

## **Sloth and Loathing on the 71 Line**

Sherilyn Connelly

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I had a hunch there might be trouble when I saw the kid wearing a Misfits t-shirt talking on a cell phone. I know I'm out of touch with modern society, but that seemed wrong. Things would get much wronger.

We'd gone into the Haight to see a movie at the Red Vic called *Little Otik*, a Czechoslovakian surrealist film about a rampaging tree monster. Maddy suggested we see it on acid, and I was more than happy to oblige. We dropped half an hour before the movie began, so we were still peaking when it was over. We briefly considered walking around a bit, but just making it home sounded like a much worthier goal. I was still a little freaked out by the movie, and Maddy was getting the giggles something fierce.

Being Saturday afternoon, the Haight was crowded. Not a problem; the key to getting around on acid is repetition, and I've gone home to Ocean Beach on the 71 line before. It's simply a matter of doing those same things.

The toughest part was crossing the damn street. There are very few stop signs or traffic lights, and the drivers are only slightly more tolerant of pedestrians because they're outnumbered. But we made it across in one piece, and I was confident the most perilous part of the journey was over. Sure, we'd have to wait for a bus to come along and

probably fend off panhandlers in the meantime, and then stand for much of the trip home, but these are all things I've done before. There wouldn't be any surprises.

The bus arrived, we made our way through the crowded aisle, found a place to stand just ahead of the middle doors, grabbed hold of the beams, and hung on. So far, so good.

Then we hit 9th and Lincoln. The kid in the Misfits t-shirt and cell phone got on at the front of the bus and paid the fare like a sucker, while two of his friends snuck on through the middle doors like REAL rebels. Guess where they reunited?

Thanks to the tunnelvision of acid, I didn't realize they were targeting us until it was too late. At first they were talking to a girl near us, insisting that they'd seen her in the park and not taking "It wasn't me" for an answer. Then they started obsessing on how that one girl was really tall and the other had blue hair. I was looking out the window, wishing them away, hoping they wouldn't notice us at all. It didn't work.

They reeked of alcohol, and when I risked a glance I saw something else in their eyes. Speed, maybe. Something more sinister than the drugs Maddy and I were on, in any event. And, really, the alcohol would have been enough. Whatever it was, it scared me. The main kid, the one with the punk t-shirt and the yuppie accessory—well, maybe it was the acid, but I swear he looked like Sloth from *The Goonies*. Remember the mutant guy with the fucked-up eyes who looked like a cross between Zippy the Pinhead and The Toxic Avenger? Like that.

Because I was dressed in black, they concluded we worshipped Satan. Mind you, Maddy was wearing jeans, a white sweater and a hooded jacket with kitty ears--not exactly standard devil-worshipping attire. But my clothes were enough. They started moshing and chanting "Sisters of Satan," though they were so wasted it came out as "Shishters of Shatan."

I figured their attention span was very limited, so if we could get out of their line of sight, they'd focus on something else. But I didn't want to get off the bus, since that would divert us from our primary goal of getting home, and who's to say they wouldn't follow us? The bus may be a pressure cooker, but it's also a contained environment in which they probably wouldn't dare hurting us. That was my theory, anyway. It was the best I could do while frying.

All the while, I'd been holding Maddy, her face in my chest. This was mostly to shield her from them, but also in case she got the giggles again, which would have made things worse. Over the sloshed "Sisters of Satan" chorus, I leaned down to her ear and told her we were going to the back of the bus.

The glaring flaw in this plan was that it involved walking through them, and Maddy has had bad experiences with loud, threatening males. In a remarkable act of faith and courage, she turned, and we walked through them. They didn't stop us, but didn't lose interest quickly enough, either; I heard one of them say behind me, "Hey, that's a guy."

My heart sank to the bottom of my boots. Oh, no no no. Not now, of all times, to get clocked. I expected him to follow us, saying "Are you a dude? You're a dude!"

Thankfully, he found another shiny thing.

They got off a few blocks later at 25th and Kirkham, having loudly announced they were going to the beach. I was on acid, and even I knew the beach was over a mile away.

When we finally got off the bus at 48th and Ortega, we were at the beach, and *they* were not. I'd like to think they got lost and died.



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