

Over her cereal at her kitchen counter at 6:30 AM, Shelly blearily looks at the note she'd texted to herself last night:

Industry Plants

She'd had an amazing time in the level-100 seats at the Garden, rocking out with the other concert attendees in her section after chatting with them about what their favorite album was and from where they'd traveled. After she'd offered the empty seat next to her as a repository for Stuff, the people around her had become her best friends, taking selfies and buying her drinks. One of her good friends, Krissy, had the ticket to that seat but bailed at the last minute, citing some complicated situation with her in-laws and a rescheduled anniversary party.

Whatever.

In any case, one of her section buddies had told her about this new band that Shelly should check out, and Shelly'd texted the name to herself for later perusal. Honestly, she'd completely forgotten about it—the text being the only reason her memory sparked at all, given the last night and early morning.

Industry Plants

Squinting, Shelly assesses the name, trying to decipher what genre the name should evoke. Maybe some pop-gimmick band? Anyway, she'll give anything a listen once.

Navigating to Wikipedia, Shelly skims the stub about the band: formed 5 years ago (early 2010 in Los Angeles, CA), the lineup consists of a lead singer; a bass, rhythm, and lead guitarist; and a drummer. They have a pastiche sound, evoking the early 80s, which they label as post-punk revival.

Pulling up Pandora, Shelly searches for them with no luck, so she switches to Spotify, where she has more success. Their debut album, *Anger Love Riot*, pops up, and she scans the tracklist, her amber-brown eyes landing on track 4, "Ash in the Teeth (Radioactive Love)." It's evocative, so she starts there.

It's ok.

The frenetic drums and energetic guitar belie the subtext of the lyrics—much like “99 Luftballons” by Nena—but Shelly feels like the subject is merely shock value to cover up the simplicity of the song structure. Still, when the song ends, she doesn't dislike it enough to stop the autoplay into “Bolt Cutter Block Party,” which sounds like a song people play at weddings, having never listened to the *lyrics*. Yeah, with its shouting chorus and syncopated rhythm, it's guaranteed to get butts out of seats...however, the “story” is very clearly about burning down box stores trying to gentrify areas. Shelly balks at the straightforward lyrics even as she's tapping her toes and fingers as she does her dishes from last night and this morning, while slowly trying to become a person again because, at 35, she might be too old for this shit.

After that, Shelly zones out—the music is not enough to keep her attention as she brushes her teeth, her mind wandering to how she's going to move her money around to make sure her bank account doesn't overdraft. But the treacly strings that screech from her phone in a discordant mess that is track 7, “Your Glass Walls Are Only Sugar,” have Shelly wincing as she tries to activate her screen to hit the skip button; she only succeeds in dribbling toothpaste down her black shirt, and when she tries to course correct, she ends up dropping her toothbrush, which bounces off the tiles and lands behind her toilet.

Fine.

She needed a new one, anyway.

Her phone plays on.

It plays through “Golden Hour Gunpowder,” a song Shelly can't really hear because she's in her laundry room trying to get the toothpaste out, and then because she's rummaging through her closet trying to find a fresh shirt that matches the look she was going for. When the playlist transitions into “Siren Call to Arms,” a sexy-sounding, midnight-ballerina song, Shelly decides to let the album play through again.

She lets it play through while she does her makeup.

She lets it play through as she travels to the coworking space, of which she's a member.

She lets it play through as she sits in the soundproofed closet she booked to have some peace and quiet.

By the time Shelly gets back to her place at 6 PM, she's humming along to "Asphalt Skin." As she's crawling into bed, she already can tell "Graphene Heart" is unskippable.

When she wakes the next morning, already itching to "play all" again, Shelly accepts she's hooked despite her initial indifference.

She energetically screams the spoken-word intro of "Cat Eye of the Storm" into her cereal spoon, even though she only gets half the words correct.

She does a joyous little twirl on the empty bike path on her way to the train as the bridge to "Curb Stomp Two Step (Civil Right Riot)" amps up the bass—and her heart rate.

She bops her head to the beat of "Duct Taped Scrape" in her chair at the open-concept table as the breakdown hits, uncaring if people stare.

On Friday of that week, Shelly sends track 1, "Stomp, Kick, Crash," a yelling call-and-answer anthem, to the group chat as "their weekend jam."

That weekend, Shelly dips her toe into the Industry Plant's subreddit and finds they're currently on a tour that's ending soon.

Heart beating in her ears, she navigates to a ticket service to see if they're playing the Boston area—and if there are any seats left.

Her mouth has become dry, and when she sees the band is playing at the Worcester Palladium next month, she swallows thickly. With shaky hands, she clicks to see if there are any tickets left.

There's one.

Literally just *one*.

“Obstructed view.”

Biting her lip, Shelly considers if the discounted cost is worth it, but the pressure of the scarcity makes her blood roar through her ears. While she’s hemming and hawing, someone else who doesn’t give a fuck could snatch this up, and then Shelly will have to wait—what? Another two years to see them live?

She clicks purchase.

She checks out.

There is a general unease that perhaps she has made a huge mistake now that she can’t take it back, but that gradually turns into a euphoria that she *got the last ticket, bitches!*

As the next 30 days unfold, Shelly cannot contain her glee at the anticipation of seeing them live. The tour is supporting their second album, *Bargain-Basement Social Experiment*, and she throws that album into her Industry Plants mix. It’s like she’s never enjoyed any other music the way she wears each song out until it’s threadbare. In her free time, she dives into the history of the band and their sound, surprised to see the vast majority of posts and opinion pieces from early fans lamenting how much their sound has changed now that they’ve got a big-name label.

Which, whatever. Shelly thinks they merely sound like they had more money to produce this album, so good for them.

The night of the show approaches, and Shelly is *hyped*. Outfitted in a DIY crop-top, waist-high cut-off shorts—which provide tummy and chub-rub control—paired with ripped tights going into beat-up Docs, Shelly is feeling herself. Both Industry Plants albums on shuffle, she does a spin in the bathroom mirror of the Couchsurfing place she’s staying at and shakes her ass the way she might if she were in the pit and the lead guitarist could see it.

As she stands in line waiting for doors, her teeth chatter, but Shelly can't tell if it's from the cooling Spring night air or the excess adrenaline.

Maybe both.

Normally, Shelly would be *on*, chatting up everyone around her and making friends left and right, but for some reason, tonight she's nervous. She's only known about this band for *a month*, but somehow tonight feels like the culmination of a lifetime of music listening. Like every other concert experience had trained her for this moment.

The line starts to move, and Shelly's heart gives a leap of excitement. When it moves jerkily in stops and starts, Shelly jumps in place, trying to work off the excess energy that has lodged in her chest and throat. By the time she finally makes it to the entrance, the opener is halfway through their set, which sucks for anyone behind her who wanted to see them, but means Shelly is that much closer to Industry Plants *live*.

Once in the venue lobby, she heads to the bathroom to pee, not wanting her nervous bladder to ruin the continuity of the setlist, before making her way to her upper-level seat behind the support pillar.

The view is actually as awful as promised, and the couple next to her gives wincing of sympathy, but Shelly was so close to missing this experience entirely that she honestly doesn't care.

The pillar won't obstruct the music.

Shelly fiddles with her phone to keep her mind occupied while she waits for the minutes to tick down to showtime. She listens to the girl behind her talk about her VIP experience and how the lead singer looked into her soul.

Next time, that could be Shelly.

At 13 minutes past 9 o'clock, Shelly wants to gnaw through the plaster of the pillar, but then the lights go down and the audience roars as a backing track intro blares through the speakers.

Shelly screams like a teen seeing The Beatles for the first time, and a voice rings out, “*Helllllo, Boston!*”...

Shelly sits, rooted to her seat, as the crowd disperses now that the house lights are up and it’s clear there won’t be an encore.

Her neck aches from trying to crane around the pillar, but the rest of her feels as if she could run a half-marathon

That. Was. *Amazing*.

The energy of the band surpassed her greatest expectations, and while they slightly altered the sound of the songs, she could tell they did it with care for live performances. The lead singer riffed with the audience between songs just enough to make everyone in the crowd feel like a part of the show, but not too much that it ruined the momentum. And while the interlude, where the bass guitarist and the rhythm guitarist switched instruments in an exaggerated tiff, was clearly a choreographed bit, Shelly could tell the camaraderie of the members was real. She’s only sad she’d missed the other bits due to the accursed pillar.

Maybe there’s fan footage online somewhere that could tide her over until the next tour.

When the band announces its European leg in 6 months, Shelly renews her passport.

Pit tickets hate to see her coming.