Its 6:30 am and Heather Lloyd wakes up reluctantly. Looking in the mirror, she sees what everyone who will see her today sees: a short substitute teacher. Ten years ago at this point, she would’ve been a nervous wreck, meticulously dressed and apprehensive about the time she would spend speaking in front of groups. But not this time. Today she is confident and eager to work with her students. Especially since she had been the main entertainment the night before for a lot of the kids she teaches, singing her heart out as co-front for the band ilyAIMY. They might not listen to her in class, but it’s impossible to ignore her on the stage.

At the age of 5, Heather knew she wanted to be a singer. A lifelong dream that was temporarily derailed by her high school freshman English teacher who also happened to be the advisor for the school’s newspaper. After having her first commentary piece published, Lloyd was hooked. Thus began an 8 year submersion in the world of journalism. Graduating high school and moving on to the University of Maryland College Park, Lloyd started off as a full time reporter for her schools student newspaper and moved her way up to news editor. When there were no stories of her own to tell, she was more than happy to be a storyteller for others. With twenty four consecutive front page stories for UMD’s The Diamondback, an internship with The Baltimore Sun was in store for her.

At just twenty years old, Lloyd was a full time student with an internship that had caused a sudden crisis within her. Used to her articles running with no corrections over the years, she was suddenly faced with an insecurity that only a
true writer could feel. Would she be good enough? *Could* she be good enough?
Dropping twenty-four pounds that summer in a whirlwind of what she felt was impending failure, Lloyd came to find out that she had published 3 times more than any of the other interns that summer. But emotionally and professionally drained she noticed the toll journalism was beginning to take on her life. In 2001 Lloyd began to play at open mics again and it was then that she met Rob Hinkal of ilyAIMY (*i love you And I Miss You*). While working in Academic Conference Planning the year after her graduation at UMD, she began to play shows with Hinkal’s band. Deciding to try their luck on the road, they waited until their current leases were up and then they were gone. Journalism was a thing of the past, as Lloyd became an expatriate of the profession and moved on to her singing career. When it comes to her choices in her professional life, Lloyd says, ”I’d done all the things I was supposed to do. I got my degree. I graduated just about top of my class. My feeling was about the same as my parents’: When else in my life am I going to be able to do this?”

For someone who claims to be self involved and terrified of failure and regret, one would never know it. Though terrified of spiders, she always goes out of her way to save them rather than kill them. She describes herself as a professional eavesdropper who picks up discarded expressions for her collection the same way other people might save stamps. With an affinity for curiosity shops and thrift stores, she most values a small bible she found with a massive four leaf clover pressed in the pages of Acts, or an old metal rosary. It could be said that Lloyd gets her passion and ingenuity from her mother and father. Living in Randallstown, Maryland with her parents for the first twelve years of her life and then moving to Owings Mills, Maryland, she continues to live at home when she is off the road. Once a high school social studies teacher, Lloyd’s father eventually became principal. Although he may not remember to deliver a phone message to his daughter, he can recall the name, prom date or desk location of every student he ever taught. Her mother and a
childhood friend went into business together and are entrepreneurs of a store in Glyndon, Maryland, where they sell knitting supplies, teach lessons and help people through their projects. While her younger brother, Justin, is currently a student at the Maryland Institute, College of Art, Lloyd feels that both have received nothing but encouragement over the years from their parents. “My parents are smart, intensely responsible, and devoted parents. Justin has enjoyed the same support from them as I have in my artistic endeavors. They come to almost every local show of mine.”

While the last 6 years have been spent performing regularly, a typical day on the road for Lloyd finds her in a deep sleep at ten, eleven, even twelve pm and sometimes later. “When you’re touring, it’s your days that are empty,” she says. Some nights Lloyd and her fellow band mates are at the mercy of the clock and don’t finish breaking down until about 3 am. Operating on an alternate schedule compared to most, she has the option to see the sights and be a “tourist” for the short amount of time she is in each town. With forty states seen and plans to make it forty-one, Lloyd has been cross country and back. Her longest tour to date came to nine thousand miles round trip over a two month span of shows from state to state. Throwing herself into menial tasks and routine, Lloyd is a good asset on tour. Always on top of the press releases, booking and punctuality, she says, “We are the only musicians I know that seem to ever be on time for load-ins and sound checks.” Lloyd sees teaching and performing as two very similar activities, “It’s essential you keep their attention. Clarity and diction are a must. The messages have got to be precise, or else you lose them.” While she admits that the subbing schedule can get a bit stuffy after being on the road for so long, she feels that it helps her along in terms of being productive and useful. Taking on subjects that she is not so skilled in herself, such as trigonometry and physics, Lloyd sees this as a challenge and meets it head on and she says, “it was a benefit that I was not, in fact, good at [trigonometry],
because it helped me anticipate the kid’s problems since I made them all first. I love feeling compelled to learn again, particularly in subjects I would never pick up on my own at this stage of my life.”

In addition to reporting, touring and teaching, Lloyd has been the recipient of many prestigious awards such as winner of the Cape Fear Folk Festival High Noon Shootout, Honorable Mention in the International Narrative Song Contest and Finalist at the Susquehanna Music and Arts Festival Singer/Songwriter Competition. Most recently Lloyd has published her first book of poetry entitled, “Messiah Citrus.”

Heather Lloyd has done it all, from playing a show ten thousand feet in the air to playing naked to opening for the likes of Gym Class Heroes and Blue Oyster Cult. Last night she was a radiant demi-goddess to some, playing her djembe with all her might and belting out notes of perfection until her voice was hoarse. Tomorrow she will be on her way to ilyAIMY’s upcoming month long tour from Maryland to Texas and back. But today Heather is simply a short, substitute teacher making her way to her classroom.