spin mode. "Oh, you should see my mother, or my sister for that matter. I'm the youngest of four tall girls." Is that being in stealth, even though that very same evening I spoke about being a tranny? Is it ethically questionable to fib on occasion?

12. The Hollywood sign was visible from the street outside Flipper's house. I have to admit, I thought that was pretty cool.
13. When we left town on Monday, Lynnee discovered the danger of letting me buy the road snacks: I go for the white food. Not food for white people, per se, but literally white food. Lavash, rice cakes, tofu, popcorn—even the blue corn tortilla chips were spiritually white. Lynnee wisely brought hot sauce, and we used the better part of a bottle on the popcorn. I think he was surprised my taste for it, even though I originally got the idea from him at K'vetch. (I don't much care for Tabasco brand, which means I'm not turning into my father, right? Right.) During the readings, I used the anecdote as an intro to my piece about drinking Maddy's blood.
14. All things considered, Lynnee and I didn't eat as badly as I'd feared. We stocked up on veggies and stuff at a store on Tuesday afternoon and fended for ourselves as much as possible after that. Lynnee likes to cook, which helps a lot.
15. On Wednesday afternoon, after visiting with some old San Francisco friends of Lynnee's who'd relocated to Los Angeles (and they are legion), we wandered down Hollywood Boulevard. Man. Tourist hell, and yet as seedy as I've heard. The "celebrity impersonators" walking about only increased the weirdness factor. The Marilyn Monroe and Charlie Chaplin vague-a-likes struck me as hypocritical more than anything else, seeing as

how Hollywood betrayed them both. Why not just go all the way, with Fatty Arbuckle or Frances Farmer? It makes about as much sense as Elvis impersonators in Vegas.

16. Lynnee was all excited about the idea of seeing a movie at Grauman's Chinese Theatre. I was initially intrigued for historical reasons, but my enthusiasm dropped sharply when I discovered that it had become a googolplex. That just hurts. Still, I didn't want to let him down, so I said yes. Thankfully, I, Robot was just starting, sparing me the mental and emotional indignity of White Girls. At eleven dollars a ticket, though, even a restored print of Eraserhead introduced by Lynch himself would have been painful.
17. The custodian in women's restroom at Grauman's was giving Lynnee the extreme hairy eyeball. Same shit, different year. Finally, he grabbed his pecs (breasticles to you) and said, "What? Whaddaya want? I got tits! See?" We left without further incident.
18. We arrived in Hollywood around midnight on Monday, so the traffic wasn't too bad. The drive to Orange on Wednesday evening was our first real exposure to the famed Southern California traffic. It would not be the last.

## **Orange.**

1. As you may have guessed, Orange is in Orange County, famed as the birthplace of Richard Nixon and home of the John Wayne Airport.
2. The Ugly Mug is on a block which strongly reminds me of The Tower District in Fresno, a bastion of self-styled hipsterism in the midst of

conservative country. Ironically, it's part of Old Town Orange, complete with a town square and everything. (According to myth, town squares were where people congregated before malls rendered them irrelevant.) (I mean, really, would you rather go somewhere that has a boring ol' gazebo, or an Orange Julius? I rest my case.) As Lynnee and I ate at a surprisingly good Japanese restaurant, I read an article in the community newspaper about collecting syrup dispensers.

3. The venue itself is a house. Literally. The stage and couches of the main performance area used to be the living room, and there are rows of chairs in what probably used to be the dining room. I wasn't entirely sure that was the case until I used the restroom, and realized I'd been in houses exactly like it in Fresno. Pretty cool, actually.
4. They used the guns picture for their July events Calendar.
5. Lynnee wasn't quite digging the small-town vibe as much as I was. He gets understandably nervous when it isn't an obviously queer-friendly crowd, and was worried that we wouldn't be well-received. (I think I'm still too new at this to have developed that anxiety. The villagers haven't come after me with the torches and pitchforks just yet.) So, we asked the group of people sitting on the porch what the audience is usually like, what they expect, that sort of thing. Not that it really mattered.
6. A short, very cute Girl with dark hair, bangs and glasses—my type, Lynnee observed—told me that although she worked at the cafe, this was her first time actually coming to the show. *so you read the bios for lynnee and I and figured we looked too interesting to miss, huh?* Actually, I'm Here Because I Think You're Really Hot. *oh. wow. thank you. i'll try my best to make it worth your while.* A really stupid thing to say, but, I was a tad floored, y'know? A perfect stranger (and a hottie at that) made a point

of being at the show because she thought I was attractive. Again, wow. No pressure.

7. Even though the crowd was mostly comprised of straight boys (as Lynnee had predicted it would be), I wasn't nervous at all. They'd either dig me or they wouldn't. It helped that they had no idea what to expect, and probably no particular ideology regarding gender or sexuality. If I was completely alien to them it would become obvious fast, since I'd been opening with a story about drinking Maddy's blood. Seems like a good litmus test, and I haven't lost anyone yet. I did try to edit out, or at least explain, some of the more obscure San Francisco references.
8. There were at least two whompers in the audience, but I did not edit my material accordingly. Very little of what I write (or read aloud, anyway) is family-friendly in the first place. With a little advance warning I can compensate, but otherwise I tend to plow right ahead as usual. None of it is shock for shock's sake. Well, okay, maybe a little...
9. As usual, I closed my set with the biblical necro-erotica piece which had inspired Vaginal into singing "Hosanna" from *JSC* the night before. (If I read it at all, I kinda *have* to close with it. Anything after it would be anticlimactic.) The girl approached me and said, That Was...One Of The Most Incredible Things I've Ever Heard. Really. I Almost Had An Orgasm In My Chair.
10. What can you say to that? I thanked her for one of the best compliments I've ever received. It was right up there with Carol Queen fanning herself off.
11. Nobody else admitted to quite as strong a physical reaction, but they loved us all the same. Plenty of merch was sold and signed, and there was

much chatting up. I got asked twice how long I've been reading in public, oddly enough.

12. I talked for quite a while with a Long Beach bookstore owner who expressed interested in carrying Lynnee's *Godspeed*, as well as my chapbooks. She also wants us to do a reading there. Cool. (I'm not jaded enough yet to hate bookstore appearances. Give me time.)
13. We briefly considered going out to said bookstore to drop off a few books, but it was getting late and we still had to drive to San Diego. Besides, Lynnee figured it would be just as well to mail them from SF and hang onto the dozen or so copies he still had, since we had a gig Thursday night and there was no telling how much merch we'd need. He was quite right about hanging onto them, but not just for that reason.

### **San Diego And Beyond the Infinite, Part 1**

1. The drive from Orange to San Diego was the beginning of the end of navigational luck. Anna Joy had given me directions to her place over Lynnee's cell earlier in the day, but I'd done it with a shaky hand and didn't quite trust my scrawl. We called her when we got closer, and she assured me that I got it right in the first place. Believe me, it was wise to second-guess myself.
2. Though we arrived well after midnight, Anna Joy stayed up to meet us. (Her spouse Ali was out of town.) Her and Lynnee were still talking when I finally went to bed. It's fascinating watching the two of them together. They're like an old married couple—or, more accurately, an old *divorced* couple who still care deeply for each other, even if it doesn't take too long

for them to remember why they broke up in the first place.

3. I don't sleep much to begin with. I sleep less in someone else's bed. And I sleep even less than that if I'm sharing the bed with someone with whom I'm not physically intimate, like Lynnee. (I dig butches, and I've seen some trannyboys who make me feel downright hetero, but he really isn't my type. Besides, he's more like an older brother at this point, and, well, can you see "Ew?") After about five hours, I was up and around again, which is about two hours longer than I managed in Flipper's guest bedroom.
4. God. Both people we stayed with had *guest bedrooms*, and with very comfy beds at that. I need to not get too used to it, since there's surely couch and floor-surfing in my future.
5. Thursday morning, of course, sucked. Discovering I'd left behind the laptop cord (among other things), Anna Joy missing calls because of me tying up the phone lines and somehow running late for her teaching gig at UCSD as a result, and just a general sense that things had peaked the night before and the downhill slide had begun. Turned out not quite to be the case, but there would be a certain roughness to the next forty-eight hours which Lynnee and I managed to ride out nicely.
6. Part of the problem was that we had no idea what to do with ourselves; San Diego doesn't offer quite as much to look at as Hollywood (which itself is overrated), and certainly not within walking distance of Anna Joy's house. We considered venturing into Tijuana, but the timing was all wrong, as much as I would have liked to get vicodin for Maddy. Anna Joy's horror stories about the border guards didn't help, either. Doesn't mean I'll never go, but while still on his first cup of coffee Lynnee suggested I could go by myself. Um, *no*.

7. Then again, there's a lot to be said for not doing much of anything.  
Lynnee told me this was one of his most relaxing trips in a long time, since I let him sleep as late as he likes, nor do I rush him when he finally does wake up. Evidently his bandmates are much more likely to roust him out of bed early and drag him around. I wouldn't have guessed them to be morning people.
8. Anna Joy suggested La Jolla, which features less pharmaceutical drugs but more seals. It seemed as good a way to spend a few hours, so we left in the early afternoon, her handwritten driving instructions as our guide. Problem was, she accidentally said to go east on a certain highway. In California, the ocean is towards the west. We'd gone about five miles before realizing we were headed in the wrong direction.
9. Five miles as the vulture flies, that is. As the car drove, those five miles took an hour. At first we figured it was that Southern California traffic we'd been learning to adore so much, and that La Jolla was a remarkably popular destination, even for a Thursday afternoon. Nope. The traffic was backed up because of an accident in the median. It wasn't even an especially spectacular accident, but by god, as Americans it is our birthright to slow down to gawk at the misfortunes of others. If we don't, then the terrorists have already won.
10. It struck me that even though it had been on Tuesday night, the Parlour Club gig felt like it had been ages ago. Lynnee said time has a tendency to warp while touring. I get that.
11. By the time we reached La Jolla, the gas gauge was on empty. We managed to find a station in time—we even called AAA to ask for the nearest one, just in case—but damn, disaster was clearly *determined* to

- strike. Like when I called Maddy on Lynnee's cell at the station. Well, I don't have one of those things, so I didn't know you weren't supposed to use them near a fuel pump. No sparks and/or explosions, obviously.
12. We eventually found a place to park, saw the seals (and a squirrel!), went down into a cave, got stared at, and marveled at the very whiteness of the area. And, of course, the galleries. La Jolla clearly needs more brown people serving white people as they walk past galleries.
  13. Somehow, following the same instructions we'd used to get to Anna Joy's house the night before, we exited the freeway in the wrong place. Still not sure how that happened, except that it simply had to happen.
  14. We made it back to Anna Joy's in one piece, ate, cleaned up and ventured back into the world. I had a feeling our luck was finally about to run out, but we somehow made it to David's Coffee House on time. Even got rock star parking in front, as we had the night before in Orange, and would probably have in Hollywood had we not walked to the Parlour Club from Flipper's. Because, well, you know.
  15. The show itself took place in the back patio area, and it was *packed*, as host Abby Schwartz assured us it would be. Siren's open mic is women-only (men are allowed and encouraged to be in the audience), and although Lynnee and I were invited, I still couldn't help but feel nervous. I've never personally encountered the famous feminist/lesbian prejudice towards transsexuals, but there's always a first time, and I can't help thinking it seems more likely to happen *outside* San Francisco.
  16. Even beyond the fact that I was born with and still possess a penis, while Lynnee was born female, he identifies as a boy. (When he has to pick one or the other, that is. Otherwise, he's both and neither.) Some might

say we're odd pair to feature at the one-year anniversary of a show whose mission is "to provide a safe space in which female artists may inspire and support one another via the expression of the creative arts."

17. As I looked over my pages, I was beginning to get a sense of what a grind touring can be. And, really, I use "tour" in the loosest sense of the word. Three nights in one half of a state? Please. That isn't a tour. It's a minitour, a microtour, a *nanotour*. Real tours last ten times as long and are a hundred times more grueling. Was I already feeling just the slightest, teeniest bored with the material, all fifteen minutes of it, that I'd already read two nights in a row? Imagine an hour or longer, kiddo. I didn't want to read anything different, though. I was happy with my little set, and nobody but Lynnee had already heard it. I could only hope he wasn't finding it too tedious.

18. Stronger than any sense of self-doubt or repetition was the sense of *i don't want this to end. it feels like we're only just getting rolling. do we really have to go home tomorrow?*

19. A woman named Corrine introduced herself. A former student of Anna Joy's, she teaches a writing class at a shelter and rehab clinic called the Toussaint Teen Center. A few of her students were reading in the open mic, in fact. Were Lynnee and I still interested in speaking to her class on Friday, as Anna Joy had suggested? We assured her we were. Michelle and Rocco, in to promote Rent Girl at Comic-Con (among other things), would also be joining us.

20. Lynnee said he could tell I was nervous before I went on. It was probably only obvious to him.

21. It was the most immediate, intimate crowd so far, with the front row just a couple feet away from the microphone. Anna Joy arrived from work a few minutes after I began, and made her way up through the audience to take an extreme front-row seat on the ground, practically at my feet. I was terribly flattered that she went to so much trouble, when she could have just as easily stood at the back of the audience near the door. Having recently gotten hitched herself, she laughed hard at certain parts of my piece about getting married. She's obviously been getting the same junk mail.
22. Guess what? They loved us. Much merch was sold. Not so much of mine, actually, but definitely Lynnee's, and that's okay. The audience was very generous when the hat was passed around, and I always make more from that than actually selling stuff.
23. They got the "processing" joke. There'd been a few obvious laughs in Hollywood (Guin and Ryka), and a polite smattering on Wednesday (they parsed it from context), but this audience really got it, as only an alt-fem crowd would.
24. My favorite bit of praise came from a very small woman who appeared to have been in a fairly nasty accident, possibly but not necessarily involving fire. Only one of her eyes was still functional, and neither of her hands appeared to be fully fingered. After she said how much she liked my set, I returned the compliment, telling her (truthfully) that she was my favorite of the open mic readers for a simple reason: she was loud. Even from inside, where the sound was muffled, her voice was audible. She clearly wanted to be heard, and made sure she was. I respect that. After we talked for a while, she said I was "beautiful and complete," and gave me a long hug. That was pretty nice.

25. Michelle and Rocco didn't get into town until well after the show. Along with Anna Joy and Corrine, we congregated at a wonderfully sleazy 24-hour diner. (The place Anna Joy had originally wanted to take us, which she described as staffed by bears (*i like sunbears!*), was closed.) It was frequented by all manner of tweakers and, evidently, inbred folk down *from* the mountains. Kinda reminded me of certain places in Fresno, actually. Anyway, Corrine showed us the writing of some of her students. A lot of it was really damned good. Rocco seemed particularly impressed by the work of a girl named Mars.

26. Corrine said she'd like us to speak to her class about how it's not only possible to write about one's experiences with drugs (and other heavy stuff) without glorifying them, it's completely okay. Memoirism without shame? *That*, I can talk about.

## **San Diego And Beyond the Infinite, Part 2**

1. The smart thing would have been to have left San Diego on Friday morning, to get a headstart and beat the worst of the traffic. In theory, I could have even been back in San Francisco in time to see (but not be in) Zippy. That was the original plan, and if we hadn't been asked to speak at the class, that's exactly what we would have done. But we weren't going to refuse the request.
2. Anna Joy drove, and we picked up Michelle and Rocco at their hotel, arriving at the Toussaint Teen Center at a quarter past one. The class consisted of a little over a dozen kids, in their mid to late teens. I recognized a few of them from Siren the night before, including Mars. Corrine had them each introduce themselves and say a word or two about

why they write. We (Lynnee, myself, Anna Joy, Rocco and Michelle) all did the same, and answered questions. It felt odd to be on a something resembling panel with people like Lynnee and Michelle, as though we were colleagues or something. In spite of the fact that Lynnee and I had been nanotouring together, I still don't feel at all up to his or Michelle's level. I know I'm not. Still, to the kids in the class, I suppose I might have been close.

3. There was a lot of discussion about a 'zine which they're putting together, a final project for the class. Most of what Corrine had shown us the night before would be going in it. The title was undecided and still a subject of much debate. No surprise there. I have a hard enough time with them myself, let alone deciding by committee.
4. Michelle was due at a Comic-Con signing and Anna Joy was her ride, so by two it was just Lynnee and I. (Anna Joy said she'd come back for us.)
5. Corrinne suggested we read some of our work. I decided probably the most San Francisco-centric story I have, about a particularly harrowing bus ride on acid, one which I'd consciously decided not to read the last few nights because it presupposed a basic knowledge of the City's geography. Though she's never been, however, Mars is fascinated by San Francisco. She asked if there was still "life in Haight-Ashbury," which is an interesting way to put it. Sometimes there's entirely too much life there for my taste. Anyway, I figured she would appreciate the fact that the story is partially set in the Haight, and it also fit in nicely with the theme of writing about drugs without glorifying them.
6. Before I started to read, Lynnee asked, What Do You Have There, Sherilyn? Thankfully, I picked up one what he was doing pretty quickly,

especially by my standards. *it's a chapbook*. What's A Chapbook? *well, i'm glad you asked...*

7. Reading the story to the class was one of the more fulfilling things I've ever done. Being there at all was pretty special, of course. For as much as that week had been about Lynnee and I being rock stars, this felt like we were actually doing a little bit of good. What a concept.
8. When I finished, I gave the chapbook ("Substance") to Mars. She asked me to sign it, which always surprises me. As I kneeled in front of her desk, trying to think of something profoundly witty and or wittily profound to write, Corrine discussed the story with the class. She made a couple pronoun slips. I'd decided to let the first one go, but gently corrected the second one. She apologized sincerely, and I accepted it. None of the kids seemed to pay it any mind.
9. Lynnee then read from the beginning of *Godspeed*, also very much set in San Francisco but still quite accessible. They loved it, of course. He had three or four books which he hadn't sold, so he gave them to the class. They got snatched up pretty quickly. Seeing how disappointed Mars was that she didn't get a copy, I went to her desk and promised her that she'd get one eventually. (And she did.)
10. Inspired by Lynnee's generosity, I offered up the stack of chapbooks I had left. I suggested that if anyone was worried that maybe something they wanted to write about was a bit too personal or embarrassing, they should read the first story in "Sublimation" to see just how high (or low) the bar on self-disclosure can get. Who knows. Maybe I inspired one of them into getting something off their chest that had been weighing heavily. It's a nice thought, anyway.

11. Anna Joy picked us up, and now the smart thing would have been for her take us back to her place so we could hop in his car and head northward. (She was disappointed that we weren't going to stay in town for the reading she had that night with Bucky Sinister and Michelle, but understood our reasons for leaving. As it turned out, I think she would have been happier if she'd left with us.) Instead, we had lunch at a fish taco joint she'd been raving about. When she suggested it, neither of us objected; there was a similar place in Hollywood to which Lynnee had wanted to hit but didn't, so this seemed the next best thing. Goddamn, it was delicious. I even discovered that the really good hot sauce at the taqueria with the killer vegan soyrizo burritos at 24th and Valencia is chipotle sauce. Mmmmm. Good to know, because I need more condiments in my life.

12. Corinne's college thesis was about cutting, Anna Joy informed us. Corinne herself has never engaged in it, but she's obviously fascinated by it in others. Not surprisingly, it's something many of her students do. Lynnee pointed out that it's something I could have talked to them about, and I suppose that's true (even though I've never written about it in-depth), but it's not like it was brought up while we were there. Besides, there were a lot of things I could have talked about but didn't, mostly for time reasons. (The gender issue, to name but the most obvious one.) Anna Joy suggested that there were surely similar programs and classes in San Francisco. Something to look into.

13. So, full and slightly tired after a large meal, Lynnee and I hit the road at half past three and began the roughly two-hour jaunt to Los Angeles.

### **San Diego And Beyond the Infinite, Part 3**

1. The earpiece headset thingy for Lynnee's phone died on the drive down. We went to a Radio Shack in Hollywood in hopes of getting replaced, but no such luck. Now, between San Diego and Los Angeles, the battery charger for his phone went kaput. On Monday night he was able to have long leisurely talks with people as I drove; now, we didn't dare stay too long on the phone, and you had to actually hold the phone to your ear like a friggin' caveman. It was a portent of things to come.
2. The other unmistakable portent was the extremely slow traffic heading to L.A. No rubbernecking this time; it was just Friday afternoon.
3. Our plan was to stop by Flipper's to pick up the laptop cord and the other things I'd dumbly left behind. Flipper told me on the phone that he'd found something of Lynnee's as well, so I didn't feel quite so dumb. I considered suggesting we just keep on going, and Flipper could mail it all to us. It felt very wrong to ask him to do that, to inconvenience himself because of *my* carelessness. Besides, he's super-busy these days with a film proposal (a talk with Showtime on Thursday went very well), so there's no telling when he'd actually get a chance to do package it up and mail it off. So we'd just swing by his place, a mile or so off the Highland exit, and hop back on the road. No fuss, no muss, no huge amount of time loss. Really, you can't get from San Diego to San Francisco without going through L.A., so it's not like we'd be going out of our way.
4. After about four hours, Lynnee became concerned that we hadn't found the exit to Hollywood Freeway yet. I'd been yammering on for a quite a while about me me i i and hadn't seen it, either. I tried to get a sense of where we were based on the signs, then consulted the map. Sun Valley. Oh. Heh. Whoops. Yep, we'd overshot our exit. Not too badly, just a few miles, but annoying all the same. We both knew which exit to look for, and neither of us saw it, probably because the sun was setting and the

signs were in shadow, but my self-absorbed monologue (*and then they said this and did that and it really hurt and how could they do that to me and*) surely didn't help.

5. As we stopped to get gas and reverse course, he told me that same thing had happened on tour with Tribe 8. Early one morning and Flipper were the only ones awake in the van, engrossed in conversation. Eventually Leslie woke up, looked out the window, and asked where the hell they were. Seems they'd overshot their exit by about fifty miles. So this was nothing, and Lynnee assured me he was *not* upset.
6. Of course, the Tribe 8 van had been in the middle of nowhere, and making up for those fifty miles didn't take long. We, on the other hand, were heading into Hollywood on Friday night. Worse, Flipper's house isn't the only thing accessible via Highland. Thanks to Harry Connick Jr. (and special guest Doug Wamble!), we got stuck in Hollywood Bowl traffic for at least an hour, if not more. By the time we realized what was happening, it was too late to take another exit.
7. We got in and out of Flipper's place quickly enough, and were proud of ourselves for choosing a different onramp to get back on the freeway, thus avoiding the Highland mess. We were back on the road, for real, a straight shot to San Francisco. It was ten o'clock, much later than we would have liked, but hey. We finally had forward momentum, and would be home before we knew it.
8. Meanwhile, in San Diego, very bad things were happening. I did not personally witness them, but I trust those who did.

*friends, artistes and people who like to take their shows on the road:*

*may i tell you a tale of jerks and drama? i just came back from doing a show in san diego, and it was such an epic nightmare i feel compelled to send out this email. partly to get it off my heaving chest, partly because i'm seeking both justice and vengeance and also cause you people travel and you might not want to do shows with the jimmy jazz crew. or then again, you might. here's how mine went:*

*jimmy jazz is a san diego poet who does rowdy poetry shows with a couple of his friends. In addition to poetry, they did this fake jeopardy game show. In this case, they would cite some gross misdeed perpetrated by our government, then ask an audience member if this was done by the U.S. gov't or KFC. One female audience member guessed incorrectly, then her surprise punishment was jimmy jazz coming up behind her on the stage, bagging her head in a flannel pillowcase, and duct-taping it around her neck (a take-off on the government's hijinks in iraq). it was disgusting to watch three big self-righteous dudes who've been drinking beer for hours get to feel all punk and outlaw at this woman's expense. if it had stopped there it would have simply been high jack-assery, but it went on . . .*

*A couple lowlights:*

*--jazz (I can't believe I have to call him that) pitched a fit because i'd asked him to switch the order of the show. I had invited a bunch of teenagers from a group home to see me read, and they needed to be home before their curfew kicked in. after I convinced him to change the order (which took a lot of haggling), he walked around muttering 'you fucked up the order of my fucking show!' He then accused the woman who brought the kids (who he called 'her poor babies') of ruining his show, and spent part of the night flipping her off. This has been recorded on camera.*

*--a couple girls were bummed that we'd had jazz put on our show. These girls were at a poetry open mic with him and heard him say, following a girl who'd read a poem about rape, something along the lines of 'i'm sick of hearing girls whining about rape'. anna joy springer, who read with us, called him on it while on stage. turns out the girl who'd read the rape poem that sparked his shitty comment was there, too, and personally thanked anna for saying something. she'd felt too shaken up and crappy to say anything herself when it happened; it had been her first time on reading in public.*

*--one of Jazz's goon friends started a fight with rocco (my boyfriend) because he left the sweltering performance space during cecil hayduke's performance. the dude kept stalking rocco from the shadows and just could not let go of his hurt feelings. eventually he came out with fireworks, and hurled one into a crowd of me and my friends, including rocco and anna joy and laurenn mccubbin and her little sister. it was fucking scary. i didn't know what happened. a crowd of similar straight dudes stared in a group behind him. one was filming the whole thing. eventually he lit another firecracker and threw that at us. someone tried to call the cops but they never picked up. 911's a joke in that town. eventually a totally nice person pulled her car around for us, so we didn't have to walk by them. it was scary like high school or something. we left.*

*a woman who worked at the venue (not part of Jazz's team) came out as we were leaving and offered profuse, horrified apologies for what happened. the people who run the space had an emergency meeting the next day and the firework-throwing dude is apparantly banned from the space forever and if he shows his ugly ass there again they will get a restraining order.*

*no one from the jimmy jazz crew has emailed any sort of apology, though one member did email me because he was upset that he heard i'd said they were making money of me. sigh. he also sent me a copy of one of jazz's poems. great.*

*if you ever want to do a show in san diego email me cause i have alternate contacts.*

*your friend, michelle tea*

9. Lynnee told me as we drove through Oxnard that it was Anna Joy's hometown. The poor thing. Oxnard makes Fresno look like a bustling metropolis.
  
10. A lot of my friends converged in San Diego that weekend, including Temple. Unfortunately, the logistics of us hooking up were unworkable, seeing as how she was driving there on Friday, the same day we were driving back up. We decided to settle for waving at each other as we passed on I-5. (Stop looking at me like that. It could happen.)
  
11. I was talking to Maddy on Lynnee's mortally drained cell phone when I learned that I would not be waving at Temple. Are We On 101? Lynnee suddenly asked. We Should Be on I-5! are you sure? isn't 101 okay? No, No, We Should Be On I-5! I told Maddy I'd call her back.
  
12. Yep. We were on 101, and well past any connecting road to I-5. Both lead to San Francisco, but I-5 is a much straighter line, while 101 is somewhat twisty and roughly follows the shape of the coast. Though not as much as Highway 1, which goes right along the coast itself. If we'd somehow found ourselves on 1, we would have been seriously screwed.

13. Lynnee estimated that it would add about two hours onto our drive, getting us home sometime between six and eight in the morning. Jesus. We considered doubling back to I-5, but that would take at least an hour or two, and heading away from our destination felt very counterintuitive, an Aesop violation. Let's just deal with bone we already have in our mouth.
  
14. He's not one to anger or upset easily, but the amount of time we'd spent sitting in traffic that week that week—hell, that *day*—was really eating at him. Lynnee's permatweak nature doesn't handle so much enforced idleness very well, and I could tell he was starting to crack. I offered a few times, gently, to drive the rest of the way. Finally, he accepted. I'm glad, because he needed a break, and it was the least I could do.
  
15. I felt terribly guilty for having gotten us into this situation. After all, if I hadn't left anything behind at Flipper's (yeah, Lynnee left something too, but it was nothing especially important), we would have been able to shoot straight through L.A. and we wouldn't have strayed from I-5. Instead, because of me, the duration of the trip home had doubled.
  
16. Lynnee asked Tour Pig how this could have happened. Tour Pig declined to comment, obviously an admission of guilt.
  
17. My primary concern was keeping awake, as I hadn't slept more than three or four hours a night on the trip. It had nothing to do with the accommodations, which were super-comfy. I'm just wired funny, which has long since been established. I was generally fine during the day, but driving through the night with only a radio (the usefulness of which was

sporadic at best) and an increasingly sedate traveling companion sounded problematic. Thankfully, I still had a good supply of chocolate penguin mints.

18. Knowing how bushed he was, I told Lynnee that I wouldn't be offended if he went to sleep. He responded with the story of the last time he slept while someone else drove, during an all-night journey to a Sister Spit gig. Suffice it to say, it's by pure dumb luck that he lived to tell the tale, and he was never going to let it happen again. Can't say I blame him, and Oscar knows I appreciated the company.
19. Determined to get us before the sun rose, I averaged about 80-90 mph in a car which Lynnee hadn't been sure was up for the drive in the first place. Getting a ticket would have surely harshed whatever mellow was left, too. But the Invisible Pink Unicorn favors the foolish, so we weren't stopped.
20. Whenever we'd find something halfway decent on the radio in Southern California, it would go to static before long. As a result, we didn't hear the end of an interview with Larry Hagman on a low-power talk station in which he reminisced fondly about his days on *Dallas*. If we hadn't lost the signal, he would have finally broken his silence about directing *Son of Blob*, owning up to his place in B-movie history. I just know it.
21. Bay Area classic rock stations dip into the relatively obscure stuff when they think nobody is listening. At least, neither of us recalled ever hearing "All the Girls Love Alice" or "Hey Bulldog" on the radio before. It helped.

22. Really, the drive wasn't so bad. Didn't go quite as smoothly as it could have, but it was just one more part of the overall trip, and the overall trip was very, very good, a smashing success.

23. We got in at half past four, a couple hours earlier than anticipated. We beat the sun.



This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 3.0 Unported License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, 171 2nd Street, Suite 300, San Francisco, California, 94105, USA.