

I See You

Gregg Hurwitz

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Extract

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S P H E R E

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I woke up with IVs taped to my arms, a feeding tube shoved through my nose, and my tongue pushed against my teeth, dead and thick as a sock. My mouth was hot and tasted of copper, and my molars felt loose, jogged in their beds from grinding. I blinked against the harsh light and squinted into a haze of face, too close for casual—a man straddling a backward chair, strong forearms overlapped, a sheet of paper drooping from one square fist. Another guy behind him, dressed the same—rumpled sport coat, loose tie offset from open collar, glint at the hip. Downgraded to bystander, a doctor stood by the door, ignoring the electronic blips and bleeps. I was in a hospital room.

With consciousness came pain. No tunnels of light, no bursts or fireworks or other page-worn clichés, just pain, mindless and dedicated, a rottweiler working a bone. A creak of air moved through my throat.

“He’s up,” said the doctor from far away. A nurse materialized and fed a needle into the joint in my IV. A second later the warmth rode through my veins and the rottweiler paused to catch his breath.

I raised an arm trailing IV lines and fingered my head where it tingled. Instead of hair, a seam of stubble and stitches cactused my palm. Light-headedness and nausea compounded my confusion. As my hand drifted back to my chest, I noticed dark crescents caking the undersides of my nails.

I’d dug myself out of somewhere?

The cop in the chair flipped the piece of paper over, and I saw that it was an eight-by-ten.

A crime-scene photo.

A close-up of a woman's midsection, the pan of the abdomen crusted with dark blood. A narrow puncture below the ribs faded into blackness, as if a stronger flashbulb were required to sound its depths.

I raised a hand as if to push away the image, and in the dead blue fluorescence I saw that the grime under my nails carried a tinge of crimson. Whether from the drugs or the pain, I felt my gorge rise and push at the back of my throat. It took two tries, and still my voice came out a rasp, barely audible around the plastic tube. "Who is that?"

"Your ex-fiancée."

"Who . . . who *did* that to her?"

The detective's jaw shifted once, slowly, left to right. "You did."

My car occupied slot 221 in the impound lot. A Toyota Highlander, the hybrid model selected so I could drive an SUV and still think highly of myself. I turned over the engine and sat with my hands on the wheel, readjusting to the familiarity of this object that was mine. My head hummed; my scar, largely hidden by grown-back hair, prickled. I felt pressure beneath my face, as if I wanted to cry but my tears had forgotten the pathways. My radio had been left on, Springsteen still going down to the river despite the fact that it had yielded nothing but blue-collar heartache for three decades now. I wondered if I'd left the radio on myself or if somewhere along its towed journey someone had smacked the button. Had I been listening to music on my last nighttime drive? Had I been behind the wheel? Alone?

Of course, I had to pay a vehicle storage fee, six hundred-some bucks. I used a credit card that my keepers had been considerate enough to leave in my wallet while they'd safeguarded it for me. Driving home, I passed a flickering yellow sign and felt a sting of excitement as I parked, the promise of a new liquor store.

"I'm looking for bourbon. You got Blanton's?"

"Nope." The guy at the counter didn't look up from a black-and-white television the size of a clock radio. A cigarette dangled from his lips, supporting an impossible length of ash. I couldn't see the screen, but a reporter was providing updates about some schmuck who had the same name as me.

"Knob Creek?" I asked. He shook his head. "Maker's?"

His eyes pulled over to me, snagged for a beat. “Jack Daniel’s.”

I could’ve pointed out that Jack Daniel’s is Tennessee sour mash, not bourbon, but I figured that my first stand back in the world should be over something of greater consequence. Box wine, maybe.

“Single-barrel?”

“Yeah, we got the single-barrel.”

I felt his stare on my back as I left the store.

Two minutes later I was on Mulholland Drive. The asphalt vine clings to the ridgeline of the Santa Monicas, shooting tendrils north through the Valley to the Santa Anas and south into the L.A. Basin. On its eastern stretch, tourists pull over to snap shots of Hollywood writ large in white block letters. Persian palaces and mutant Pueblo Revivals perch along crests and hillsides, hiding behind gates and rock walls. It’s a dangerous road, soaked in affluence and romance, home to the breached guardrail, the meandering Marlowe, the David Lynch fantasy, the 2:00 A.M. drunken head-on. You’ll drive it too fast and be glad you did.

Tonight I went the speed limit, figuring I’d had my fill of problems. I rode Mulholland west, banking downslope just before the 405 and easing right off the stop sign. My cul-de-sac was as it always was, pinprick lit with porch lamps and walkway goosenecks, the freeway distant enough to sound like sighing waves. My house was unlit, but I paused to recognize its contours. Despite my absence, it looked the same—Richard Neutra on a budget, a steel, glass, and concrete rise of intersecting planes and right angles that came together nicely but fell short of elegant. After my third book deal, I’d begged, borrowed, and borrowed to catch the lip of the ever-receding tide that is L.A.’s real-estate market. I’d paid too much, but the million-dollar view tacked on to the abrupt backyard consoled me in that. If I couldn’t afford it before the trial, I sure as hell couldn’t now.

There were no news crews camped on my front lawn. No paparazzi hiding in seedy cars. No Geraldo Rivera in camo gear and full mustache, ready to pounce.

I pulled in to the garage, plucked the jar from the cup holder and the brown paper bag from the backseat, and headed inside. It felt odd to be carrying so little after so long. No suitcases, no carry-on, just the clothes I was wearing, a bottle in a bag, and a brain tumor in a jar.

I'd been gone four months, but the familiarity was undiminished. The catch of the opening door as the weatherboard scraped the threshold. The particular scent of the interior, a layered blend of carpet and tile, coffee and candle wax. Objects I'd bought, choices I'd made. The emotion rising through my chest broke the instant the door closed behind me. Alone in my house, I finally wept, standing, head bowed, tears dotting the floor at my feet despite the hand I'd clamped over my eyes in a futile attempt to keep the anguish from flooding out. I don't know how long I stood there shuddering, but when I removed my hand, the overhead light made me squint.

I trudged through my kitchen with its stainless appliances and teak cabinets, through the entryway with its repetitive Warhols that even I'd tired of long ago, past the wide staircase. Everything in the house was cold and sharp—flagstone underfoot, marble corners on countertops, pointy knobs on drawers. The ambience now felt affected, hubristic. I supposed I should have been relieved to be home, even happy, but all I felt was unsure of myself.

I went to the only worn-in piece of furniture in the house, the club chair in the family room. Distressed leather, brass studs, matching ottoman—displayed curbside at a garage sale near Melrose, it had brought my Highlander to a screeching halt. I seated Jack Daniel's and the brain tumor together on the coffee table, figuring they could swap trade secrets, collapsed into the chair, and felt my shoulders go limp for the first time in four months.

Deep breath. Longer exhale than seemed possible.

Nothing I'd written could compare to this. And I'd had ample opportunity for contrivance. I'd published five books, three of them optioned by the studios, one of which was actually made into a movie, albeit unrecognizable to my readers—the three who saw it—

and myself despite the fact that I'd written the first draft. The produced script, about a priest bounty hunter, was named, I'm ashamed to admit, *Hunter Pray*, and it starred a crossover TV star who didn't cross over. My books feature Derek Chainer of LAPD's Homicide Special (unhappily converted into Father Chainer for aforementioned flop). In them, pain causes white bursts before the eyes and anger makes the head throb with rage. What my books *don't* do is capture the feeling of seeing your ex-fiancée's mutilated body in crime-scene photos. Or how hard it is to scrape dried blood from under your fingernails.

I'd thought I knew this world. But I'd known only the outside of it. Once I got in the belly of the beast, once the digestive juices went to work on me, I discovered I knew nothing at all. I'd been merely a tourist on the dark side, watching through binoculars as the creatures stalked and feasted.

My gaze drifted across the room to the row of my titles—hardcovers, paperbacks, foreign editions—and it struck me how I'd overestimated even the minor importance I'd ascribed them. I felt abruptly ill-equipped to take the world at its word, hard-pressed to believe that there was *any* fundamental merit underlying its designations of failure and success. My yard-sale chair, solid and comforting beneath me, seemed invaluable. But my name, embossed on five glossy spines? One day I'd be a faint reminiscence, me and other low-grade celebs, joining the dusty ranks of brush-with-famers past. Years hence, some blowhard grasping for conversation at a dinner party would have his memory tripped by a turn of phrase. And others might nod their heads and lie kindly. *Andrew Danner. Rings a bell. Remind me.*

And what would be our blowhard's response? A mystery plot retrieved from the thickets of senility? A response sensitive to legal intricacies? Or a simple tabloid reckoning? *He was a murderer.*

As always, I had difficulty keeping my fingertips from my head, from that ridge of hardening tissue, the one known entity I'd carried

out of my amnesic fog. The scar where they'd dug into my brain rose straight from my left ear just behind the hairline, then curved slightly toward my forehead. By now I'd memorized each millimeter of the pink seam by touch, as if its bumps and edges held answers written in Braille.

I turned on the TV just to get away from myself, but there I was. My shell-shocked reaction when the verdict was intoned. A *Brady Bunch* split screen of DAs and victims'-rights activists and Alan Der-showitzes. An interview with my seventh-grade teacher. The same old helicopter footage of Genevieve's house. A witty cable anchor had Photoshopped courthouse pictures to depict me miming the see-no, hear-no, speak-no monkeys.

I had achieved some success as a novelist, but fame had come to me as a killer. Squeaky Fromme, Johnny Stompanato, O.J., the Menendez brothers. I was one of them now. A tale of fate and shame, bent to a classical model. Another modern slant on an ancient story from those funny people with olive laurels and knobby knees. Silly Pandora couldn't keep her box closed. Crazy dude, whacked his dad and humped his mom. Did you hear the one about the guy, woke up and didn't even know he'd killed his ex? I was Starbucks chatter, Jamba jive, a drive-time-radio punch line.

I clicked off the TV and sat in the piercing silence.

What would *I* think if I didn't know me? Motive. Means. Opportunity. How's gut instinct stack up against those?

What had I said on the stand? *I believe that anyone is capable of anything.*

But, unfortunately, I was my own unreliable narrator. What I needed were some hard facts to slap on the table beside the sour mash and that handsome tumor of mine.

The neighbor's kid, a chubby, bespectacled tyrant out of a Gary Larson sketch, was at it again with his trumpet, practicing "Whistle While You Work" off tempo and key. *And CHEERfully toGETHER we can TIDY up the PLACE.*

I rose and padded around the house, reacquainting myself. On the wobbly kitchen table, beside two grocery bags filled with mail, sat my block of Shun cutlery, sealed in a clear evidence bag. It stopped me cold. A welcome-home gift from the prosecution or the cops, calculated to throw me in case I was entertaining any thoughts about getting my life back to normal. The forged stainless-steel set had been a passive-aggressive gift from Genevieve, a tenfold upgrade on my sorry plastic-handled Target crap. The same expensive set she owned, a perfect match. My knives had made a cameo appearance in the trial, a nice bit of theater. See, jury, he has a set just like hers, all shiny and bristling, and a present from the victim herself! The inspiration for the crime!

The boning knife from Genevieve's set had been a key piece of evidence. It was what I had been told I'd plunged into her abdomen.

I got scissors from the drawer and sliced the bag open. With odd ceremoniousness I transferred the block to its place on the counter. I balled the evidence bag and threw it away and then leaned against the counter for a moment.

I tried to refocus, to remember how to care for myself. The last thing I needed was a postoperative seizure, so I fought my pills out of my pocket and popped a Dilantin, washing it down with a handful of water from the tap. What a pathetic homecoming.

In the sink rested an empty glass and a white bowl holding a dried orange paisley—incontrovertible evidence of cantaloupe. Breakfast, September 23. The last concrete presurgery event I remembered. The dishes carried the weight of archaeological relics. I rinsed them out and put them away, then trudged upstairs, toting the bags of mail and my tumor, and down the floating hall my Realtor referred to as a catwalk.

More industrious cheer from next door—*put ON that GRIN and START right in to WHISTLE loud and LONG.*

My office has the best view in the house. The soundproofed French doors that let into the master were now closed. My chair lay

on its back, toppled over; it drew into view eerily, like a body, as I came off the stairs. I stared down at it a few minutes before righting it. Knocked over by a cop during the search? An intruder? Yours truly, lost in my brain-tumor blackout?

Crumpled in my office wastepaper basket were a faxed offer from an Italian publisher, stubs from Dodgers tickets, and a few pieces of junk mail. Remnants of an ordinary day in oblivious progress. I checked my PalmPilot, clicking backward through all the appointments and meetings I'd missed, until I arrived at September 23. The screen was appropriately blank. As I reseated the Palm in its cradle, I was hit by the bizarreness of investigating myself. I was an intruder in my own house.

I tapped the speaker button on my telephone and reached to dial, figuring I should order takeout in case my appetite ever returned, but after three digits realized that no tones issued forth. I dug through the grocery bags, unearthing a handful of disconnection notices. My other services, fortunately, autowithdrew from my diminishing checking account, like my cell phone dutifully charging on the file cabinet. I stuck my headset into my Motorola and dialed.

As Pac Bell's hold music competed with Snow White, still squalling from next door, I retrieved my e-mail. Expressions of support from friends and readers, a few nastygrams from others convinced of my guilt, a surfeit of Viagra and penis-enlargement offerings that I elected to regard as spam rather than targeted marketing. When I scrolled down to the days around Genevieve's death, I was simultaneously disappointed and relieved to note nothing unusual.

I logged out of the e-mail account and stared at the blank screen. The thought of writing anything soon—or ever again, for that matter—was daunting. Nothing like a little old-fashioned trauma to bring the self-indulgence of my job to the surface. The impracticality, too. I wished I had a surgery to scrub in for or, failing that, an orphan to mend. Something aside from confronting a monitor and pretending that what I could think up would be of interest to hun-

dreds of thousands of people, most of whom performed jobs that were actually useful.

Serge finally came on the line asking how he might provide me excellent service. I explained that I'd lapsed in paying my phone bill but would do so now, and that I needed my service restored. After he finished lambasting me with outstanding penalties and reconnect charges, all of which I contritely pledged to pay, he sighed with disappointment and took down my credit-card number.

"Can I keep my phone number?" I asked, anxious to retain anything familiar.

"Your service wasn't disconnected, just interrupted," Serge said, "so yeah. We'll send a guy out to reconnect the line."

"When?"

"By next Thursday."

"Can't you get anyone here sooner?"

"Maybe. But next Thursday's the first we can guarantee."

This didn't strike me as excellent service.

"Listen," I said, "I can't not have a phone right now."

"Then maybe it was a bad idea to ignore your bill for four months?"

"Did I reach the call center in India?"

A brief pause, and then he said, "Oh, *right*. Andrew Danner. You were otherwise detained."

But while extenuating circumstances had granted me my freedom, they were no match for the phone company. Serge remained unmoved, so I flipped my cell phone shut and powered off my computer, leaving the office in peace.

The bedroom told a story of its own, the tale of April's departure. Door ajar. Sheets thrown back. A few of my toiletries knocked over on the bathroom counter as she'd scrambled to pack up her overnight bag. Pink razor overlooked in the shower. Maybe I'd give it a try later for old times' sake. April had dropped one of her socks by the sink in her haste to leave.

We'd still been in the first flush of romance. An orthopedist with neat, pretty features and an even temperament I'd enviously put down to a midwestern upbringing, April had seen me after I'd snapped a collarbone playing pickup ball at Balboa Park. The firm medical touch, the caring tempered by reason, the proximity of our faces as she manipulated my arm through this test or that—I hadn't stood a chance. We were three months new, full of imaginings that seemed youthful for a couple of hunkered-down thirty-eight-year-olds. Good-night calls. Ice cream from the carton in bed. Howard Hawks classics and Fabrocini's pizza. The occasional sleepover, just for practice. Then a brutal killing.

That interrupted a kind of levity and hopefulness I'd doubted I would feel again after Genevieve and I had gone our separate, bemused ways half a year before. Or, according to the prosecution and the cable anchors, our bitter, vituperative ways.

I picked up April's sock, feeling the emotion rising again before deciding I wouldn't allow myself to get all blubbery over footwear. I set my tumor on the nightstand, made the bed, then sat on top of the sheets, wondering what kind of loneliness we were in for. Me and my tumor.

Gazing at that suspended mass of brown cells, my mind pulled again to Genevieve, the horror of her death, the greater horror of my unknown implication in it. She'd brought a tinge of the exotic to her tastes, to her pronouncements, that I'd found irresistible. Most of her I found attractive. The finality of her judgments. The sureness of her passions. She was a big woman, thick around the thighs and hips, and refreshingly comfortable—no, *confident*—in her body and in what it could do. I remembered her mostly as a collection of sensations. The smoothness of a cheek brushing my chest. Traces of Petite Cherie on the pillowcase. Beads of sweat on her alabaster back. Her sleeping face—smooth as a child's. She had no bad angles, Genevieve, and no bad-face days. It's much harder to resent someone when she has no bad angles. It takes a measure more of behavioral

ugliness. But while I took my time getting there, she raced ahead, resenting her moods enough for us both. I was in love with her, certainly, but more in love with holding her together, and she was the only one of us perceptive enough to grasp that complexity.

The night of our breakup, she'd run her full gamut. I'd emerged from my office in the evening to find her sitting in my bedroom, watching *The Bachelor's* rose ceremony, pint of Chunky Monkey in her lap. She'd held up the spoon in my direction to prevent me from distracting her from the TV. "Jane's a vile cow, and she needs to go home." The trace of French accent undercut the prosaic declaration, making me suppress a smile. Then later, with a devilish giggle: "Let's grab a bite. If we stay in, we'll just fight or fuck." She'd held my hand across the restaurant table, face soft with ecstasy, while she named the spices in the merguez. We'd gone home and made love, sweaty in the hot breeze through the screen. That night I'd lost her into another dark mood, coming upon her sobbing in the shower. "There's no dignity in anything anymore. It's all so *cheap*."

She was sitting on the tile, water pounding her chest. I'd crouched, feeling the familiar helplessness, the streams striking my sleeve. "What is?"

"All of it. TV. Nothing. I'm sorry. My head's not right. It's one of those . . . I'm sorry. This isn't fair to you. I should go."

Later I'd awakened somewhere in the early-morning hours to find my hand clasped between her clammy palms, her front teeth worrying a pale lower lip, her eyes seeking comfort even as she said, "It's not going to work with us." I didn't have the energy to talk her around anymore. She packed up the few belongings she kept here, plugged in to opera on her iPod so we wouldn't argue as an excuse to lose nerve.

All the media confabulations about her made me realize how difficult she'd been to know. Despite her vague claims of managing a portion of the family real-estate portfolio, she hadn't worked. She read a lot. She went to matinees. She knew good bakeries. She hadn't

asked a lot of life, and, in the end, it had given her less. I couldn't help but think now of the experiences she'd never get to have. The whole world denied to her, irrevocably.

I wanted to shake off the past four months like an unsettling dream. But certain facts are like boulders. They get in your way. They've got sharp edges that cut you when you try to move them. For weeks after my mother died, I awoke in the morning, reduced to the most basic, childlike thoughts. *I want this not to be true. I want it not to have happened.* I just couldn't bend my brain around it. My father's death a year and a half later was equally painful, though by then at least I'd had some practice. But where to file Genevieve with the gash through the solar plexus?

"I didn't do it," I said to the tumor.

It gazed back indifferently.

I headed downstairs, opened the Jack Daniel's, and inhaled the rich, satisfying aroma. Then I walked over to the kitchen sink and poured the smoky single-barrel down the drain. The Jews leave a glass of wine for Elijah; the Buddhists offer fruit; the gangbangers pour one out for their dead homeys. You've got to feed the gods. Or the gods feed on you.

Not that they won't feed on you anyway.

A brass-plated cappuccino maker overcrowded the counter like a perched Labrador. I'd picked it up for Genevieve in the five-minute period when things were going smoothly between us, and it had put out fifteen shots of sludgelike espresso at a cost of \$147 a cup. The refrigerator held three bottled waters and a dark chocolate bar, half eaten by April. Walking over to the cupboard, I removed the juice glass and white bowl that I'd just put away. I set them on the counter and stared at them as if I expected them to start talking.

Breakfast, September 23. My last memory before waking up in the recovery room.

I couldn't stop my gaze from moving to the knives resting in the wooden block on the counter. A dark curiosity stirred in the pit of

my gut. It felt like a blue-hot flame. Like a twenty-year scotch hitting the blood after a two-hour jog. I walked over to the wooden block, guessing correctly at which was the boning knife. I bounced it, feeling its heft. Stainless gleam, Japanese character on the blade. I'd used my knives maybe four or five times. Why had my hand found the boning knife so easily?

I stared at my hands for a good long time, then at my reflection in the window above the sink, some guy holding a knife, a notched line of hair over his scar. The sight made me shudder.

I visited my humidor, then went out to a deck chair, put my feet on the railing, and smoked a cigar down to the yellow speckled band. My sole remaining vice. Except writing.

If I ever actually wrote again.

The night was dark and January-sharp. People forget how cool L.A. can be in the winter—Pacific breeze, Santa Ana winds, angry spates of rain with half-assed lightning, like a constipated monsoon trying to find relief.

A view heals all woes. A view makes you feel as if you own something bigger than yourself, as if you own a place on the planet.

I watched the Valley twinkle in the heat below, like the ocean only prettier, because it was a sea of lights, because it was movement and life, because it let me be separate but connected to a thousand people in a thousand houses with a thousand stories, many sadder than my own. The mainline of Sepulveda charging north into worsening demographics. Van Nuys, beautiful only from a distance, where Mexicans play soccer workday mornings, crossing themselves before kickoff as if God cares about the outcome of a hungover pickup game. The 405, a curved waterfall of white headlights. Ventura moving east past the by-the-hour motels with glam studio names where johns bring broken street kids or vice versa. And around the Ca-huenga Pass, where the city waits, an insatiable and inscrutable mistress, spread on a bed of neon with a sphinx smile, her just-pounced paws set down on punctured dreams.

I closed my eyes, cruising through Hollywood of the hipsters and wannabes, the culture consumers with brand names Roman-lettered across ass velour. Drifted behind the honk-oblivious Cutlass with Arkansas plates doing five miles per hour down the boulevard as heads inside craned on substantial southern necks, past black kids rat-a-tat-tatting on overturned white buckets, past peeling German noses, the sticky smell of suntan lotion, intoxicating smog, silver hoops piercing bronze belly buttons, Gap billboards of pop sensations in floppy hats, and up the alleys into real Hollywood, where hookers kneel over pools of vomit and junkies stumble from doorways, scratching their shoulders, mumbling their nighttime song, *Gotta get well, gotta get well.*

Through the run of comedy clubs, where husbands from Wichita laugh at Jesus jokes despite sideways glances from prim-mouthed housewives, where amateurs sweat through sets and maybe, just maybe, after the heard-it-all waitresses clear the second empty glass of the two-drink minimum, that big-name sitcom actor will pop in to work out some new material. Then west to Boys Town, where gay couples come in shapes and sizes to defy the limited straight imagination, where soft-porn billboards overlook studded leather window treatments, glowing tarot cards, and tattoo parlors, where lovers sip coffee within screamshot of porn palaces with purple polystyrene, and parking signs totem-pole atop one another, impervious to comprehension. Past the Urth Café, where washed-up divorcées munch organic lettuce, faces caved from pills and swollen with collagen, a war of fleshy attrition. Down the slick snake of Sunset with its old mansions, its bright and brazen Hustler store, its Carnation lights at the holidays. Through Beverly Hills' runs of palms oft filmed but never captured, leisure suits riding Segways to Valentino, celebrities strolling with purse dogs, agents with their invisible cell-phone earpieces mumbling solo outside restaurants and at stoplights, the nattering dispossessed.

Come Westwood, come Brentwood, where 310 moms push sym-

metrical children in designer strollers through farmer's markets and wax dreamily about Bali hotels. Onward to the Palisades, Santa Monica Canyon, and Malibu, up the sparkling coastline reeking of exhaust and covered with seagull guano, then through the runs of canyons, deep russet pleats like streaks of ore or a woman's folds, the air startlingly crisp and tinged with salt.

My cheeks were wet with the breeze and the swell of my heart for the lights below. Los Angeles. A mirage of a town that sprang up like a cold sweat on the backs of gold diggers and railroad workers, and took form when pirate film distributors, fleeing Edison's patents, took a train and a gamble backed by East Coast muscle.

Los Angeles, land of endless promise. And endless failure. Los Angeles of the petty cruelties. Los Angeles of the instant hierarchy, the spray-on tan, the copped feel. L.A. of the bandaged, postoperative nose, the chai menu, the slander lawsuit. Of the hyphenated job title. The two-SUV garage. L.A. with its wide-open minds and well-formed opinions. L.A. of the high-octane sunset, the warm night air that leaves you drunk. L.A. of the prolonged adolescence, the slow-motion seduction, the ageless, replaceable blonde. L.A., where a porn star runs for governor and an action figure wins. L.A., where anything can happen at any time to some poor schmuck or lucky bastard. Where anything can happen to you.

Where anything had happened to me.