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I keep losing things (magical cords that let me move the pretty pictures from the camera to the computer) and breaking things (we shall not talk of the car and the incrediblytightparkinggarage incident) and I am starting to feel like I am just about ready to go home. It's time to get settled and centered. Also spending a weekend in the big city is going to make it hard to go back to the farm, even if it's for just a little bit. It just is. No further details necessary.

I did have a pretty great weekend out there in Omaha though. At last: people! And not the same four people, no matter how awesome they are. I do need new people and stimulation on occasion. I can admit to that.

So, the breakdown: When we (meaning me and the other artists from the residency) arrived on Thursday, we took a tour of the Bemis Residency program, which is part of the Bemis Arts Center. There we met a lot of nice people, some of whom I ran around with that weekend. I wish I had been able to spend more time with some of the writers at the festival, but I still feel like I got to have a lot of nice chats with people.

On Thursday night I almost got into a bar fight with a traveling car salesman from Kansas City. Or I got into an almost bar fight with a traveling car salesman from Kansas City. One or the other. Fortunately a [writer](#) (Guth), an [artist](#) (Mikey), and two tough little Omaha dykes had my back. It goes without saying that Omaha dykes totally rule.

On Friday I did a lot of recovering in bed. I did make it out to the poetry reading that was held in the park across from the library - I

particularly enjoyed Todd Robinson's work, and kept raving about him all day. But mostly I was just sitting around in bed, enjoying having internet access and a clean, bug-free environment, and I could talk on my phone without it crackling in and out, and just the general complete peace and quiet, all for myself. I talked to Bernie for a while on the phone. The documentary was complete and she was sending it off to a variety of film festivals. So, you know, fingers crossed. .

That night Guth and I went to an opening at the Bemis and then we went to the lit fest opening night party where I saw [Ron Hogan](#) (a real-life New Yorker!) who took what I'm sure is yet another terrible picture of me, and met a bunch of nice people, who were all so eager and enthusiastic about books I couldn't believe it. Here you all are! At last. The party was held on the top floor of the library, and it was really odd to be drinking in a library. I got a chance to talk to Todd Robinson, the poet I had enjoyed so much earlier in the day. He was so insanely nice, and I was bummed he didn't have a book. I wish there were more of a market for poetry. His stuff was really brief and sharp and funny and honest and totally right-on. It kind of made me want to start a small press just to put his stuff out there, because now I'm never going to be able to see his writing again.

On the supporting the arts tip, there was also an art auction of altered books, and I ended up buying a piece by [Jeremy K Stern](#). That was my one new piece of the year. Someday I'll have enough money to buy more than just one. Someday I'll be able to keep the flow going throughout the creative world. It's important to do that kind of thing.

Then Guth and I went back to Bemis and got drunk with the nice artists and looked at fashion magazines from 1996, a time when people still, remarkably, gave a shit about Cindy Crawford, and Kate Moss was a fresh and dewy ingenue with two fully functioning nostrils. I had a really nice talk with Rory Golden and I am hoping I can make him my friend in Brooklyn someday.

Yesterday was the actual lit fest. Both the authors and the audience members were really enthusiastic and inquisitive and it was very well-organized and everyone just seemed to be really happy that this was happening in Omaha. I could easily see this festival really growing in the next few years. I was most intrigued by the "Short Story vs. the Novel" panel, and though I didn't hear anything I didn't already know - in short: it's impossible to make a living writing short stories unless you're Alice Munro - it was still nice to hear it all.

Then Guth and I went out to drinks with Mikey and Timmy Schaffert and [Charlene Baumbich](#). Now Charlene couldn't be any more different than Amy and myself (Charlene is my mother's age and she does work with Christian audiences, for example), and yet we sat there and had this wonderful, seamless conversation about families and role models and how to lead a full life. Everything slowed down for a second. Everything disappeared except for the conversation. It was really lovely.

Then we went to Jeremy's opening, and then finally (man it was a long day) we went back to our respective hotels and then there was a tornado warning, so instead of taking a much-needed nap, I was hanging out in the rickety old health spa in the basement of the building with a bunch of annoyed hotel guests, including a full wedding party. And then I saw [John McNally](#), who was on the short story panel earlier in the day, so I got to talk to him a little bit about writing. I think that was really the tipping point for me in terms of exhaustion and just general delirium. It was really hot and surreal in that basement gym. I did at some point think, I am not going to remember the details of this conversation later. And it is true, I really can only remember bits and pieces today.

And then there was the late night sex panel. Marilyn Coffey did this amazing reading from her book *Marcella*, a novel about masturbation she wrote thirty years ago. It was seriously the best reading ever. Also I talked a lot. A lot. Too much? Probably. I was sitting next to [Terese Svoboda](#) on the panel, who is incredibly accomplished and has like nine million books, and I just thought, maybe that lady should be talking a little bit more than me. Like maybe she knows more than me just in general. In life. And yet, I could not stop talking. Please don't ask me to tell you what I said though.

I know that in five years I'm not going to be talking about the same things. In general people respond more to the emotional content of IL rather than the sex scenes, and in some ways I'd prefer to talk about that. But if I'm on a sex panel, that's what I'm going to talk about. Because you shouldn't be afraid to talk about sex. And I think more than anything I wanted to say that.

At one point, Frederick Reuss, who was in the audience, suggested that the samples Guth and I read from our book were not in the slightest erotic. The way he said it sounded very much like he felt he was speaking on behalf of the entire room. (I must have missed the straw poll segment of the evening.)

I say, it's funny what people find sexy. I talked a little bit about Alicia Erian and Stephen Elliott, how they both write about these really unconventional sexual moments that should not necessarily be sexy but are. In fact it can make you feel uncomfortable with yourself that you do find it sexy.

More than anything, though, I'm going to guess I'm just not Frederick Reuss' literary type. And I'm ok with that.

Then me and Mikey and Guth had one last drink. "We'll always have Omaha," I said, and then suddenly I had no personality left.

But oh, it was a swell time.

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Some nice people out there said nice things about Instant Love:

[RetroLowFi](#)
[Jive Magazine](#)
[uber-librarian Nancy Pearl](#)

And here's an interview I did about marketing your book over on [Write and Publish Your Book](#)

(09/17/06)

e l s e w h e r e

October 18 - New York, NY
Happy Ending
In the Flesh Reading Series
w/ Mo Beasley
Christen Clifford
Stephen Elliott
Marcy Dermansky
P.F. Kozak
8 PM

+++

October 20 - New York, NY
The National Arts Club
w/Deborah Schoeneman
Eliot Schrefer
Alex Berenson
6 PM

+++

October 23 - Brooklyn, NY
Galapagos
Smut Reading Series
8 PM

+++

[see more events here](#)

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Nextbook
[What Lies Beneath](#)

Print (July/August 2006)
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[Radical Traditionalists](#)

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