

The first car to stop was a small white Saab. It pulled to the side of the on ramp, not far ahead of where I stood. I hadn't spent much time thumbing for a ride, so the quick pick up was a good sign. As I approached my ride, I noticed the little car was looking rather full. To my surprise, the car was filled with some Springfield kids for whom I'd spent a good chunk of my childhood times around. They were all excited to see me; I'd been out of the state for the last couple years & they had no idea I was in the area. With a little shuffling about, I crammed into the ride & we made our way onto the highway. I listened as they updated me on how horrible the small town still was. Local economics still barely keeping the town alive, hardly any community culture outside of heavy drinking & small crimes. Their voices sounded tired, the depressed tones of just gettn' by... unhappy, but alive. Still, it was a nice way to start this trip, even though the ride did not last too long. I was let out only two exits down, which in Vermont is still a nice distance. We said the things people say when parting ways and I started walkn' down the road. The first official steps into the unknown. I knew where I was, and had the plan to head south for the day. I was tryn' to get down to Connecticut. Not for any solid reason really, just a point to be at. Small goals to keep me focused. I started to skate, my legs gearing up for whatever lay ahead. I was carrying an orange hikers backpack, with a metal frame fastened for proper weight distribution along my spine.. plenty of zippers & compartments to hold whatever unnecessary item I felt I needed. My shoes, it turned out, were my worst choice of footwear to bring. Plus I didn't bring a back-up pair. I had on my feet a pair of leather loafers. They're nice for Church; but kinda rough for long distance travel. I did not think with much logic as to what I should bring. I looked around my room for what I thought at the time would be small items I'd want along the way. I grabbed notebook, sketch book, random pens & pencils, my large CD collection, tools and a few other things. I didn't skate far before I knew, deep down, that I had packed a much heavier bag than necessary.

For now I was comfortable. I was skating dead center on the white line doing my best to avoid the many rocks & patches of sand along my way. No sidewalks in this area, and the towns that do have such a luxury as a sidewalk, don't maintain them ever.. thick cracks & uneven slabs of concrete make it a ride only for those with quick mind/ foot control. I could see the road was going to continue downhill for a while , so I got off my board before I got going too fast to control. No need to risk road rash so early in my trip. Let things ease in slowly, a smooth descent into the Divine Chaos. With my board at my side I began marching forward. I don't like to stand still with my thumb out & expect someone to pull over. I'd rather keep moving, sticking out the thumb as I hear cars approaching my six. If I didn't get picked up, I was still making distance. I had walked less than a mile, before a car pulled over ahead of me. I hurried my pace a bit, without running, to my potential ride. I gave the window a friendly tap with a knuckle & opened the side door, greeted the driver with love as I got in. Board & bag between my legs...tight fit. I was now with a father & his two young daughters. He told me he usually doesn't stop, especially with his kids, but he looked at me & felt a good gut feeling about stopping. He expressed how he loved to see me out there, and how he felt that not enough people had the guts to take in an adventure such as mine in today's world. I was informed he didn't have very far to take me, the father was on his way home from whatever family event had just recently ended. The kids were in good spirits, asking me questions about my weird hair & skateboard. Right away I had a beautiful connection. I was taken to the outside of the small town Bellows Falls. Luck was sent with me via verbal charm before the family departed back into their own reality. I smiled as I tossed the heavy bag onto my shoulders & with a parting wave, I turned south and began walking. Most roads in Vermont are hard to maintain due to the extreme temperature changes through the seasons. The town paves what it can, and within two years the cracks are already pushing apart the blacktop into bumpy chunks of rock. This makes finding a place to skate far & few at times. I walked for what seemed like twenty minutes, when a local bus pulled up next to me. In big cities you have Muni buses, running every 15 minutes... but in Vermont, there is only a small number of buses which travel a couple times a week between the small towns. This is helpful for elders who need milk here and there. The little doors swung open with a rusty screech, revealing a little old man sittn' behind the wheel. "You lookn' like you could use a ride young fella'. The bus is free, so hop on." He said with a smile. I made my way up into the bus and noticed I was the only one on the bus. "Well thank you sir, I appreciate the offer." I got comfy and relaxed in the back as the bus took me most of the way to the border of Vermont & Massachusetts. I fell in and out of sleep as we slowly made our way along old roads. The driver would stop at little stops along the way, but nobody was around. I thought about the life of this driver... a peaceful job, driving along the country roads with a small speaker pumping out country music. He was whistling melodies as he twisted and turned through the mountains. We didn't speak, though I felt comfortable on this bus. Perhaps in a younger stage, he too was picked up while backpacking & this was his day to return the love. I was his passenger for a couple hours. I looked at my books, took notes, slept a bit & thought of where I wanted to go. I concluded that I didn't want to make a specific destination; my thinking was I didn't want to set myself up for a failed path or expectation. I simply wanted to go & let the chaos guide me. I was let out at a Friendly's parking lot right off the highway. The driver wished me the best, refilled his coffee mug and with that, the bus turned around headed back up into Vermont. Now I was at a busy exit ramp, one way going north, the other heading south straight into Massachusetts. I took a moment to wake up, rolled a smoke & sipped a small cup of coffee. When I felt motivated

enough, I walked to the South facing on ramp & began to fish for a ride. This was a slow process of whoring myself out & looking at hundreds of cars hoping one will not ignore me. Each machine carrying different people with different lives, all passing me by onto the interstate. I would get the occasional 'honk', a small gesture validating my adventurous spirit. Police would drive by, which always made my heart skip a beat. Thankfully, I was not yet harassed by them. Time & gravity was weighing on me, particularly my shoulders & as I was beginning to feel I needed to start walking a car pulled up next to me. This was a small, old red sporty looking car. The interior was a wasteland of paperwork, clothes, and empty food containers. The driver: A young woman full of an equal amount of big dreams & stress. She was friendly right off, enthusiastic to help me out, so I quickly smashed into the car with all my stuff & we sped away with ease. She informed me she was heading right to New Haven Connecticut, which was a perfect catch for me. Finding a ride across a full state can be hard without it being a trucker, so I was off to a good start with this Carma, if you will. The radio kinda worked, drifting in an out of fuzzy radio stations. I rolled up a joint, at her request, and I relaxed with my new friend. It is easy for me to 'zone out', I sat and listened as she updated me about her world & what her immediate plans were for the day. She spoke fast, and drove faster. My ears took in her words, perhaps skipping a few sentences while my eyes took in the passing billboards molesting my view of the Earth. With a good connection & conversation, we made it to New Haven with ease. I think I was her first hitchhiker, because she seemed enthusiastic about being part of my adventure. She pulled up in front of a coffee shop on a hip looking section of the city. I'd never been here before, and now I was sleepy from being in a car for so long. I felt a little anxiety about night arriving while I was stuck in an urban area, my goal was to sleep under a tree. So with my rapid firing thoughts, didn't think to chill & see what the vibe was around me. Instead I rolled a smoke & began to walk to find a gas station in search of a map. I walked twenty feet or so before the car I was just in, rolled back up next to me. "Adam, you forgot these!" My sunglasses came flyin' out the car at me. "Hellz Yeah" I spat out. The window rolled up, and she sped away once again. I have always been bad at keeping sunglasses; I lose and or break every pair, usually within 42 hours. Now I was back on the map finding mission. T'was an easy mission; \$2 later, I had a map & as I burned down my smoke, I scoped out a path to take for the next couple days. I felt confident in my map reading skills, a dying art with the younger generations. I folded up the map, not in the way it came, but who's judging?? With my path calculated, I got a coffee & started to skate southwest. Right off I noticed how once you leave the area fulls of neon signs, yoga studios & cafes; the town became isolated & run down. I grew up with this image in my life; Vermont can be the same way. I passed through skeletons of once vibrant communities, lost to the rapid changes of local economics. Old ways of hands on work, lost to cheaper labor to China. The American dream dead, and the people holding on to what they can, like a polar bear stuck on a melting piece of ice. For hours I walked or skated, flowing in and out of neighborhoods & wooded areas. I slowly flowed along the twisting roads, quietly taking in the world around me. The headphones provided me with a beautiful soundtrack, making this day feel almost surreal, as if I'm in a film. The heavy and steady rhythm of Ten Foot Ganja Plant set the perfect pace for me to travel. I have skated for so long I find myself lost in thought, while still able to read every inch of the road in front of me. I would take breaks, walking up of the hills along the way. I did like to challenge myself and skate with vigor, but I wanted to hold off the inevitable body odor as long as possible. I held out my thumb as I listened for the rushing of cars passing from behind me. Although I skate inches away from them, I never been worry about being hit. It's not something I even think about when I'm skating. If it happens, I will survive or I won't. To stress about such outcomes will only make my judgement clouded, so instead I just let go.

My smooth sailing was halted when the road I was on came to a T. I had been skating along for hours, following one route. All I could see now, in both directions, are big houses with perfect lawns & shiny mini vans. This was not my neck of the woods, and being in upper class areas gives me instant and overwhelming anxiety...all eyes on me. The paranoia kicked in fast. I was sure that housewives lurking within their castles, had their bored eyes on me; knowing damn well I was up to no good. Decisions had to be made and fast, I was an easy target sitting with in their pristine shrubbery. I was sure the police would descend on me any minute. From my sight, no street signs gave me any idea where to go. The main road just ended. I stood for a bit, thought for a bit...legs accepting their rapid state of exhaustion. I decided to cross the road & sit under a fine patch of shrubbery. Although it was not the finest of shrubbery, it was indeed a fine patch of shrubbery. I could see down the road in both directions, to guesstimate my next move. I checked my board, drank some water & consumed part of my small stash of nuts. I was looking to see which direction most of the cars were driving. I thought around the time of day it was, most of the cars are coming back from the city. So I followed what I thought was the way to the city. The blocks became pristine, the roads smooth as can be. Each lawn had the same amount of trees, which was one. At this point in the day, it was gettin' pretty dark & I had no clue what to do or how to get out of the populated area. Block after block became a thicker sprawl of housing and corner stores. I was tryn' to find some woods to camp out in, but the way it was looking, that didn't seem like a goal I was going to reach. I continued down the path I was on, pushing forward into the night. I came to a house, with a group of humans socializing on their porch. I stopped and chatted, asking where I was, and how to find

woods. They told me traveling on foot to the nearest forest would be a while, I'd be better off finding a hotel around here. A hotel would cost at least \$120.00, I had around \$50.00 to my name. So this was not an option for me, not that I expected any different. I thanked the crew for the info & got back on my board, riding along at a slow pace. My wheels like a metronome, clanking along the best sidewalk I'd ever skated on. My sight was filtered by yellow street lights, which put a great tone to my quiet & warm night. At this point, I was no longer thinking about finding woods; instead I focused on trusting my place in the world. Be here now, it is all part of the adventure. After a little while of my urban exploration, I came to a gas station. I sat and rolled a smoke along the side of the small building, taking a sip of water. As I twisted the rolling paper, a couple walked out of the station and notices me sitting. They both light up with a smile & introduce themselves. A quick and friendly conversation started, they informed me about how they're moving & asking where I was going. A young couple, lives in sync and ready to start their lives in a fresh home as a couple. Although they were not heading the direction I was going, they wished me the best and we parted ways. I was losing energy fast, so I decided to get some juice before everything around me closed.

Inside the gas station, I was surprised to see a long line of people. The pumps were empty, and the area quiet, so I couldn't imagine that this many people would be inside. I grabbed some orange juice & stood in line. Not a moment passed, when a stranger turned to me, "Hey man, you one the road? That's pretty cool." A dude standing in two people front of me had seen me walk in. "Yeah, I'm going somewhere brother" I replied with a smile. I paid for my drink & as I walked outside, the stranger was waiting & invited me over to his place for a beer and food. This offer sounded just fine with me. I can't for the life of me remember his name, so for the sake of the story we'll call him 'Bob'. I got in his car, and we drove a few blocks to his place. Bob had a sweet apartment with a fenced in yard, a screen hut and a fire pit. I was impressed with the place; it felt as if he made a good chunk of change in whatever work it was he did. "Why do you live on this corner?" I asked as I popped open my cold brew. "I study cancer at Yale". He replied. "Go on..." Spoke I. Bob then informed me his studies at Yale, a project so profound & inconceivable; my mind dare not recall what it was. He told me to make my way to the back yard, as he made some food. The environment was mellow; the night was young in this city I knew little about. Bob did his thing inside the house, leaving I outside like I was an old friend. I was grateful to be trusted by the people I run into on the street. As I ate some food, and spoke of my day, Bob offered that I stay & tent in his yard for the night. "You won't make it out of the city tonight, so just rest up & get an early start". This was an offer I could not deny. We set up a pile of things for me to sleep on, inside his cool screened in chill zone. After some franks and beers, we went for a night drive. We drove around the city, showing me the school, the laboratory of medicine & secret science stuff. I had no idea I'd made it into the heart of Yale, no wonder I was stuck in the middle of urban sprawl. I was shown the hip areas: clubs, bars & the places where all the cool folks was at! It felt like a cool town, although I was too young to be in the clubs and bars. At this time in I life I was only 18, so we did not have the option to go party. Plus I was in no condition to be accepted into such establishments. I was far too stinky & under dressed to impress the nightlife raging before me. So we went back to his house. Bob told me to make myself comfy, where the bathroom was, etc... He didn't stay up, having a full day ahead of him, so I was soon alone to chill next to a fire with a beer & my herbs. The sounds of the city around me left me in a comfortable daze. I felt good at being in a strange place with a bag & my board. My body was ready to crash, but my mind was always running at full speed. I burned a spliff while listening to the sounds of the city and a couple birds. The night was warm, I had traveled a good distance without having any trouble. With that, I fell asleep.

I woke with the sun, stretched for a bit & packed up my stuff. I made sure the area was spick & span. Leave no trace! I was awake and ready to go for an hour or so, before Bob walked out. He had work to get to, so I ate a bagel & left. A quick conversation about what direction I could head, and we parted ways. I was on the road at 8:15am, wheels clicking & clacking along the sidewalk. I headed along the route I remembered from my tour last night. I remembered seeing an intersection with big green signs showing white arrows & numbers, exactly what I need. I would zero in my location with my map when I found these signs.

Houses no longer surrounded me, now the world around me became vast spread of shops, cafés & dentists. The city was alive with coffee drinkers, peeing dogs & early morning fitness enthusiasts. The day was young, and I wasn't in a big hurry to get anywhere. I wanted to chill out to let the sun rise a bit more so I slowly rolled around on my board twisting through side roads, taking a lay of the land. I came up to a park. It wasn't too big, a cute designated public nature zone with a big fountain in the middle. Loads of people sitting on the fountain; faces full of coffee & cell phones. I felt the urge not to go keep moving so I turned away from the park into a little cobblestone alley. The alley cut through the side of a couple large office buildings. I followed the alley, cutting through another block of apartments, before I came to another park. The voice in my head told me to sit down & relax. It's probably around 10:00 in the morning. I was looking for a place to sit, my bag was heavy & I had no real plan for the day yet... So plop on a bench I went. My stash of herbs was already low... I didn't have much to start with, so this was expected. It was

nice to burn a spliff in the morning before a day of being on my feet with my bag. The thought of finding herb began to clutter my thoughts. The chances likely low, but I enjoy the challenge. I rolled a small spliff as I begin emitting the vibration into the air with my thoughts of new ganja. Soon enough a tall heavy set man walks, slowly, my way. I felt like he was going to stop & chat, or ask for money...which he did. Reading people is a super power I have. "Yo man, that's a nice smell. You let me in on that?" The tone of his voice told me he was clearly on a mission to smoke. I don't mind, herb is the healing of the Nations. So I pass the spliff & introduce myself.

His head looked back & forth, puffn' with paranoia distracting his mind. We chatted for a bit, finishing the spliff. I eventually suggested I could use a little more ganja, to which he quickly let me know that herb was close by and it would be nice to smoke a blunt. I chatted more, reading between his lines figuring out if it was a good idea to chill with this dude at all. I didn't mind, I like to trust even if I can smell a little trouble in the air. So I said a blunt sounded fantastic & he lead the way me as I followed him a couple blocks to a corner store for some blunts. Soon as we left the park in a new direction, the hood changed. I was no longer in rich New Haven, now I was in the real city, where the poor people lived. The park was the fine line between rich and poor. Nice marble & glass buildings on one side, then old brick & wood houses, most with chipping paint & dusty or boarded up windows. The corner store was haggard & old, the sign painted back when things were done by hand. Decades later, this little shop still manages to sustain itself on the locals need for tobacco and milk. Two middle aged men stood outside the shop smoking. One dude was wearing a wife beater and black jeans which looked to be hanging on to his ass, like a rock climber on the edge of a cliff. Half of his hair was picked out into a tangled mess, the other half in the fresh stages of new cornrows. His eyes looked like he'd had a tough life.. he'd most likely eatn' a few fists, along with dishn'em out too, on his path to where is stands today. He spotted me from a far & I could feel right off that he knew I wasn't from around here. I'm sure he knew who I was with & that probably stood out. This is, by now, eleven or noonish. Nothing was said when I got to the door, I just looked into his eyes as I passed, so he knew I wasn't scared or judging. We are still animals, and if you can communicate with your soul, you will be safe. The shop was tiny & filled with bagged food, boxes, crates & random items which sat without order around the shop. There was an old feeling odor about the place, like I was in an old barn or thrift shop. I grabbed a bottle of cheap Orange Juice & asked the clerk for our Philly Blunts. I said thanks, the clerk said 'Alright' and we headed back toward the park. The mood was nice, I was mainly listening to what he had to say. If you give people an ear, they will always have things to say. I feel like a major part of what allows me to be around stangers without fear, is that I just listen to them.. instant street credit, people want to be heard... without judgment.

We walked back in the park, back to the same bench. People jogging, small dogs trying to keep up with their master. Hobo's waking up, peeing on trees and sifting through the morning trash cans in search of leftover coffee and butts. I was asked again if I'm lookn' for herb. "Well I don't have much in the way of funds, but I'd rather have a little herb than \$20. That doesn't buy much anyways these days." I gave him some money, even though I felt a little weird about the way this dude was presenting himself... a bit shady or dodgy as my English friends put it. He told me to chill & he'd be back. Which I didn't mind, then he asked if he could listen to my music while he ran. I knew right off that he wasn't going to return, but then I thought of the Tao Te Ching. I knew that if someone wanted my shirt, I should give it to them without question. The true separation is to bring that ideal into the materialistic world. Thus, I handed him the CD player & headphones. He said to wait for him & walked off. I knew I wasn't going to see him again, but wanted him to show his true self to me.

What started next was a hazy period of anxiety & paranoia, the key factor being I had no watch on me. I did not own a cell phone, so I relied on the Sun to give me a sense of time. I was already feeling outta place in this park at this particular time of day. The day before was still fresh on my mind, I jotted down some notes in my journal in an attempt to center me a bit. My legs felt heavy, not motivated to do much at the moment. I wanted to cover some ground, make it out of the city with enough time to search for the perfect place to camp out. All these thoughts was sending me into small states of daydreaming. I would pop out of my head thinking I'd been sitting there for hours, if not days, if not years, When in reality it was only maybe possibly twenty minutes... or two minutes. This mental scramble went on for some time... I periodically looked around for Mr. Dude, who was getting me herb for us to smoke blunts. With my head filled with madness , I stood up & started walking. No need to wait around, daylight is wasting away! Don't think about being ripped off, it is all part of the fun! A sacred step forward into the bigger world.. I had been had, but in a polite and friendly way. It was a blessing in disguise: I had worn headphones for a good percent of my high school years. Nearly every day I had them on. So many years of being closed off from the world around me, exactly what I wanted in that time. But NOW I needed to really open up, How many people would I not meet, if I'd had that CD player on all day. I also had with me a large book holding about 200 plus CDs. It was a very nice collection of music; ranging from Bob Marley to Erykah Badu, Mozart to White Zombie. I had no use for this music, not to mention how ridiculous it was to carry all that on this trip.

I thought of walkn' around & letting random people pick out a CD. A fun way to socialize or at least see how people react to such an offer. I walked up to a couple sitting with their dog. "Hi, I'm in the middle of a long trip & I'd like to give you some free music. It no longer has value to me, so I'd like to share them with the people around me." There was a moment of pause, the couple looking at each other, and back at me..sizing me up. The man then smiled & started to look at the book of music. He came across a Metallica album. He smiled & mentioned another CD from Slayer. I let him have both. The woman picked an Aerosmith & Grateful Dead CD. This interaction put them both into a great mood. They were both very grateful, and I wished them (and their dog) the best before walking away. It felt great to shed this music onto other people, bringing music to their lives. Each album in that book was part of who I was, tools that shaped my consciousness.

I could see in front of me a small/portable Gelato stand the corner. Looked the same as a hotdog vender in New York. I walked up & introduced myself... I spoke of my trip & morning I'd be having. Behind the cool colorful collection of Gelato, was a middle aged man. His voice was bold, every word pronounced with pride & power. He was also a warm person, in love with what he was doing. Behind him I saw a CD player, and with that I offered all my music. I explained the book of music had no value to my trip & I felt it would be in better use with him. The man smiled, filled a cup with espresso gelato & handed it to me. He took the music & looked through it; so much music in perfect condition with booklets & put in order by genre. He was amazed, eyes lit up. He repeatedly asked if I was sure. "Are you sure!?" he'd flip a couple pages & see an album he loved "I love this! Are you suuuure?" Happiness became his name. He told me to put down my bag & chill. He then started talkn' about his stand & refilled my little paper cup with each flavor he had to offer. This was sooooo nice, the sun was hot & had a deep love to ice cream. An Idea hit him like a brick! "Adam, stay here & I'll be right back. You see the corner down there!?" he pointed down the road, which had many corners & intersections; but I understood generally what he was tryn' to convey "My bank is right there, I want to get some money out. If someone comes, take an order...don't over charge!" And like that he rushed off. So, here I am, in Connecticut... 12:00pm on a Monday, running a Gelato stand right in downtown somewhere! Not bad... It was a little early for that Gelato rush, thus I served no one. The owner returned with money and a plan. He ordered a pizza. Not just any pizza, this one was "goin' to be good" as he enthusiastically told me, three times. He paid with his recently withdrawal, and tipped the driver with his gelato. It was delivered right to us on the street! We ate with little to say, the pizza did the talking, soo damn good. He was happy, I was full. It was time for me to leave...the day was getting late. As I was getting ready, the man repeated just how happy he was about this day. Something he'd never forget. Before I took off, he told me that he was taking this interaction as a sign from God. He had recently lost everything he owned in a house fire. So the past year had been a struggle... within that struggle, he had decided to let go & invest in something simple with his life in an attempt to find happiness again. This fire sent him into a deep hole of depression & indecision. Today, out of thin air, I gave him the own thing he missed more than anything: his music collection. So in a chaotic yet perfect chain of events, this human is feeling blessed and centered... at least for the rest of today. He offered me the rest of the pizza, but I declined.. not something I want stinking up my belongings. I received a strong parting hand shake & with that I walked away, hearing my Leon Parker album already playing in his radio.

The rest of my day was simple: Skating, walking, skating, walking... crossing roads, waking up hills...guessing what route will take me where. I look for signs that say South or West. For all i knew, I was on a big 'zigzag' down the coast. I had a map, but didn't feel the need to use it much. I enjoyed floating along the roads as I found them. I didn't talk to anyone for the rest of the day; Just moved along, looking at the world around me. All the buildings looked broken & run down; far away from the wealth & cafes I began my day within. I passed people sitting around on porches with neighbors, drinkn' beers & burning smokes, while kids play on the uneven and overgrown sidewalks. People checked me out as I pass by, my bright orange hair and bright orange bag making me look like a clown on his off season... that day I also decided to let go of another weight I no longer wanted to carry. I took with me a sling bag, or "Man Purse" full of Art materials. It was adding weight I did not want to deal with the rest of the trip. I had only just started this journey and this was too heavy a weight with too little a purpose.

My mind was made, and with that, I made the choice to stop at the next trash can available for public use. The can sat at the edge of the property, currently occupied by an Italian Pizza house. With a deep breath, I opened the sketch books for one last glance. My mind, without effort, began to think up options so I did not have to let go of another strong attachment. "Snap out of it!" My logic said to my emotional self. I left the whole damn bag next to the can and walked away. Someone was sure to think it was a good find. Now that I stopped, I was thirsty. I walked into the Pizza joint, setting down my gear at an empty booth. I then went straight for the bathroom: Let go of some liquids, made sure my face wasn't full of grime and gave it a rinse. After the wash, I walked to the register to ask for some water. Right away I was asked if I was hitchhiking. "Why yes I am" I answered. "I have much respect for you! I too spent many months of my young life thumbing around the country. And I just don't see people out on the roads like I used

to". The man at the register said. "This is my place, I would love to give you a good meal tonight!" At first I giggled a little, and then said, "That would be awesome. I did have pizza today, but whatever.. lets see what you got". I sat down at the table, what a feeling to sit. I could've slept right there. The boss man made up a nice pie. I took my time and enjoyed another free meal. At this point, they day was getting late, so I Give many thanks and took off. With a warm belly full of pizza, I didn't even think about the bag I'd left behind. The board fell at my feet & with a heavy push, I was rolling down unknown territory once again.

The Sun set with rich colors as I followed strange roads, coasting along at a nearly numb pace. My feet felt as if they'd been on fire. My legs felt weak, so I began to think of what to do with my night. The fight between pushing on & gravity pushing me down kept me distracted about what I was really doing. I had zoned out & before I realized it, the Sun was almost gone. I knew not where I was, and it was late. Along this road, the grass was grown in real high filling in the dip between the street and the forest next to me. I could easily hide in the tall bush & sleep for a couple hours. I was far enough from shops & houses, I didn't feel sketchy. It was really quite nice. The bank was a nice curve to guide water along the road (it was dry at this point) & the night sky was amazing. I laid back on my board, feet up on my bag. I sunk into my hoodie as best I could, the cold of the night kicked in quickly when I stopped moving, each night thus far felt cold. I was exhausted enough to pass out, but the air was cold enough to constantly wake me up.

## Part Two

I awoke. Blackness surrounded me. I forgot for a moment where I was, the tall grass confused me. It was the sounds I heard that woke me. An incoherent mumbling of what sounded like two men. As I studied the sounds coming from the road, I concluded that alcohol was most likely the drive & reason for these two being where they were at such an hour. I felt a growing concerned for my well-being. I couldn't see them, for I was still in the ditch. I didn't want to move, making noise & potentially causing trouble for me. I lay still, on my back..completely vulnerable, like a turtle. It musta been like 3:00am, what are they doing out here? I didn't know my location, and I didn't recall being around any houses. All I knew is their sounds kept gettn' closer. I didn't want them seeing me, or messing with me. Layn' low in the shadow...ready to fight, ready to kill at this point. I was ready for the shit to go down...then, without any clear reason to me, they stopped. "What's that s\*\*t?" One of the shadowy figures muttered. "I don't know..." Both men stood there, lost at what lay before them. It sounded as if they stood right above my location. I didn't even look up, feeling sure enough as if they'd seen me. My mind was going crazy at this point, heart racing. I'd been made, and two country boys 'bout to skin them a hippie. As I was preparing to fight to the death, my paranoia was interrupted by more drunken confusion from the two humans. "I think it's a light, man." His thoughts plopping out of this face like old chunky milk from a carton. "A light? Goddamn!" They both laughed, and called each other pussies for the fear which had gripped their, would be peaceful, stroll home. The men had been startled by a yellow flashing construction sign down yonder from us, about one hundred feet or so. I quickly felt better, facing the new challenge of not laughing out loud and giving away my position. Although at this moment, with the two of them off guard, jumping out would be perfect. buuut no, not smart. I stayed still... After mumbling some more, they stumbled away & I took that as a sign it was a good time for me to start moving again. I grabbed my stuff in a slightly frantic manner, shoving it into pockets on the bag. My hands shook with adrenaline, my thoughts raced faster than I could listen to them. "just go, just go, just get moving!" I later learned I'd left my sunglasses & some other small things, like my lighter, in the ditch. Oh well... some raccoon will enjoy the glasses.

I rode on down the road, following some stars that stood out among the trees & clouds. The night was cool, and the sky was my guide. For me, skating this early/late is surreal. There are times I remember doing so, getting back from friends' houses, or skating at night cause I couldn't sleep...getting out of a night shift job for break. The energy of the human influence on Earth is very still. Few engines humming, electricity can barely be heard. Something we seldom feel, let alone drift through. It was very quiet, only a couple cars had passed by in the last hour or so. A deer followed me in the trees for about five minutes or so. At first it was kinda uncanny, but when I thought of the pattern of the steps, I could tell it was a deer. These creature can be trouble.. a Buck in a bad mood, can be for quite the experience. I learned this once, while gettn' dirty in the woods with an old lover. Huffing and Puffing, grunting.. getting ready to fight, likely from the sell of sex in the air. I had to pause my pleasure & throw a rock at the damned intruder. But this current deer was chilln... no drama.

I figure it's about 5:30am. The slight tint of orange was sneaking up on the horizon. I was running out of energy, and I'd been skating since the two men woke me from my bush nap. So after some eye balln' the area I was in, I made for a spot in some bushes.. beneath a pine tree.. behind a supermarket, inna shopping plaza, somewhere. I

didn't have many choices, and it didn't look like this dense brick & window display landscape was going to change. I was very sleepy & getting hungry... and I was having trouble ignoring it. I knew I only had a couple bucks on me, so my chances of a full breakfast were slim. So I gave in for a maple doughnut & a small cup of water. A small coffee/doughnut shop was the only thing open anyways. This sugar would give me a bit of energy to get me till noon. I liked to sleep when it's hot outside anyways. Went back into the bush i'd scoped out, ate & sat. Breathe... I place myself within the Great Awe. Into the Nothing. Away from the sight of the early morning commuters. A new day for them is rising.. my day continues. Trucks drive up around the back of the stores, unloading today's merchandise, one after another. The smells of diners, coffee, the first smokes on the job being lit was all around me. I sat back, and began to breath and detach from the smells distracting my peace. I appear as the tree, which rests my weight, and the bush, which guards my sight. The dirt that grounds me. Here I am, now. Alive. Me. I am all that surrounds me, the elements that bound me to flesh & bone. I call it home, Om. The Temple is me, for I house consciousness, oneness. I feel the past, the land that was before domination. A place of wild forests now lay in ruin to Strip Malls & Fast Food. How Mankind can see it as progress is beyond me. People file in, pick a box. Pay for box. Drive back to your box, in your mobilized box. Eat what's within box. Watch propaganda box. Sleep, repeat. This is Freedom? To I, it only looks like chains, lies & illusions. Not Freedom, but the American Dream indeed. They are all dreaming. Or is it me who lives in delusion? I am the one sitting in a bush at 6:00am on a Tuesday.

The Sun was up, the sound of cars crept up on me like the rising tide. So I felt it was time to move on. I decided to walk for a while, wasn't quite sure where I was. The road led me through the day, in and out of neighborhoods that blended together. The weather was nice, I didn't have to worry much that day about the heat. My feet had been hurt'n' all day. I knew this would happen, so I didn't think much of it, I just skated until it felt numb. Today was a quiet day for me, I kept to myself which helped me get a good distance. I easily find hours lost, listening to the tales of strangers... well I don't feel like people are strangers, maybe that's why I can walk up to most anyone without freak'n' them out. This doesn't help when I'm try'n' to get things done, or traveling with other people.. They stop for gas & a minute later I'm inside the station talk'n' it up to the workers, people in line, the police sipp'n' coffee, it don't matter. It's fun to approach people who would normally judge, or not expect me to interact with them. Sometimes I search them out... It's those people I like to listen to.

The day was in full swing. My feet burned, and I couldn't ignore it any longer. I felt I was heading out of the populated area, so I decided to make a camp in the first good spot I found which was the corner of what looked like a nice sized farm. The rim of the land was grown in, so it was easy for me to be hidden inside eight feet of thich bush & trees. It was early in the year too, to the ground was still clean, no bugs. I took some time & made a nice hut. I bent vines, sticks & leaves together, creating the perfect little hut for me to rest. I couldn't see the any buildings on the land, so I felt okay about sleeping on it. One last thing, I wanted to wash up. Some could say I was starting to put off a "musky" smell. There was a McDonalds across the road, perfect place to wash up & get water. I stumbled out of the bush and across the road like a hungover hobbit. My feet hurt so much at this point, I was making a strange face with each step. This I didn't notice until I saw an old lady looking at me with that look.. you know, that look? when you get high and go to the grocery store & you see people looking... they know.. its THAT look. I went to wash up & for a cup of orange juice. I had just enough on me, just enough for that sweet sweet love of mine. This was also the very last of my money. I felt it was well spent, juice is always enough for me. With my pits, feet & face washed, I returned to my spot & took off my shoes. I was ready for my feet to fall right off..they didn't. They instantly felt better being in the open air. With the stupid choice of shoes & the distance skated already, my feet had massive blisters which had then rubbed themselves very raw... I was not going to make it far like this. I stopped thinking about all that, and made a pile of fresh soil to rest my feet right on. Leaning back on my sack, I enjoyed my juice and drifted off into a nice sleep.

I woke the next day, nice and early. The air was chilled, my feet felt cold. I must have slept for ten or so hours. My feet felt a bit better, though I knew I really needed better shoes. After a couple handfuls of granola, I packed- up the site. Leave no trace. Again, most of the day was on my board. I decided to hit the interstate. It wasn't hard to find an exit ramp, and I wasn't bothered my cops when they passed. Sometimes it takes two cars before I get a ride. Other times it took 200 cars to pass before somebody stopped. I never had people mess with me, 'ya know, by slowing down or stopping. Then driving off as I get close..

One morning I remember walking through a neighborhood around 5:00am. I wasn't sure if I was going in the right direction, and as I was dwelling on it, a man spoke from behind me. "Well where you heading this early?" spat out in a kinda goofy way to quickly make him seem friendly. It was a skinny man, likely in his mid-40's. I could tell right off that his life had been full of tribulations most commonly around alcohol and or violence. I didn't want to ignore him, as most people likely do. I told him of what I was up to, and how I was looking for a general path away from the city

sprawl. He said I was right on route, and then asked if I was hungry. Being the hour it was, a local food shelf was getting ready to serve a handful of local homeless & crack heads. I was told if I was hungry, to just follow him. I thought of following this guy & how that could be a bad choice, but again, I try to actively trust people. So off I went with Larry; we'll call him Larry. Sure enough we headed to a shelter. I felt the heavy stare of an entire room soon as I entered. Nothing really negative, just a sense of "who is that?" or "What is Larry up to now?" I felt a little odd being there, like I wasn't welcome. I asked if it was okay that I was brought here. A staff member greeted me and said "Honey, you are more than welcome here. Get yourself some warm food & we'll get your get your bag filled up". The table in the middle of the room offered your basic breakfast options: cereal, bagels, sliced fruit & hot oatmeal. The smell of coffee lifted my spirits right away. The shelter was being run by a handful of lovely little old ladies. They asked where I was from, what Vermont was like. They chatted about my hair and how they too had color in their hair at younger point in their life.. They all came down to the shelter to help a couple times a week. They were already awake, some had lost husbands or partners already, so this was like a filler as they awaited reuniting with our ancestors. I ate a bagel covered in a thin layer of cream cheese. I'm not much of an eater in the morning. When I wake I'm usually ready to go for half the day. I seem to work well with a good intake of H2O and juice. I didn't want to spend much time here, so I finished up quickly & thanked them for the food. Before I took off, the ladies insisted I filled my bag with some canned goods. They didn't want me out there & hungry, and it would be rude for me to refuse their kindness. My bag was packed & feeling very heavy. I bent down & maneuvered my way into the shoulder straps. With a good exhale I lifted up my gear, grabbed my board & headed out into the morning.

At the time the canned donations felt like an awesome idea. After a couple hours later, I quickly felt the strain of all those cans. On top of that, the weight began to take effect on my bag. Holding the fabric on the metal rim was made of thin metal loops. They looked like an alternative way to sell paper clips. The bag was not the best to use, but it was the best I could get my hands on. This was all part of my odd path. I could see the stitch was starting to loosen along corners and stress points from all the weight within. Without wasting any of the food, I began to lighten the load. I had two or three large cans of Pineapple Juice & Orange Juice. The labels looked as if they were printed in the 60's. I screwdriver worked well to pop a hole in the first can...perhaps not the best or cleanest way, but effective nonetheless. I punctured a can, and I gracefully rode along the road sippn' on free juice. I questioned the year this juice was made, but only a little. They sky was quickly getting dark, the air cooling down. The air had that smelly smell, that kinda smell which smells like trouble... My knuckles, knees & feet started to feel uncomfortable...rain. I knew I didn't have much time before I became wet. I was close to an interstate, but I didn't want to stand along the on-ramp while getting rained on. So I ran into the forest running along the interstate looking for a giant Pine. I had many large pines to, hopefully, cover me enough to stay relatively dry. And just as I got under, the sky broke open and a heavy downpour was let loose.

Rain fell like bricks. I was sitting under a tree waiting for it to stop. The trees did not help much & at this point I was soaking wet. I was shivering, and had taken off my jacket to cover my gear. I did not let myself get stressed, instead I hummed music I knew & did rounds of pushups to stay warm... The rain continued... an hour passed without a sign of sunlight. I had another can I did not want to carry, so I found myself tryn' to get this can of beef stew open with just a screwdriver. This became quite the challenging task for me. As I pounded the top of the can, tryn' to break a hole into one end, the rain fell harder & harder. I couldn't hear the interstate which was only a couple hundred feet away. I had vigorously pounded a small hole in the top of the can of stew. Now I was tryn' to get another hole in the other side of the lid. Every time I hit the can, juicy splashes of stew sprayed all over me. After a couple splashes, I accepted my fate & just embraced the flying stew particles. It was a wet & beefy combo of liquid sensations, wrapped in a strong stormy wind. The few mangled pieces of potato or beef I was able to pick & or sucked out of the whole, felt like an accomplishment. I was soaked, tryn' to stay warm & sprinkled with stew... If I was in Yellowstone, I'd be the perfect snack for a Grizzly. After thinkn' about my options, I came to a conclusion: I can sit & stay cold, or stand cold by the road with a slight chance of getting picked up. To the road I went. I sat with my back against my bag to keep it a bit more dry than I. Despite my wet condition, being under Pines during a down pour is a magical place to be... I will always feel like a gnome in places like that.

### Part Three

Back on the road, few cars passed by me. I was not shocked to see no one wanted my soaked & stinky ass in their car, but I waited anyways. To my surprise I did get a ride without waiting long. An old white van pulled up. The van quickly reminded me of vans I'd seen in skateboard videos...beat up & ready to rock. Or to most people, it looked like the classic white van from a murder movie. Spots of rust along the trim gave it character. The passenger door swung open exposing a round, semi-nude man sat in the driver's seat. Behind the beating rain off his roof he said

"Hope 'ya don't mind me in my boxers, I'm on my way home from work & this rain left me soaked; Jump in if 'ya lookn' for a ride". I jumped in right away. The van took off down the road & onto the interstate. The driver was a friendly fella; talkn' about his busy life. I was happy to be out of the rain, even if it was in a old creepy van with a large, half-naked man. He mentioned he did have far to take me, but I was welcome to come hang out until the rain stopped... He went on about his friends, and how beers were next on his list for the day. Being such a large van, I didn't notice the speed at which we had been gaining as he went on... "Our exit is up here, sorry it couldn't be more" he noted verbally. We made it maybe four miles...eh, it was a ride. Now, this is the good part: As he turned for the exit ramp, the van kinda stayed in, we'll call it, turning limbo...or you could call it hydroplaning down the road at 50 mph. I watched from the corner of my eyes, this dude turning the wheel all the way to the right, yet we just kept going straight toward the guard rail. I remember feeling rather calm. Growing up testing my body in various ways, gave me the acceptance of "near-death situations" as some people put it. Time seemed to slow to a barely visible speed. The van was now gliding towards a guard rail, large drops of rain exploding onto the window as it descended from the Heavens. My legs still crossed, arm still resting on the door; I sat and watched as the driver sat back in his chair, no longer able to control his future. We hit the rail head on & slid like a skateboard down the guard rail about 40 feet. When we came to a stop, I was nearly falling out of my seat toward the driver. Everyone was safe, and it felt as if the van took all this wel. The back of the van was near empty, so no tools or other objects broke or became lodged in our heads. So I then jumped out of my door, which was the highest point at this time & took a photo. A tilted van, propped up on a guard in the rain. This, of course, was the moment the rain finally moved on. I couldn't see any major damage to the van; it seems we had a perfect crash. The driver popped out & walked around to me. "I am so very sorry to do this to you" he started. I didn't let him go on, telling him how happy I was to experience this with him... I helped him laugh it off & he put on his pants. It didn't take more than 5 minutes before a car stopped to check on us. The driver was a nice woman from the area. We told her that we didn't need medical attention, so she stayed to help figure out what our next move would be. My original ride asked if I'd like a ride into the town with him while he figured out how to get the van moved. The woman was more than happy to drop us off at his place, which was right down the road. Minutes later, car pulled up to a small blue house in a little neighborhood. A few people sat on the porch, kids running around being kids. They all looked confused as to why their friend was getting out of a strange car with some dirty youth they'd never seen. These are the moments I living for..good ol' chaos. I quietly greeted the people, shook some hands & my present existence was explained so that I could enter the porch area. I was told to hang low while the van was moved. And like that, all was quiet. So, there I am...still soaked and on a strange porch. I was asked a few familiar questions: How do you do that to your hair? Where are you heading? Does anyone mess with you on the road? How do you wash your hair? Can you even wash it? I answered all questions in a friendly, but distracted tone. I don't think many people in this area grow dreads, and a ginger with dreads is almost like finding a leprechaun. I noticed one of these folks smokn' a Newport, so I asked for one. I tried to engage in small talk. I'm never any good at this, so instead of chattn' it up, it would be a couple words, then silence. At least I don't lose my cool by such silences. I liked this house/ neighborhood. I reminded me of Vermont, poor but happy. No fancy cars, paint falln' off the walls. Sidewalks cracked & locals aimlessly walkn' about talkn' to people at each house. This went on for about an hour; small talk & simple interactions. I didn't realize the time for a while, and then it kinda took over my thoughts. So before I let myself get comfortable, I grabbed my stuff, gave thanks & walked away. Plopped down the longboard & jumped on, gliding down another new road. I didn't get more than a mile when a police car pulled up alongside of me. "Get off that board right now" the officer told me as if he was waiting for any excuse to kick someones ass. I put my foot down, but did not get off.. I asked why? "Skateboarding is illegal in this town. If I see you on it again, you will have a night in jail." I laughed, then gave him a good stare down. "So, even though I don't live here & I'm clearly passing through minding my own life, you'd still arrest me?" I asked bluntly. He didn't answer, just glared at me. So back into his eyes I looked...with the fire of a million skaters. I said "Fine"... not a battle I was going to win. So I grabbed my board & started walking along my path. The cop followed behind me, driving at the pace of my walk. I could hear his radio, static and then voices cutting in and out. The officer followed not five feet behind me, until I came to a bridge that led out of the town. The footbridge dropped down into a tunnel and the cars drove over above. While under the bridge, I grabbed my big black marker & wrote "Free your minds" in fat letters on the wall. I dated the words & walked away. It was getting dark, so I walked with a mission in my pace.

After crossing the bridge I realized I was now in a new state. I was now looking for a place to sleep for the night. Right off the bridge, I saw only a quiet neighborhood layout. This didn't leave me with confident thoughts of finding a wormhole in the woods. I passed house after house, much nicer than the ones right across the river. The sky was now dark again & another day was officially over. The familiar voice of self doubt was trying to get the best of me. I was not going to panic, keep moving. I had all the energy I needed, so if I had to, I would just keep moving until the sun came back around. I wondered for about a mile, before the road crossed paths with an interstate which had its very own Pennsylvania Welcoming Center. This was no ordinary welcoming center, no, this was state of the art.

Modern architecture, walls painted with images from the 1800s.. and soda machines that we not sun bleached and half empty. I was happy the place as open, I went on in to rinse off my feet & let go of breakfast. It was real quiet inside. Two men sat in a small office, getting ready for their night shift. The building need cleaning, waxing & polishing of everything inside. "Bad company, and I can't deny" echoed out of a small radio attached to a mobile trash can. The sky had changed plans & began to release an ever so soft rain. It was the kind of rain you don't notice, than a minute later you are cold and moist. I felt the best place for the night was under a bench that was outside in the lawn of the center.. I used my skateboard as a pillow & my pack as a makeshift wall to guard against the rain a bit. On this night, cold concrete and a steady rain became my bed. The rain shifted and lightly hit my face. I tried to ignore it & sleep, but that just was not going to happen. Perhaps rolling over would help, nope. Like the smoke at a campfire following your face, the misty rain seemed to follow me. Now I was damp not enjoying the experience. I had enough and crawled out, back onto my feet. Maybe, I thought, if I offered to my time to clean the welcoming center, they'd let me sleep on the floor or in the closet. I asked, and was turned down... they were nice about it, but rejected my puppy eyes. Soooooo I walked back outside, grumpy & sleepy. Pulsing pain penetrated up my feet & into my shins from standing all day! I was likely feeling extra sleepy from the after effects of my hydro van experience...! pluuuuus, my clothes had been rained on earlier & now I was being rained on again!!! I could continue with a page of (!).. that is exactly how I felt inside, a deep rage working its way up. Thankfully I am also equipped with an equally strong ability to remain calm & let the inner madness pass without the need to release such energy physically...there is a time & place to freak out, this current situation was neither. Well, I was in for a long night. What to do...? I didn't really want to leave from this ramp, cause who knows how long I'd end up walking before I hit another one. I stood in cover thinking.

Across the street I could see a brown house with a brown garage. At first the house sat in my peripheral sight, then my subconscious moved the house into conscious thinking! I started paying attention to this house. I looked as if no one was living in it from the outside. No lights.. extra dark and lonely look to it. I could see the lawn was overgrown & not representing the "usual" standard of neighborly lawns... The garage, in particular, was calling to me. Anything looked good at this point, so I thought abstract options. Though it felt a bit crazy, I walked over to the house. I found that a square piece of wood which was part of the garage door was popped out. I looked around, no one was watching me. There was only the welcoming center in view anyways, so I was in the clear: First my pack, then my board & lastly I squeezed through the square into the abyss. The garage was dark, musky & nearly empty. The only thing I saw was a large carpet which was rolled up resting next to the wall. I unrolled it. It didn't smell too nasty...just a bit of a dusty smell. I laid down on the carpet, put the gear under my feet & rolled myself up in the carpet. Within moments I was one warm kid. Sleep crept up before I could let anxiety about what I was doing kick in.

I woke! dirty carpet fuzz was my view as my gears started running at full speed. I wiggled my head out of the end only to see a freakn' car tire right in front of my face. A car! Someone has parked their car in the garage I thought was empty! Since I was rolled into the carpet, I couldn't just get out to see what was going on. I had to unroll myself from this dirty cocoon. I was able to make half a rotation before I hit the wheel...damn. What the hell? I pictured walking in on myself tryn' to get out of this predicament. Needless to say, I figured out my escape. I was able to wiggle myself forward, squished up against the garage door. I'm sure I looked ridiculous. I crawled low to the opposite end of the carpet & reached in to pull out my gear. Slowly... quietly. The garage door was shut, so getting out & away from the house was a bit more intense than the entrance. I crouched at the square hole in the door, mentally preparing for being busted. With a deep breath, I calmly stuck out my head, put my hands on the ground & pulled my legs through. "Keep moving, don't look" I thought. I reached back in, quietly lifting my heavy sack through the small square... and then again for my board. I was out of the garage and now standing in someone's driveway. I casually put on my bag and walked down the driveway. I passed a couple windows which had no curtains, and I could see someone sitting at a table, with their back to the very window I was passing. I was struck with horror, convinced they would turn and see me on their property.. "this would surely start a chain of events, which would ultimately lead to me being locked away in some small town jail. Just what I needed before I could even take a morning shit!!" I reached the road, and as soon as my feet found the street, I felt my stress float away. Without looking suspicious, I walked across the road, back to the welcoming center. I had successfully managed to sleep in a carpet, in a random garage for the night. And nobody came out the house guns blazing. I guess I can check that off my list of things to do in life. I didn't think till much later the fact that the car could've easily parked right on top of my head.

The sky was blue, the air was warm & I had fresh energy for the day. I walked up to the on ramp, lifted my thumb & took a deep breath. Not a minute later a big red truck pulled up. "I'm driving to work, so you can ride along till I get off again; should be about a half hour or so". I thanked him for the offer and quickly tossed my stuff in the bed. This dude was real nice. He was happy to see me on the road. He thanked me for doing what I do & that it meant a lot to him to see that kind of trust I have for people. "Too many people just walk around with their heads down" he shared. "When

you can trust your place in the universe, you really can glide through anything". He was a spitting image of a what commercials depict as a pick-up driving man. Blue jeans, old shirt & a ball cap.

I was dropped off & left with positive energy to take with me. I usually walk off the road and sit for a second before I take post for another ride. It was now around 10:00am. I sat on a guard rail, rolled a smoke & thought about what to do. I saw a cool VW Hippie Bus heading my way, but in the opposite direction of the road I was on. The van slowed down. From the other side of the highway, a friendly looking human came running across the street & approached me. "Sorry we're not going your way" he stated. "Here is a beer for your travels, this is all I have to offer". And with a smile, he turned and headed back to the van. I don't drink beer, especially not a Bud Light, and still I couldn't deny such an act of consideration. I knew I could make use of this beer. I held it up high to signal my item, offering in trade, for temporary transportation. It didn't take long before I got a "bite". Another big truck pulled up, it was the day of the 'Man-Truck'. "I'll give you a ride until I finish that beer". He said with a smile. It's hard for me to explain every person I ran into. It's like tryn' to talk about each tree as you walk through the forest. For the sake of the story, it was a middle aged man. He had a scruffy face that hid under the rim of the old baseball cap on his head. I handed him the beer, tossed my weight in the back & climbed in. This dude was nice, we didn't say too much, but the energy was comfortable. He took his time sippn' the cold brew as to make sure I got a good ride. This made me very happy. I went at least a half hour before I was again sitting on my board thinkn' of what to do next. Being accepted into a person's car without them ever knowing me is a great experience. Every time I step out of a vehicle, I am filled with such joy. I felt at peace sitting on the side of an interstate you didn't know, in a state I didn't know, a town I didn't even see the name of, having no idea of what the next 5 minutes will bring.. let alone the next 5 days.

#### Part Four

I thought about smoking a responsibly sized joint. I had a little herb on me, and I knew it wouldn't last. So instead of tryn' to make it last with the fear of running out, I just twisted it up like normal, until it was gone. I knew if it was meant to be, I'd find more herb later. I walked along, looking for the perfect spot to vanish into for a while. A cop passed by me, shattering my peaceful train of thought. "What if the cop turns around and follows me..?" I mean, I'm just some dude walkn' in this town... who knows if a million people live here, or if I stand out like a burning bush. I felt if I turned off the road now, and he does turn around, he'll notice that I'm hiding on him... then when I do start walking again, he'll pull me over. This police paranoia went on for some time, and I ended up walking a few minutes more... I stopped at a gas station. When I sat down outside, a van pulled up and a family poured out of every door, toys falling onto the ground...a dog sniffing the rocks near us... It was a nice bubble to be next to. I remember the mother figure kept peeking at me, and smiling. I thought of where they might be driving to. What adventures they were in the middle of for this nice day. I didn't stay long at the station, just a spot to think about my next couple hours. Find water, fill it... roll a smoke & I'm off! The road was a nice in that area.. My board coasted along in a steady pace, as I took in the world around me. I came across a nice patch of a woody area, under an overpass. This is just what I wanted to find. I lost myself within the patch of dense vegetation. It was a beautiful day, sun was out, wind was mellow & warm. I was in a green world of tall bushy trees, which smelled fresh & happy. I took off my shoes & tied them to a high branch in the sunlight so they'd dry out a bit. My bag always doubled as a resting pad, even if it was filled with tools, cans & paper. When you're really exhausted anything can be turned into a bed. So I stretched out, I knew there was no way anyone would walk up on me. I feel unless it's kids, people don't really hike around areas like this.

I locate my herb jar...an old mint tin. Inside is just enough left for one last joint. It was lovely... not the best herb, but enough to make my time in the brush a little better. Of course, soon as I smoked it, I felt the energy to get on the move again. This is something I do a lot.. I get ready to relax, then I don't. Herb makes me relax while doing things...like dishes, painting, or walking. Plus I was now a little irie and thinking about the cop I'd passed a little bit earlier. Stupid paranoia; I mean, someone could've seen me walk into the woods, than called the police. What would happen to me if they walked up on me lounging in their woods? Not good, so I stretched & hit the road. I knew it was for the best, I didn't need to be sitting where I was all day. If night came, I'd be stuck in a pretty busy area. I always tried to be in an unpopulated area by nightfall...this was a great idea in theory. In reality, it didn't always pan-out as such. Some nights I found myself walking until sunrise, tryn' to find a place to sleep. Walking in a place you don't know, at hours where most are lost in a dream, can be very surreal. I reach a point where I am half asleep, and half awake. Mindful walking, my thoughts seem to connect with everything around me. In the middle of the night life seems to be quiet, but everything becomes loud. You hear every step, every animal around you, even the wind

seems to become amplified. Life is very much alive at night, we just become lost in our electricity. When we turn things off at night, life becomes pure again.

The road was nice; this day of skateboarding was fun. Where I was the road had been on a steady downhill path. It was a new road; the pavement was fresh & smooth. I had plenty of room along the side, so I didn't have to think much about the cars passing me by. This makes things a lot more fun for the skater. I try to not ever worry about cars; it's a little mindfulness of being alive for me.

The sound of cars rushing by was drowned out by constant wind racing through the treetops around me. Tall Pines surround the horizon, and one big interstate sliced through this massive forest. The long board is under my sack, as to not show that I have any way to move faster than walking. Ways of physiologically based ideas flowed through my brain when I stand, thumbs extended, and posture presentable, alongside the on ramp. As to my surprise, a few police drove by me without any question as to the laws of hitch hiking. This, at first, was kinda scary. After the third car, I felt like I was okay to proceed with said 'thumb extended standing'. I did so with confident thoughts. I had only one encounter with the police, kicking me off my board..like a big jerk.

Little Blue car, piloted by an old man. Several papers, empty bottles & socks lay around this little blue car. On top of the car was a little sky-view window. The essence of pipe tobacco surrounded my smell of a dirty hiker. "If you want a ride, I am going to Canada now." He pulled the pipe to his lap & began to repack it, signaling me to take a moment to choose. With a smile, I said yes. The engine stopped & thus began the packing of my stuff into his even smaller little trunk. We introduced the names which we are labeled as & took off down the interstate. Few words needed to be said, as we both enjoyed the wind being the main auditory entertainment for the next hour or so. I learned that Frank was heading to Canada with the goal of buying a new little blue car. He was looking specifically for a car which displayed Kilometers, as opposed to the American standard of Miles per hour, on the speed meter. Frank was Canadian & Frank worked in America. It was a weekly routine for Frank to drive into the States for work, and drive back to the land of the Mounties at the end of his labor filled weeks. As he spoke, I found it hard at times to understand his words. He would start to mumble in my direction with no real aim of making sure I understood. It was kinda nice, I didn't need to feel bad for dozing in and out of vivid daydreams. We drove out of the seemingly endless forest, into a vast networking of farms. It was early in the season for corn, so all the fields had little vegetation at that point. What the fields did produce was a strong smell of cow manure. We stopped at a small gas station which felt like it was smack dab right in the middle of all the farms. As the bell jingled from my confident opening of the sticker filled door, a wonderful wall of cool air embraced my entire being. I had on me little cash, so I went for the one thing I knew I wanted: one half gallon of concentrated Orange Juice. I had nothing to eat, but the juice was exactly what I needed at the time. Frank filled up his little blue car, and we again sped off down the road. After an hour or two of driving, talking, and daydreaming, we came to the Canadian border. He told me to not say anything, if asked, about how I was hitchhiking. He noted that if questioned, I was going to stay at his house for two days, get a small tour of his town, then return on Monday into America. Our stories matched, so we moved forward. The car crawled down the row of vehicles, right up to the window. The American side of the border was quick. With a flash of our ID's, we pulled away into the bubble that was the gap between the two Border booths. The Canadian Border Security Representative leaned out of this booth slowly & asked for identification. We both handed what we had to show. Then the usual quick questions shot at us via lifeless eyes & numb voices. "Why are you here? What are you going to be doing? Do you know anyone in Canada? When will you be leaving?" Frank said all the words we'd thought of sayn' in this situation. And to my surprise, we did not get a smile followed by "Enjoy Canada" Instead, the officer asked us to pull into a side parking lot. We pulled in & after a minute or two of anxious silence in his car; another officer walked of their headquarters, and asked for Frank to now pull into a garage. At this point I knew that we were about to be searched as part of some security screening. An officer joined us in the garage, where we had been sitting next to Frank's little blue car. One by one every item I had with me was removed from the bag, held up into the light, turned & inspected by an official looking glaring stare-down method. "What is this screwdriver for? What would you need all these tools for? Why the skateboard? Why do you have canned food? What was the screwdriver for again? So why are you here? You think it's safe to just trust people? How much money do you have? So these tools are only used to maintain your skateboard?" A barrage of questions answered simply, trying to avoid as long as possible my smartass tendencies. The questions stopped suddenly & as the officer walked away, he told me I could put my things back in the bag. I sat on the concrete floor, picking up my belongings which lay spread across the garage.

Now it was time for Frank to explain his actions to these men with guns. They looked through his car, pulling out nothing & asking stupid questions. He had a couple hundred dollars cash on his person, for the purchase of the new car. The officers asked if I had asked him to hold any money or bags. I knew all they wanted was to harass us about being too cool for their fear mongering tactics. This was indeed a waste of time, but if you don't fit the cookie cutter

mold, you will be treated like a criminal. Guilty until you “get a haircut”. The experience wasn’t so bad, Frank was cool about it all & was having fun for being locked in a garage. His car became a target for a search for all the things they didn’t want us to have, but were certain we in fact had. The money was apparently for drugs... so they looked. On and on with the questions, leaving the room, returning for a new round of the same questions slightly reworded in an attempt to catch us in a lie. Unfortunately for them, we had nothing to hide; Just a couple of dudes enjoying life. After what felt like hours in this dim cage, molested by stupid questions & watching this poor little car get strip searched to pieces, the officers told us to pack it up & drive from the garage over to their HQ & come inside. I was immediately taken to a counter & was asked to present my identification. A mountie insisted on giving me a speech about trusting strangers & that Frank was someone not to be trusted. I looked on with a dead stare that takes over my face when I’m being scolded. They also told me because I had no money, that I was not welcome in Canada. Apparently, was a threat to their Welfare system if I just stayed in the country without saying anything. No way could I really just spend 42 hours in their country without wanting to hide... like I was running from the Draft or something. After being treated like children by children with fancy metal symbols pinned to their shirts, they let us both go. Frank was nice enough to drive me out of the border and into Buffalo, NY. The sun was now setting, the sky glowed a fantastic orange. Frank was still going into Canada, so I told him to let me out along the exit ramps. We laughed for a minutes about our recent fiasco, said our goodbyes, and I took one picture of him and his little blue car. Off into the orange abyss went Frank & his recently molested little blue car. I stood on a busy crossroad, interstates running in all directions around me. My motivation is drained at this point, and I was not exactly where I wanted to be.

#### Part Five

Okay, now it’s getting dark. I am nowhere close to any woods, or a field, or anywhere I can sleep without being seen. Buffalo was a city, filled with noise, cars & construction. I stood on the ramp for about an hour to see if I could get picked up. My theory about this is that you ask for a ride in a city or crowded areas, people will assume that your destination is not ‘that’ far away...so they drive right by. If you are in the country, on a long lonely road, people will see that any populated area is far off & will feel that much more obligated to help out. On this evening, I was not so lucky. By this time I was sleepy. Dealing with the Government was a drain on my sanity. I could see a Mall close by, I thought perhaps I could sleep in a bush or something. I walked over & scanned the parking lot. Nothing... I did a couple laps inside the building, just to see what was what. I went to the bathroom & cleaned my face, feet & pits. When I got back outside a security guard drove up. He was cool. “We see you inside wandering around, where you from?” I told him I was stranded here & I was looking for a bush to sleep in. He was okay with the idea, then left me alone. I felt a little relief, and walked to a bush on the outskirts of the parking lot. Bag off, sipped water.. ready to sleep. Ten minutes later the same security guard came back & told me that he’s getting bugged from the people inside the mall, watching via security cameras & had to tell me to leave. I was polite, but inside I was so sleepy & just wanted to scream. I didn’t know where I was, I didn’t know where to go at this point. When I reached the end of the parking lot I kinda just looked from left to right, scanning the world for options. I spotted a dirty little truck stop tucked in between sketchy motels & burger joints. Without thinking too much about it, I walked over. The place was quiet. Outside in the back was one little bench, next to it a rusty coffee can filled with butts. I looked for the longest butt, picked it out & lit it up. I sat my head back against the building, looking up at the dark night sky..clouds obstructed my ability to see any stars. I burned a couple more butts, thinking about what the hell I was doing. Self doubt was lurking under my skin, always challenging my ability to feel human. I always feel out of place, like I don’t belong or have no purpose.. this insanity I contribute to my dysfunctional parents. With trauma, for some, comes great inner power. I had such power, and knew opposite to the doubtful self, that a confident/ stubborn self would prevail. I knew I was safe here, at least for a minute or two.. hopefully all night. My bag was on the ground, my shoulders temporarily freed of its weight. I was really hungry, but had no money at all. I had a pocket with a few nuts lingering within, for trail mix had spilled out. This was my meal tonight. I washed down the small meal with water, burned down another soggy butt & went inside to inspect my ‘options’. What I found was a small theater room which played on its massive screen, a channel of local news. The room was very dark, and had about 20 little theater style seats in it, allowing truckers to forget about their troubles & zone out for a while. This room will have to do, so I grabbed my stuff, snuck into the room & passed out cold.

I woke with a burst. At first I’d forgotten where I was. It could have been midnight or 4:00pm, all I could see was darkness & one big screen. Alas, the stale smell reminded me of my location. Soon as I started to function, my back quickly reminded me of the chair I’d just slept in. I was feeling very stiff, my body unable to relax any longer in these rigid metal seats. I shifted and shuffled, trying to make the best of this situation. I did not want to draw any attention, I

had no idea if I was even welcomed here at all & did not want to even ask. Just lay low & try to rest. The news spoke of a Tiger which walked off his land into a New York neighborhood & was shot by a single officer 60 times. This meant the officer shot 7 rounds, reloaded & repeat. The Tiger was 'owned' by some guy who played Tarzan in a 70's TV show. The camera displayed the man's horrible loss of a friend. He cried out against the officer, sayn' the Tiger was causing no threat. "Why didn't you wait for me; why didn't you wait for a tranquilizer!?" The man cried. Of course the officer didn't have to answer to why he brutally destroyed such an amazing creature. The emotions were real & a strong man was falling apart before our eyes. Not a moment later, the viewers were taken to a happier distraction about things worth buying, 100% guaranteed to improve your quality of life. Forget the dead tiger, because you need this new Mop! This mop will clean your kids explosive diarrhea off the kitchen floor with just ONE swipe!! With all that on my mind, along with a sensation of urination; I got up & headed for a bathroom. After a quick rinse, I headed to check the sky. I didn't notice until the Sun reached my retina, that both doors to the outside world had been tinted as to relax the sleepy truckers who wander around the property like soldiers waiting to get their call to duty. I was punched in the face with sunlight, blinded by the light! At least I slept.. and a new day was here.

The sounds of lighters flickn', the word 'yut' and the rumble of diesel engines became the soundtrack of my morning. I chatted with folk, asked simple questions & shared smokes. The topic of "vaporizing" deer when they hit them at full speed came up from more than one trucker. I worked in the question of getting a ride, but sadly most of the drivers couldn't let me ride along due to insurance & lawyers. "If you want to find a ride, you got to ask someone not driving a logo cab. That means they own their own truck & get paid to pull trailers". Most people treated me nice enough, only being ignored by a couple extra rednecky, southern flag on their ball cap types. A couple dudes sat in their truck & called on the radio to see if they could get a ride lined up for me. Nothing came of it. I was starting to feel a little trapped, when the rain came of it...lots of rain. The blue sky was surrounded by black clouds rapidly circling my location, closing in fast. I couldn't leave meow, I had to wait out the rain. So back inside I went, right back to the dark room, with the little metal-framed chair. My bags lay on the floor next to me, tryn' to stay out of sight as best I could. The smell of food from the diner attached to this place constantly teased my senses, but I was too worried about getting kicked out to ask about possibly earning any food from cleaning or whatnot. I felt if they said no, they'd know that I was in the building without any money. In America if you got no money, than you are nothing. So I stayed quiet & sat through my hunger.

It rained all day without a break..just darkness & heavy rain. I sat inside, watching mindless news...shifting my weight tryn' to figure out the best way to sit; there was none. These chairs made you feel like bedsores were kicking in after only ten minutes. After that game of shifty butt became numbing, I would go outside to see what the sky was thinking. Dark grey & full of water. By now the day was rounding its end & I was going to have to sleep here again. Not too many people wanted to talk about rides when the rain was pouring like it was. It's bad enough that the drivers were so tired, but to add a rainy day to the mix just made everyone that much more detached. The few peanuts I had left became my dinner. I felt if I ate one nut every 20 minutes, that I'd be slightly nourished for one last night in the Truck Stop. Back to the chairs for me, into the darkness I sat. Sleeping wasn't easy, it only was accomplished when my head was too worn out to think about how uncomfortable the situation was. I thought about sleepn' in the woods, and how nice the ground felt. After a while, I passed out.

When I woke next, I jumped up thinkn' I'd missed something important. I went outside and checked the sky. It was looking much better today for me to travel. It looked as though it had stopped raining within the hour. I made sure my stuff was ready to go, but I wanted to try to get a ride out of the city. So I chilled on the bench outside the back of the building. After a little while, I was approached by a trucker. He asked if I was good at lifting, and if I wanted some work for a couple days. He told me he had to check in with his company, and if I was ever asked, I was to say knew him already. This helped so I wouldn't look like a stranger to whomever controlled his fate on the other side of the phone. I waited, he talked. All I could think about was getting the hell out of where I was. He talked... I waited. When he came back to me, I was ready to work. My spirits was feeling good, ready to get in a truck & out of this area. Unfortunately, he had to say no. His boss knew I wasn't his friend & rejected any idea of letting someone in the company truck. Post 9/11 paranoia really has taken a toll on the nation.. all sense of trust or adventurous spirit as been killed. Now we seemingly pretend to be calm and polite, all while hiding a violent and scared reality, just under the skin. Trust nothing, everyone is out to get you!! He offered me a couple smokes as a gesture of respect, to which I accepted, then he was off. A monstrous engine roared, and my almost chariot rode away without me. I lit the smoke & mentally prepared myself for the day unknown. Defeat was settling in, I was questioning my place & why the hell I was doing any of this at all. My two smokes burned away in a stress filled haze, and I was left with a dry mouth & empty belly. With a sigh, I was ready to start walking again.

## Part Six

“You lookn’ for a ride?” A voice said. I turned around and a middle aged man was leaning out if the tinted doors. “Yes, that would be a big help” I spoke. “ Well I got room for ‘ya. I’ll be going down the coast for two weeks & if ‘ya want you can help out making me coffee.” We had a deal. He then told me to hang tight as he did whatever it was inside the truck stop. After about another 20 minutes, he came back. We loaded up my gear & began our departure from the city. Matt was from Florida. He’d been truckn’ for a few years now. The first thing he handed me was a pack of Marlboro Reds. I didn’t really want a pack, but since I was now in his bubble, I just went along with the ‘ride’. Within the next week I must have taken a week off my life via Reds. This guy always had three things going at, damn near, all times: Air Conditioning, a cigarette, & his coffee maker making coffee. In the cabin of his truck, there was a little coffee maker. The truck was fitted an apartment style cab. It had one bed which lifted up to reveal storage for mine & his belongings. On either side of the bed was two cubbies/shelving units. One of the cubbies included a mini refrigerator. My new job was to make him coffee, so he didn’t have to stop at all unless for sleeping. At first this was a challenging task. As the truck flew down the interstate, I tried hard not to be tossed around his cab. Luckily for me, I’d grown up on a skateboard so I saw the situation as a game. At this point I still hadn’t eaten anything other than old peanuts for two days. I knew I needed something more than that soon. I distracted myself from my impending starvation by focusing on coffee. When that first drop of coffee hit the glass, the smell of it activated my hunger sensation like a brick to the face. I felt like I was going to pass out. The pot was now full and sloshing around. Time for the final task: Filling his mug without spilling on my skin. Nice and slow...steady now...bump! Ahh shit, all over my shoes. Matt laughed as he noticed my first attempt at room service. I handed him his mug, and poured myself a mug of the coffee. After loading it with stimulants, I made it back to my seat. Right away I burned my tongue on the coffee. This happens from time to time... I know it’s hot, I just poured it & I’m inside of a giant moving truck. Still, I go for a sip right away. The coffee was boring, watery & lacking character. The only thing it wasn’t lacking was lots of sugar. Though to the driver, who was not at all drinking coffee for its flavor, found it to be just what he “needed” to keep motivated. It was a nice ride thus far, he didn’t talk too much. I like that in people. For the next few hours we just smoked cigarettes, drank coffee & watched the road. If I hadn’t been so cold from the air conditioner, I would’ve passed out right away. Instead the temperature was on my mind, I was thinkn’ when he’d turn it off. Turns out he never turned it off. All I needed was food or sleep, and I couldn’t sleep. At times I’d start to pass out, then in the back of my head I’d think of how to get warmer...not happening. I’m not the type to ask that the cold be turned off. I am in his territory, and I’m here for the adventure. So I’d sip more coffee, and spark more smokes. Every now and then Matt would ask I another question about life. Nothing would turn into a full conversation, and yet it wasn’t an issue.

That night we pulled over down the street from a drop off point, the trucks engine purred all night, just to run the ‘AC’. I was a little worried about the night & sleepn’ in his truck. I hadn’t known his guy for more than a day, so I was thinkn’ of all the ways I could be murdered, or worse, by him. I made space between the two front seats. Being such a large vehicle, I had plenty of room to sleep between the front seats. My hoodie was now my pillow & a couple shirts my blanket. My legs wrapped around the giant gear shifter. I also thought of kicking it in my sleep & making the truck roll down the road into a tree or something. Throughout the night I kept waking up & checking my feet. The truck was so very cold, this was also keeping me from sleeping for more than an hour at a time. The driver politely informed me that he always sleeps in the nude. So if I had any problem with that I could sleep outside. I felt that he wasn’t a creep, so I didn’t care. He stripped down, and disappeared into his blankets...moments later, gentle snoring was the only sign of life in the cold cab.

On and on the night went, kind of a rhythm of waking up to check my feet. Waking up to rotate in an attempt to find a warm zone, which did not happen. Despite my best attempts, the chill would prevail. Needless to say, I didn’t really sleep too well. A few times I’d wake up, not sure of the time or year. I would be so stiff, cold & hungry. I eventually gave up and sat back in my seat...sparked a smoke, staring out at the early morning sky. It had now been almost three days since I’d eaten a real meal. And for the last twelve hours I’d consumed coffee, water and tobacco... yeah, well life is short.

The next morning I made us coffee. We both had a cup & sat in the field next to the truck, smoking our smokes and peed in the grass. The soft twangs of country music accompanied our morning coffee, along with the many birds chirping away all around us. When we hit the road, I made my way into the back of the truck, utilizing his bed for much needed sleep. I didn’t want him to know I was exhausted, but I must have slept for like three hours. It was a challenge at first to sleep, with the momentum of the truck, I had to figure out the right style to sleep so I wouldn’t find myself flyn’ out of the bed. Eventually, I figured out the best position was to curl up fetus style...wrap one arm under the mattress and make it so my knees faced the front of the truck. That way if he slammed the breaks (which I think

he did for fun a couple times) I wouldn't roll off, my legs acted like a brace. So take notes all those who feel they may be sleepn' in a semi-truck. You never know...

I was now rested, but still hungry. In a road trip style sleepy daze, I joined Matt up front, lit up a smoke & started more coffee. He told me that we'd be stopping soon to get some food. Since I hate asking for things, I never mentioned that I hadn't eaten anything in days. I just drank a lot of coffee to suppress that pain. It was now day four and I was out of any snacks. When we stopped, he fueled up & I washed up in the gas station sink: hands, feet, face, pits. This didn't really matter cause my clothing hadn't been washed for around a month. Back on the road... these days were spent in his truck. I spent the day looking out the window at life. Strip mall after strip mall passed by me. The same houses, slightly different knick knacks distinguished one house from the next.. everything blends into one capitalist spread of materialism. I avoided my thoughts of hunger by pretending a large train was following us along the interstate, smashing through everything in its path. This was a common way I enjoyed long car rides... that or a dirtbiker, riding up the embankments, flying up and over the overpasses. Whatever it took to not feel like passing out from hunger. Cigarettes can only suppress so much of your appetite. We stopped again a few hours later, and I was blessed with a surprise meal. Matt purchased me a grinder (Or sandwich for people outside New England), just what I needed. I ate this as slowly as I could, almost rubbing this lovely thing on my face like a fresh puppy.. pure bliss!! "Just nibble" I thought to myself, I didn't know when I'd get food again. For the next few hours I was lost in a world of passing cars, buildings, and road. So many people on the road at any given time. I thought of the size of the truck I was in. The resources it took to make & or take to run such a machine. I didn't ask what we had in the back, not once. I now question why never thought of asking. The experience of being in the (Then) now, living with someone in a very small & moving object without any plan of tomorrow is something that left me without any room to question little things like what could be in the truck. For all I knew, he could've been trafficking stolen Dolphins...Perhaps part of the underground Walnut black market. I say that due to a news report I heard, talkn' about how people stole Ten Million dollars in Walnuts...that's right. Took the trucks and all; right from the factory over the night. Reporters asked the owner of the factory about the strange theft, and they took it quite well. "I don't know what they'd even do with that many Walnuts. You can't sell them to markets fast enough without doing big business". Such news reports reminds me that Humans are, in fact, a unique and "special" creature.

My first experience of hitting a deer in the truck was quite the show. Well, I didn't see much; just the deer poppn' out into the road, close enough that we only saw it for a split second. No sound, the truck didn't skip a beat; it just turned the once whole being into a chunky splatter or hairy organic matter. I later saw that the deer had covered the lower half of the grill & under belly of the truck with blood & fur. I was a little confused at first, but Matt told me not to worry. We just kept on truckn'... I thought of the deer for a while, thinkn' of where it may have been going. I thought of my own death, the endless ways it could happen at any time. It's nice to think of it at the right time. For me i'm reminded to be conscious and strive to live in the present. I must focus on doing what I can do to best help the Unity of our minds & lives. Thus when Death does come for me, I will only greet It with a smile.

With an hour of mindful thinking, I turned to Matt and let him know I was happy to be part of his path. He too was happy I was there, he knew us meeting was only going to be a positive part of his life. He said he's never really met someone like me; and when he was my age, he & his friends only thought about beer, girls or trouble. I hear this from people who are ahead of me by twenty years or more. I'm not sayn' I don't think of girls and trouble, but I don't let desires or ego lead my path. I've learned the pain a life of such blindness can bring, from the endless examples I got observing the adults who should have set better examples, when I was a youth.

Later, as the night clocked in for its shift, Matt started to look around for food. He told me about the magical buffets in the south. We pulled up to a white building which looked like a model of "grandma's" house which sat in the back of the large parking lot. The engine purred as it shut down. The hum and vibration resonated in my head, like the feeling in your legs trying to not act drunk after hours at sea. I got out of the cab & looked for any deer remains. Perhaps bone fragment I could turn into a paperweight. There wasn't much... my imagination saw much more than reality had to share. Good enough...

Now I was interested in the smells that took over my train of thought. The place was nice, a perfect diner style interior. We walked up to the long food bar which curved along the interior of dining room. The plate was warm, as if the employees sat on them like birds on an egg. This was all so new & amazing to me. In Vermont, there are no giant buffets. This was like being in big belly heaven. I was now looking down at everything from a basic salad, to full lobsters, steak cooked to your liking, many dishes of pasta, Chinese style food & a smorgasbord of deserts. The aroma of the almost one hundred options was so intense, I only grabbed one plate & to my boyish surprise, was full. Matt went on for another plus ice cream; and while said mastication was in motion, I thought of the science of this place. Perhaps each dish is made to over stimulate the mind so that you just don't want to really eat that much; even if your goal in going to a buffet in the first place was to eat a large mass of different food. I often think of ways capitalism could work the mindless into giving away money for illusions. Now it was time for me to release a little

waste. Next to the bathroom door was a pay phone. It hit me, I should probably call my mother... i suppose it would be a nice gesture, even if that thought never crosses my mind. We don't have much of a relationship..that ended for me around 10 years old. Buut, I'm not a total asshole, so I'll call her up. So on my second pass, I put in the many damn quarters it took to run a payphone in 2004. My call was answered, and it was my mother. I don't like phones much, so I kept things short & sweet. She was happy to hear where I was, and that I was safe. I told her I just ate dinner & what my "mission" was for the moment. Being a pay phone, I was cut short before I knew it..good enough for me!

Now, with our bellies stuffed to maximum capacity, we got back to the semi-truck and rumbled back onto the interstate. For the rest of the night we sat and chain smoked. Constant country music continued to conclude that it is indeed much harder to let go of a John Deer, than a wife. I ignored the music as best as I could, usually by counting headlights or construction cones along our route. Time blurred into the night, only one of us having to pay attention to the world around us. I was happy that it wasn't me...

## Part Seven

It felt as if we were flyn' across the country in a spaceship. I was now el Captains second hand man, at the helm. And by helm, I mean a Mr. Coffee. The dashboard in this beast. was a wall full of buttons, switches & small lights that glowed ever so softly in a golden tone. I could feel the power it took for us to move at such speeds, yet within our bubble, all we could hear only a soft hum of the air conditioner.

Matt was getting sleepy, I knew this cause he'd turn on the radio when he was tired. We listened as other truckers chatted on the CB radio, tuned into all the strange people who drove. Matt told me about a man who once flew past his truck on a motorcycle around 120 mph in the middle of the night. The bike was in the left lane, and ahead of the bike was another trailer. This trailer was not only hiding within the dark of the moonless night, but also had no lights visible on the trailer. The biker, without having time to react, slammed into the back of the semi-truck at full speed. Matt called the driver via their CB radios. They both pulled over... Matts headlights illuminated the back of trailer which had just been hit, seeing a blood shaped body printed onto the back of the truck where the motorcyclists face & body became one with said trailer. The biker lay on the ground up the street, broken, mangled and dying. Matt recalled the man moving and groaning after a moment of stillness. His shattered body drunk on adrenaline and confusion. With the little life he had in him, he crawled onto his elbows in an attempt to raise his head. "Is my bike okay?" he asked, coughing out blood. "Is my bike okay?" Matt told him is bike was fine. The biker smiled, took a deep breath & dropped dead right there in the middle of the vacant interstate. His bike lay in pieces, scattered along the road for at least hundred feet. There was no one around, except for the two truck drivers & the warm lifeless body on the pavement.

The tails of the trucker life was entertaining. I told him how collaborating on book of all this madness with other drivers, would be fun to read. He told me of truckers racing in the middle of the night. Imagine being in one of these trucks traveling at 100mph. The night passed on with endless tales of trucker folklore. The light sound of the radio blended well with the air conditioner, creating a peaceful ambiance. We had been driving all night and the world ,again, was just a blur. I didn't know where we were, or what direction we were traveling. This was okay with me, for I felt a comfort in not being in control of thy path. I just relaxed, high up in my thrown, in our spaceship; flyn' down a dark & empty interstate.

It was early morning when we pulled into a large warehouse, located in a remote industrial park. Matt backed up the truck, like a pro, up to a loading dock... and jumped out. I sat inside the cab, while he did whatever it was he had to do. I looked through my stuff, checking what I had. My bags sat under his bed for a few days now. When I opened the clothing bag, I realized that my sweaty clothing, which I twisted up into a plastic grocery bag, had begun to mold. The gassy smell hit me like a mustard gas. "Holy Jesus" I thought, "I have created a goddamned monster!!" I quickly shoved it all back the plastic, doing my best to requarentine my modly linens before the toxic fumes reached anyone elses nasal cavity. I needed to find a place to wash them... or better yet, burn them. I lit a smoke, rolled down the window & prepped coffee to rid the cab of any evidence such smells. Matt came back after a little while, ready with another load. With a twist and a turn of the mighty engine, we pulled out of the park & headed back onto the road. We had started in New York, today we unloaded in South Carolina. Matt was ready to drive straight up to New York again. He was motivated to get things done. I was amazed at how many miles this guy could drive in one sitting. "You got to watch the drivers logs" he noted.. " The police can look months back & ticket you for whatever they way. Technically I need to be pulling over after 10 hours.. buuut I don't" He said without any worry in his tone. This was his damn truck & he will do what he pleases.

Matt had the night off from deliveries, and he wanted to sleep in a "real" bed on his night off. So, on his dollar, we found a hotel for the night. While he mingled with the staff & out the room, it was my job to secure as much KFC I could get with \$40. I wasn't too excited to eat that crap, but my lack of enthusiasm kinda changed when I walked in the door. There was something about the south, how fat the people were, that made me appreciate eating. When you have such common obesity, you know they at least making great food. In these parts, even the KFC equipt with a buffet. The whole wall was built into a large troth of fake food, reeking of lab made smells of fried chicken & biscuits. I thought about how much was shitty food sat steaming in front of me, and how this was only one of thousands of KFCs in the country. I'm sure there was another troth style franchise, a mear mile or two down the road. Millions of chicken murdered like the jews of WWII, so that "free" Americans can mindlessly treat food like toys. Our lack of a relationship with anything but our desires, is why kids today are labeled with 'ADD or ADHD'. In reality, these kids are suffering from 'Nature Deficit Disorder'. Yet we just write the youth off as troubled, and in a sick form of taking zero responsibility for the poisoning of our children, we instead fill their minds & bodies with whatever pill the government hands out & watch as they grow into drug addicts, criminals or just poor distracted people. It is said that we Americans end up throwing 40% of our food into landfills.. 40%. And yet I constantly see donation boxes at the cashier of almost every grocery store, like there is really a shortage of food. Our suffering seems to be caused by our own selfish ignorance & not from any lack of ability to provide. My mind raced with guilt & awe over this weird culture I was immersed in tonight, So I got three big to-go boxes & filled them to the brim with fried chicken, sugar filled coleslaw & far too many biscuits for two adults to consume.

Back at the hotel, Matt was layn' around watchn' TV. He picked up a pack of 20 shitty beers & was half way into his third bottle by the time I returned with my heavy load of fried carcass. . For the next half hour, we shamelessly gorged our faces. Being on the road & tryn' to embrace the lives of those for whom I was traveling with, I didn't say anything about my practices of conscious eating, non-alcohol or mindless television. Instead I remained humble & embraced this man's version of his American Dream. It would be worse, spiritually, for me to reject his culture & kindness by projecting my "ideas" of what we should be eating... He took me in, trusted me & was feeding me. I am not here to change any minds, simply to be one person who'll listen & embrace people for who they are... at least until they prove themselves useless.

I sat against the wall, munching away & drinking beer..indoors & warm. It only took a couple beers before my blood became infused with alcohol, and the mighty buss took over my usual balanced self. We sat around watching cop shows for a couple hours. I thought about the food & beer in my system, paying less and less attention to the TV. My eyes hurt from looking at the box, so I gathered my senses and headed outside for a smoke. I felt as if I was walking through water as a strong wind was doing its best to blow me around the parking lot. My depth perception was on leave, instead I was relying on a drunken version of myself to keep me standing... "Keep it steady, don't draw any attention" I mumbled under my breath, worrying about being seen by all but the two cars in the lot. There are few things better, than a smoke after eating too much food. I was happy, the night was warm and I was drunk.

A young man walked up to me, while I was smoking & talking to myself. He asked, in a calm and casual manner, if I wanted/needed any herbs. It's funny how many times this happens to me, strangers asking to sell or acquire herb. I always feel happy when people do so. I told him I had nothing to give him in trade, and that I was hitchhiking around. He was impressed and a little confused about how someone still does that in our modern and unstable society. Knowing he had no opportunity for making any money off of me, he politely ended the encounter and walked away. I finished my smoke, found a can to put it in, and shuffled back inside. Matt was on the bed, flippn' through the channels. He came across Def Jam Poetry on HBO. He watched for a minute, taking in a new type of culture unfamiliar with him, and asked if I was into it. I told him how spoken word was my first step into my love of music. He'd never watched or listened to Deff Jam Poetry, so he put down the remote & tuned in. For the next hour, we sat listening to the words of the people. I'll never forget watching DMX walk out on stage, the last person I thought I'd ever see on that show. I knew him as the tool he was on MTV, exploiting Queens, talkn' shit & exploiting the ignorance of the poor for the upper class to consume. On this night, I was able to hear what his heart really had to say. And for the five minutes he was talkn', I felt connected. It was good to see that he was still human, and despite the crap he produced for the machine, he still had something positive to say. Matt asked if I could share anything with him. How could I say no after all he'd done for me at this point? so I spoke:

Poets play with words to keep themselves sane  
While others using bullets to point their blame.  
On & On it goes, eye for an eye,  
This is the excuse we use to justify?  
Now y'all can't tell 'ya night from day,  
Cause 'ya sacrificed 'ya precious vision, for corrupt politicians.  
Fast cars, movie stars, retreating for comfort in bars.  
Easy woman, and guns for fun; slowly & blindly we've become undone.  
States & Countries, they all just a brand,  
Just another way to draw the lines in the sand.  
It's more than we, it's not just about us, so hit dem brakes I want off of this bus.  
I look at she as he looks at me & we are all just one nationality:  
It's Earth, there is no "land of the free", we are all stuck in this rut of no morality.  
Like a cop, y'all tend to snoop around, try'n' to bring another lonely soul on down.  
But my feet rest in the same sand, that left the first tracks of what we call a "man".  
We are only children of this sweet mother earth, so why 'ya try'n' to make life not even worth:  
Living proud & singing loud on this Land of the We, can't ya'll put the guns down & just try to be?  
Be One, One with each other, why y'all try'n' to kill one another  
'Ya know we're only here until we die, so can't we put the guns down and just try;  
to be One.

Matt sat in silence for a moment, looking into the void. When he came too, he told me how powerful my poem was for his life. He smiled and took in the moment.. with a big breath and a giggle, he reached over, pulled out two beers, cracked them open & said "cheers". "I hope to see you in the future gettn' your word out". He turned the TV back on & for the rest of the night, he watched what ever movies cable TV had to offer. I was sleepy, the beer & food burned through my metabolism fast & left me crashing as a high rate of speed. I could tell that Matt was a regular of such a diet, but I was not. I felt dirty as if the food was oozing out my skin, an attempt from my body to reject this first world filth. With the day behind us, I felt it was a good time for a hot shower. First shower in...oh I dunno, a couple weeks. It's funny how I didn't even think about a shower until late into the night. Most people in my place would've ran right into it as soon as the option of a shower was available...I guess I'm just a dirty, dirty boy. The water was as hot as I could get it. I often sit in the shower, directly under the water in lotus position. I meditate as the water hits the top of my head & finds its way down my locks and various paths around my skin. I breathe deep, thinking of my stress or expectations to let go of with each exhale. Being a Hotel, I don't have to worry about sharing the water; so I lose myself within the liquid. In an attempt to clean my clothing, I washed my socks in the shower with me. Dark, salty water diluted the shower floor as I rang out each sock. These poor socks have been put through Hell these last couple weeks, and I only had two pair with me. I had no time to wash the rest of my clothing, so I focused on getting clean socks..priority. The challenge of doing laundry would be faced soon enough. I was enjoying this shower far too much to concern myself with anything else at the moment.

After the long shower, I returned to the main room & made a nest of pillows and a blanket on the floor. The few times In my life I had slept in hotels,I slept on the floor.. so this night was not uncomfortable. Matt had a movie on, but he was passed out and snoring which was mostly drown out by said movie (thank jebus), so I rolled over into my nest and drifted away into la la land.

The next day, we got up early & wasted no time before finding ourselves back in the truck, chain smoking & communicating through comfortable silence. Leftover KFC was our breakfast, the stale biscuits went down like peanut butter, only to washed down with cigarettes & warm water found under my seat. The day was simple, nothing big to unfold , no great revelations came to me whilst lost in deep thought, seeded by being on the wide open American roads... today was just driving , sitting & small talk. I spent the next two weeks with Matt and his truck. Life became a routine; I slept in the morning on the bed after a night of rolling around between the seats. I never could get over the fear of kicking the gear shifter & still had yet to hit the damned thing at all. Day in and day out, we drank too

much coffee & smoked far too many marlboro reds. Hours of heartbreak & surprisingly graphic accidents sang out from the country music station, teaching me that country music is actually very dark shit.

One day we had to stop at a weigh station. I had always thought about these growing up; thinking about what our car full of the family weighed. One of the many things that intrigued me as a kid/ adult. Matt told me it might be illegal to have me in the truck, so I was instructed to hide in the back out of sight. The best spot to do so, was inside the beds storage compartment. For a second I was a little paranoid about getting busted. I crawled in, smelled my dirty clothing & tried not to breath... darkness & warm salty cabin air... I waited. Tried my best to tune into whatever was being said between the officials and Matt . Nothing happened, it really was uneventful. Matt popped open the lid & I crawled out of the trunk. I was officially a smuggled item... #59 now checked off my bucket list.

The time finally arrived, we got my clothing washed at a truck stop. Moldy, salt ridden clothing made for quite the face of disgust when Matt opened his bed and smelled my stank escaping from deep within my bag. With a full tank of fuel, Matt was given free use of the facilities... facilities I could use to get my ass back in fresh attire. It was a Sunday, and the first thing I noticed when I jumped out of the truck, was another semi-truck that converted into a church. This silly contraption was set up in the middle of this parking lot, for all to come & attain godliness. The trailer was a rolling church, and the humans responsible for this mess drove around from truck stop to truck stop trying to convert these poor bastards. The thing was empty, these people have to time to fear mongering & tales of petty family quarrels, they have Capitalism to keep alive. You inject God into their minds, and everything they know will fall apart. How can you deliver coveted goods, when God will strike you down for coveting?

The truck stop was like a small mall. This place was equipped with a full buffet, shopping, an Arcade, gambling, and there were movies to watch inside their very own theater room. What I needed was a laundry room..ignore the shiny objects and alluring buttons asking for mear quarters, in a chance to strike rich! Anyways, the morning was nice. I drank some coffee & looked around at humans being humans, while Matt did what he needed. We didn't spend long here before we were back "on the road again..." (insert music here, you know the tune) Looking out the window for hours became my meditation; I didn't even hear the engine anymore. I sat high above the pesky four door sedans and minivans which looked like bugs from my might vantage point. I may as well been inside the ISS, peering down the the world through my little window. I felt invincible in this machine, and was well aware of the near romantic lifestyle of being a trucker. The land we drove through was amazing. The mountains of West Virginia were vast and something I'd never seen before. Winding through dense forests, climbing hundreds of feet up steep mountain roads, through tiny communities seemingly cut off from the fast paced world around them. We drove along a thin mountain road which dropped off hundreds of feet, straight down into an unforgiving forest floor so dense, you could not see through the canopy from our position. The small villages which were scattered throughout the forest looked like scars in the forests from this height. Trucker run offs lay every mile or alongside this stretch of highway, which allowed out of control vehicles to veer off the highway and up a path cut out of the mountain into a pile of sand. I was thinking how fun it would be to just test one out, how far up would this truck plow through if given the chance...this was a chance we did not take, for our brakes did not fail. Hours past through the day, and we pushed on through the beautiful forests, getting ever closer to our next destination.

## Part Seven

The day eventually came and I was going to be dropped off. I'd spent two weeks with Matt, driving up and down the east coast. It was a great bond, and at the same time I still felt like a stranger. Knowing from day one that he could kick me out at any time kept me a little distant for some reason. We had not shared much in ways of emotional communication, but we indeed bonded in a positive way. By this time I was out of my rhythm of walking around or finding places to sleep or eat. We pulled in a truck stop near New England. Before we got out, Matt spent a few minutes talkn' to other truckers on his radio, askn' if I could get a ride. No one really was down for it. So He filled up the truck, and he gave me the receipt for a free shower. We went in the truck stop, up a flight of stairs and found a hallway of showers. One had to slide the given receipt into a little feed above the handle, much like a hotel key & the facility would unlock. One was free to shower as long as you wanted, just no leaving the room. The door would lock again once you walked out. So it was one more shower for me, and then I unpacked my gear and skateboard. We said our goodbyes, which was simple and brief.. as men do, and before 'ya knew it he back in his own world. I spent a while at the station. First I just sat down outside the building and rolled a smoke. I noticed a lot of trucks with Nascar trailers, so I asked about it. There was a race in the state & all the trucks had the race cars which were depicted on their trailer, inside said trailers.. If I cared about that "sport" I would've asked to see some, but I

don't care about American racing. I can appreciate formula one racing, the stuff you see in Italy..or motorcycles racing through tiny European villages at 200 mph, inches away from putting their side view mirror through the head of old man Willy, whos standing near feet from these adrenaline fueled maniacs. The trucks lines up as if in formation, delivering military equipment to the front lines, They all let out a mighty roar through their horns & the parade of Nascar trailers were off. I sat alone and watched the many different faces & people who lived in the trucks. One trucker came up to me and asked if I wanted a ride. He was overweight and sweaty, wore a pink bandana around his neck & talked with a lisp. Something hiding in his eyes felt a little strange, my instincts never let me down, so I said I was okay. He was driving out to Arizona and said I could go along till Phoenix. I didn't want to risk being stuck in a desert. I had never been to the southwest, and I knew nothing about surviving in that terrain. A million thoughts of being stuck in the desert and burning up in the sun ran through my mind instantaneously. This was no place for my unqualified ginger ass. Thus this was the first offer for a ride I denied. Besides, I had a feeling this human was expecting tasks from his passengers I was not going to perform...not for him at least.

With a smile, I went back to people watching. I lost track of time while observing my surroundings and taking notes. I only counted a couple female truckers the whole time I was sitting. I noticed a bunch of young drivers, some of whom stopped and chatted with me. Most of them mentioned how they can't smoke herb while working for the truck companies, which was their only major complaint about the work they were in. Although, it was okay if they drank every night if they wanted, but any trace of the ganja in their urine, it would be the end of their job & certain moral castration. I learned about their pay, most getting \$.30 per mile. It was funny to me how I didn't ask Matt any of these questions the whole time I was with him. Just being quiet with a stranger & being in the moment. No ice to break, we have all evolved to be in this present moment, what ice is there to break?

Not many people looked in any direction but the ground. Most of these humans walked around like zombies, burnt out from being on the road. I noticed a few ladies making their way around to idoling trucks, like Jehovah's witnesses. After only half watching without much thought, it struck me.. these people are selling the Almighty Pussy! I came to learn the proper nomenclature is 'Lot Lizard'. I let my peripherals do the spying, but saw no accepted offers take place. Instead the women roam around the parking lot like Seagulls, hoping to find something worth putting in their mouth.

After sitting for an hour or so, letting my clothing dry from the sink washing, I felt it was a good time to try and eat something before my next move. I had no cash, so this was going to be interesting... As I stood up, a trucker approached me and asked about a 35mm camera I had around my neck. "I'll give you \$50 bucks for it, my wife wants to take pictures of our trip..it's her first time riding with me". I only had half the roll shot, but was interested in the offer. Without giving it time to become an emotional decision, I unloaded the roll & sold the camera. I was feeling relief, I had money enough to get a meal & maybe some nuts to stash away. I went inside the truck stop, straight to their buffet. It was a mix of the classic American fun food: Chinese, Fried meat, a little Italian and some salads.

I ate all I could, and sat around for a bit more outside. A driver handed another ticket for a shower, but I never used it. I ended up gettn' a ride with a couple who lived on the road together. Their truck was filled with completely with garbage. I was thankful for a ride, but in shock that people could function in such a mess.. and the fact they STOPPED at a rest area & did not throw all these empty fast food containers away. They talked about themselves, getting sidetracked into mini arguments if one person did not properly represent the other in whatever empty story they were unleashing on me. Between their rapid fire small talk & their mobile hoarding lifestyle, I did not retain anything they said.. just instinctually tuning in at the right moments, so that I appeared to give a shit. "ohhh that's funny" I would respond.. " yeah, I've never been to Kentucky..not yet" I shoved in. I sat in the back of the cabin on their bed, which was the only spot not covered their gluttonous mess. It wasn't a long ride; I ended up at another stop about two hours north. I thought I was going to have another mess getting on the road. This truck stop was small and out of any easy way for me to be on foot.. plus the afternoon was bleeding into the evening. Thankfully, a young crew working for Mayflower moving offered a ride in exchange for help. They were headed to Boston Massachusetts to unload someone's life. I jumped in, promising my ability to work hard & outlift any of them... which was all they wanted to hear. They crew had worked together long enough, that I could sit back & enjoy this ride without having to participate in the conversations. They all had no problems laughing the time away with stupid stories of excess drinking or petty fighting...your typical Masshole. By the time we got to the city, it was dark. The trailer was double high, so as we got deeper into the old dense neighborhoods, the truck felt smaller and smaller with each block we passed. The drivers were on a mission, looking for a house full college kids, tucked away in the middle of a small street. All the houses looked the same.. tightly packed city blocks of aged houses, that looked in need of serious TLC. Boston was an old city, and the architecture and attitudes have hardly changed in the last hundred years. We rolled around in this massive truck slowly, all of our eyes on the street signs. First one to spot the street wins... it was that kind of suspense in the cabin. This was fun for me, cause it felt as if we became a big inconvenience to those driving behind us. I liked watching how quickly the common folk unravel in such situations. One slight inconvenience and the

dedicated social fabric falls apart.. horns and middle fingers all around us, as we searched for our destination. Once the street was spotted, the truck carefully turned into the sidestreet, squeezing down the lane. The trailer seemed as if it was going to get tangled in the power lines. Tree branches were no match for this beast, and we took with us a few deciduous samples that twisted and broke off into our mirrors, as we inched our way up to the house. We now took up the whole street.. Boston clearly did not plan for humans to possess such large transportation when they designed these neighborhoods. The breaks released air pressure & we came to a rumbling stop. Cars behind us quickly learned they, and we, weren't going anywhere soon. For some soulless people, honking without end is the only way to communicate how they feel. . Personally, the sound of horns, alarms & clocks drive my mind crazy. So after ten seconds of the relentless honking, I walked behind the truck & began use various universal hand gestures, communicating to these people that they are idiots. One older man stepped out of his safe space and yelled to me how he was going to use his trusty police service to make us move. Some people have no ability to adjust to situations they do not control. So with one or two hyperventilated phone calls, a parole car pulled up on the front side of the truck. The officer approached us with a calm stride. We told him what we had to do, and that we would only be in the way as little time as possible. He was okay with that. "Get it done,don't mess around... and don't pull your backs" He walked around to the back of the truck; making his way to the unruly crowd of first world problem havers and told the people to wait quietly or turn around.

The college kids came out and as a team, and with ease, we moved in all their stuff: Couches, TV's, Bags, Chairs, a fridge, some boxes...bed frames. A couple of their chairs challenged us a bit, tryn' to get their awkward shapes into the old and narrow door frame. In the end, it was a fun task. The kids were thankful, and while the driver passed around a clipboard for signatures, a couple of the kids smoked a joint with me after all was said and done. The driver was eager to leave, so I only took a little puff & ran back into the truck. I was paid \$60 for helping out, and was dropped off about a mile or two down the road. By this time, it was 2:00am or so. I said my thanks for the ride, and for the work. I loaded up and they left. Now I was in Lowell, MA standing in a run down section of a sleeping town. Across the street was a loan taxi killing time under a dim streetlight. I thought about the area, and if the driver ever had any walkers out at this time. I wasn't standing for five minutes before the taxi driver came up to me. The window rolled down, and inside was a comfy looking taxi driver loving life & loving the night. For the sake of the story, I feel like calling him Jack. Jack said he'd give me a ride for a while for free. I took the offer and got in the back. I love taxis and I'd only been in one Chicago as a kid. So I was in a great mood about getting a free ride. I was taken outside the city. I was so sleepy from the day, so I was thankful but not looking for a long chat about this and that. I listened to his CB radio, the driver check in as he worked his way up to a good spot to let me out. A few miles north, I was let out and the car slipped away into the night. I didn't waste any time looking for a place to sleep. I found refuge in a small patch of pines along a main street. It was late, so nobody was driving. This made it easier for me to feel comfortable to crash. My skateboard became my bed, my bag my pillow. It didn't take long for me to start another trip into the dream world.

When I woke, the day was in full swing. From my perspective, the cars near me sounded like a river. I looked at the sky for a while, letting myself wake up slowly. I came to and felt something on my leg, so I looked. I was covered in Ants! Hundreds of these little bastards all over me! Who know how many i involuntarily consumed while asleep... I felt violated. They had crawled all over me during the night, maybe I passed out right atop their property. Still, I freaked out; so I jumped up to remove the little rascals. I gathered myself & then my things. With some push ups, and a cigarette, It was time to skate for another day. Down the street from me was a gas station, so I looked for a phone to call my mother. My mother picked up & told me she would be in Keene, NH that afternoon. If I could make it there from Nashua, NH I could then ride back to VT with her. If not, what's a couple more hours at that point? I took the challenge and began to ride. It was still early in the morning; therefore I wasn't really in a big hurry. The road was well made, so I was ready for a day of skating after a couple weeks of sitting. I loaded up my bag & started to roll down the road nice & easy. The weather was nice & warm, and I felt well rested for the day. Nothing really happened that day, just try & picture 5 hours of skateboarding at about 10 mph. Stopping to run into the bush, keep skating. Stop to adjust my backpack straps, skate on. I stopped to try and spend my last couple dollars for a lunch. This doesn't really buy you anything, so I ended up with crap food. I sat behind a supermarket, in the shade of the stores side alley shrubs. I thought I'd be able to ride straight through the day, but my feet started to burn. I was familiar with this sensation, and it never got any easier to deal with. These terrible shoes was such a poor choice, it put this whole adventure at risk. Still.. it is what I had at the time. I am poor, and they came from a thrift store.. and in the end, shoes are shoes. I made them work.

The sun was hot already, and my mind was tired of all the movement of the last few weeks. This last stretch of road was already weighing on me. When you see the finish line, it can feel like laughing while holding something heavy.. it all fall apart. Snack time was just enough for me & and after a few minutes in the shade, I was ready to get moving

again. I could never really sit for too long. Even if my thoughts were to sit for an hour and relax, I would sit for maybe 5 minutes before I felt antsy. I like the pain of my burning muscles, I like to feel tired and still push myself to skate more. I didn't need to be awake to skate, just balance & push. Many nights of my life had been spent skating back to my dwelling in an exhausted like state of mind. I knew the roads of my town so well, I could sense where the next crack in the road would be. I did not live in a city, so most roads after the sun went down, would be very dark. Street lights are hardly a thing in the northeast. Trusting yourself & the flow of the Universe is what skateboarding at night or day taught me. It was always a place I could relax & think... even if I was exhausted from the physical aspect of skateboarding, my mind was at peace.

It was time for me to get moving, If I sat for much longer it would be harder for me to get up. Workers from within the store had made their way out to the area where I was sitting for a smoke or whatever. I can tell when I'm in a town where everyone knows everyone; so when I show up and sit under some bush behind the local shopping center, I look like an alien just landed. I save the last bit of the snack I had for later consumption & I walk to the road leading west toward Keene, NH. The sound of my longboard wheels smacking to the ground is always something that gets me going.. like Lebowski listening to bowling on his headset. Puts me in 'the zone', if you will. I pulled the bag up onto my shoulders, pulling the straps as tight as they'll go and with one good push off the hot tar, I was moving again. It was smooth sailn' for the next ten miles or so. I was following some highway in NH that connected to Vermont. Today's ride was wonderful. Most of this road had been remodeled recently & felt very nice under my big wheels. Everything I'd learned, seen, felt was still new to I path. While riding on a nice road, it's effortless to reflect on Life & Time; whatever the two may be. I had been thinkn' about Matt, what he'll be doing in ten years. What he would be doing if he had a month off. He was very quiet, yet was not shy to laugh at the right time. A life of driving an incredible machine; floating around the country. Bringing one thing to the next, over and over again. Where was the little blue car today? How is the half naked man & his van? I rode down the highway, lost in thought...my left foot rhythmically pushing off the hot black top while matched with my steady breath.

I felt as if a great weight lifted of my shoulders as I rode, and without time for my brain to process the sudden change in weight distribution, my bag hit the ground as I sped along down the highway. I still had the metal frame strapped to my shoulders. The backpack could no longer bare the weight of my crap any longer. It was done, over it... ready for brunch and a mimosa. So it said "fuck this" and jumped to its death. I jumped off the deck into the overgrown grass alongside the highway. Little metal rings which held the bag to the frame had bent open. I looked only for a moment before thinking about what I had on me to replace the lost rings. The sun was hot, blasting my body with its endless power. I was tryn' not to sit as not to let fatigue set in. I opened up the smaller outside pockets on the bag first; thinkn' they'd be the place to look for odd random items...nothing. Well perhaps I grabbed some zip-ties from something...nope. Rope? No. I didn't know what to do. So I took the string out of my right shoe. My right foot is always on the board, so I don't really need to have the shoe super tight. I cut the lace into smaller pieces & began to fix the backpack. IF that doesn't work, I'm leaving it for someone to find. The shoeace worked like a...well a shoelace. I tied the bag back onto its metal frame and it held. Back to the road, it was nice have had to stop on the top of a long but shallow grade hill. One good push and I coasted along for at least the next ten minutes. This feeling is one of my favorites in life.

As I rode along, a station wagon pulled over ahead of me. I slowed a little as rolled up to the passenger's window. "Hey, looks like you're on a long trip. This road doesn't get anywhere for a long while. So I figured I'd see if you wanted a ride..." A friendly sounding feller called out to me. He seemed like a chill dude, so I took the kind offer. I sat in the front, and It was a nice change. "You got the time brother?" I asked. "It's about 3:00pm". I'd been skating for a good chunk already. I must have started the day around 6:00am..I usually wake up around then or even earlier if I sleep on the ground. Turns out I had made it a little past the halfway mark between Nashua and Keene, NH. This guy (Tom) was on his way home from work. And he was heading right to Keene, so it worked out quite well. As he drove, he told me of the seventies, being here & there, living in New England. I shared that he was likely to be my last interaction on my trip, and he was honored to be part of my final chapter. He then insisted that I chill out & he turned on some music. I looked out the window at the passing Earth. It never takes long for me to slip away when in a moving car.. I can't help it.

I woke up to see familiar sights all around me. Shops, streets, and mountains I knew. I was in Keene. Tom asked where I needed to go. I noticed a plaza I'd been to as youth and asked if I could be let out there. The sun was still awake, but the day was a little past it's peak. I said "thanks for the love", and Tom wished me the best. He drove off and I sat in the empty parking lot. After a smoke and considering if I even wanted to call it quits, I called my mother (From a Pay Phone) to let her know I'd made it to the "city". I wanted to push West, but had seriously packed all the wrong things. Plus the truckers I was with sent me in a big circle back into New England, so I took it as a sign... Quit while I'm ahead. There is always room for another walk of faith in the future. I felt accomplished, and satisfied with my

journey. Now all I had to do was wait for my mother. Knowing her, she could be on her way already or will take 5 hours to show up.

My trip was done, just like that I was back the places that made me feel empty and depressed... Back in a small and dead state, I wanted so badly to escape. But where was there to go? From the many miles I had traveled, I could hardly tell much difference between one place and the next... Sports teams may have different colored uniforms, but its all the same. Same litter on the same empty streets. The same shitty chinese food open next to the same used car lots. After weeks of being with myself, I learned I was only trying to escape myself. And by forcing true quality time alone, I can appreciate myself a little more, no matter what shitty city or town I'm stuck in.. ignore the angry humans hunting for drama or purity, and focus on my craft.

My head had not yet begun to process my journey. I sat quietly ready for a shower. Ready to challenge my mind, body & passions in life. At this point in my life, I am blessed to overstand the world and people around me in a unique way. Spiritual endurance keeps me moving, knowing Life evolved millions of years of total chaos to be here today.. and our problems are skin deep... systems we chain ourselves to, religions we become hooked on like heroin, anything to not feel alone. But this fear is an illusion... I set out alone, embracing pure ALONE time & in truly letting go, I became connected to everything. It is the secret TAO... trick questions of the Universe. Yin is Yang and Yang is Yin. We are indeed a complicated bunch of beautiful idiots, we are all in this Divine Chaos together. Chaos is rooted deep within the fire that drives my odd but unique path.

The mighty sun began to drift into the horizon, casting vibrant colors across the perfect summer sky. I sat in the plaza, small among the large commercial buildings atop endless amounts of pavement, which held all of this weight above the savage dirt trapped below.