With Your Brains and My Good Looks...

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We start out in the middle of Iowa and head to Nebraska. You’re driving because you like to, paying more attention to your music than the passing signs and scenery. I’m memorizing the scientific names of plants. I have flashcards and my feet on the dashboard. Foam orange earplugs block out the stereo.

The concert starts at 8. I’ve seen Flogging Molly several times but really want you to see them and like them because you’re such a music snob and only get enthusiastic about things I can’t relate to. Things that I can relate to are doing homework, going to ska shows, and drinking liquor. When we arrive at a gas station the first thing I notice is that they’re selling bottles of gin and rum and vodka. After the initial excitement passes I became wary. I know that in Iowa, it’s illegal to sell hard liquor at convenience stores. You ask the cashier where we are and how close that is to Omaha. The woman tells us we’re in Missouri and she doesn’t really know anything about Omaha, we can buy a map if we need it. We buy the map and I put away the flashcards to play navigator. I start drinking the vodka that I had poured into a water bottle before we left. I put Streetlight Manifesto into the CD player to punish you with its horn section.

You drive ninety down the roads that I pick out for you. I point out interesting names on the Midwest map, Conception Junction, Missouri; Swastika, Wisconsin. I calculate and recalculate how long opening bands play, how long it takes to set up equipment. I watch the clock and tell you where to make turns.

In Omaha we speed past the venue into an almost empty church parking lot. We leave the car and run into the building just in time to see a guitar player from the third band collapse on stage. He is rushed to the hospital and the techs take down instruments and put up new ones. It’s a long wait and my buzz is wearing off.

Flogging Molly plays a three-hour set. It’s amazing. I dance the whole time in the way that you only can at a live show. Skanking isn’t appreciated outside dark venues. Microsoft’s spell check doesn’t even recognize it as a legitimate word. I’m sweaty and triumphant. You say something about music dynamic and drummer’s
technique. I space it out because none of that shit matters to me.

As soon as we leave the building freezing air cuts through my four layers – undershirt, t-shirt, two sweatshirts. We hunch over as we walk to the deserted parking lot. Completely deserted parking lot. The car that had sped us through three states is gone. A sign tells us which towing company to contact. I don’t have my coat. You don’t even have cigarettes. Towing garages are closed after two AM.

Suddenly, in the gas station, I get my period. My sweat-soaked underwear is now additionally burdened with the inner lining of my uterus. I use the few crumpled bills in my pocket to buy gas station priced maxi pads. They don’t stick very well to wet fabric. You buy cigarettes. You call a cab.

Another boy at the gas station is calling his ex-girlfriend for a ride. His car got towed as well. “Kickass show though, right, man?” He agrees. The cabbie is friendly, sympathetic, and drops us off at the nearest hotel. We have to get buzzed in and the receptionist asks for a credit card. You realize that your wallet is still in the cab. I menstruate silently. You call the car company and the cabbie returns. You get your wallet, we get a room. All we have are sweaty clothes. I shower and try to do laundry at the same time. I use the hair dryer on my underwear but they don’t really get dry. My under shirt and tee shirt and two sweatshirts still smell like other people’s sweat. Any outside party would probably say that they smell like my sweat as well, but for me that’s background static, the operating platform that I work off of day to day. It’s like how you can’t taste your own flavor ice cream. I haven’t eaten in 12 hours.

The room we get has two beds. I sleep on my stomach to avoid bleeding on the sheets. I have class at noon tomorrow, technically today. It’s a three-hour drive home, assuming we take the right roads. The towing garage opens at 7. We set the alarm for 6:40. I sleep. I may or may not dream. At 6:40 my clothes are still damp, only more densely so. It’s not an hour that is acceptable to smell like other people’s sweat. I keep my hood up. The continental breakfast has a waffle maker. I stand and menstruate and wait for the man in front of me to finish cooking his waffle. As soon as it falls fluffily onto his Styrofoam plate he calls over to his 2.4 children sitting at a nearby table, “Who wants the next one?” I have a test at noon. I really have to memorize plant names.

It’s not too terribly difficult to find the garage but there is a snowstorm coming that adds urgency to every action. You pay way too much money to get your car back. I drive. I pick all the right roads and you put Tool in the CD player to punish me with melodic, progressive rock.