

Hitchin' USA

By Peace Nick Mann

FOREWORD / DISCLAIMER

This book (still in progress) is a mixture of actual events that I experienced when I decided to hitchhike the country in the early '90s as well as stories told to me by other travelers and people that picked me up or helped me in any fashion. Most of the names and some of the places have been changed to keep anonymity intact.

This book / script / serial / whatever is dedicated to all the people who have ever helped another person in need and especially of course to all the people that helped me get across America, and since.

If anyone met me or still has a business card that I printed in '94 or if you just like the book then please contact me at:
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Silly ?s welcome also

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I get off work at the library in [Union City, New Jersey](#) and get my check. I walk with another page, Glenda, over to Mickey D's and we talk about how much working sucks. She says that when you have no schedule, stress disappears. I tell her that people invented time anyway so we should all just relax about it. I give her a hug and leave to go to a check cashing place.

I cash my check and start walking uptown so I can get some herb. I get tired of seeing all the idiots walking down the street, so I walk from Kennedy down towards the railroad tracks. I see Jay, Chris and Alex crossing the street so I rush to catch up to them.

"Hey guys, what's up?" I ask.

"Nothin' much", says Jay, "We're gonna walk to New York. Wanna come?"

"How?"

"You'll see."

"Does anyone have any weed?" I ask.

"Yeah, we just picked up."

"Cool. Yeah I'll come."

We start walking down the railroad tracks until we reach the Amtrak tunnel. We wait for a train to pass and then we run to the mouth of the tunnel. Chris, Alex and I walk along the tracks since there is a 4-foot long indentation approximately every twenty feet along the

walls that line the tracks. We can wait in them whenever a train comes. Jay is scared to walk down here so he walks on top of the wall lining the tracks. He just runs to an emergency exit between the east and west tunnels every time a train comes and waits there.

We smoke a blunt and keep ducking from the trains every ten minutes or so and then we reach the Weehawken exit. We go aboveground again and smoke another blunt. Chris has a white spray paint can, so we all tag on the walls nearby. My graffiti tag's Sik Fuk.

Then we go back down the stairs and towards New York. After about another half hour we finally see the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel.

The emergency exits between the tunnels had ended shortly after we passed Weehawken but still Jay was scared to come down and walk along the tracks. When we saw a train come into the mouth of the tunnel we yelled at Jay to come down with us but he refused. He laid down on the walkway above the tracks and we saw the train come into the mouth of the tunnel and stop in its tracks. It sat there for about five minutes when a voice called out on an intercom, "Hey kid, c'mere!!"

Chris, Alex and I got out of our holes and start running down the tracks to catch up with Jay, who started running as soon as the intercom called out. We climbed up a ladder to the wall that Jay had lain down on. We were within 50 feet of the Weehawken exit when the train breezed in slowly next to us and stopped. We kept running, but then a hand snatched Jay between two cars

and pulled him in. The three of us stopped running and walked up to the train.

It was an Amtrak security guard that had snatched Jay. We all get on the train and he escorts us to the very front car. On the way we get glared at by all the yuppies that are on the train so of course we make smartass remarks to them.

"What are you guys doing? Don't you know that you can get killed doing stupid stunts like this?" says the guard.

"Actually you can get killed just by sitting in front of your TV if your ceiling decides to fall on your head", says Jay.

"Yeah, very funny. Seriously what are you guys doing?"

I say, "We wanted to go to New York but don't have any money. So we figured we should just walk it."

"Well then why didn't you just walk over the GWB?"

"Too far."

"Everyone has to tell me your names and then we'll get off in Newark, OK?" says the guard.

So he writes down all our names except mine since I lie and say I was Tracy Marrow. That's Ice-T's real name.

We then get to the Newark Amtrak Station and the guard gets off and escorts us up to the Path trains and asks a cop if it would be okay for us to hop after he explains our situation. The cop goes for it, so we hop and go over to [New York City](#).

We go to Washington Square Park and Alex buys more weed so we then walk up to Tompkins Square Park and smoke there since there are generally less cops up there.

We smoke a few joints and then get bored and decide to go back to Joizey. My apartment is first from Journal Square and so I go home since I am supposed to go to work in the morning. As soon as I get in my bed I pass out.

My alarm clock blares at me at 6:30 in the morning so I turn it off but then my TV comes on with Willard Scott showing some century old prune to me. I again wish I didn't set my TV to turn on, but I know that without it I have no chance of ever getting up on time. I go take a shower and come back to my room to get dressed for my job at a pharmacy stocking shelves.

As I am putting on my socks, a report comes on about the Mardi Gras in New Orleans coming up in February. I think about how much fun that would be and then I think about how much I hate my jobs. I'm about to have to find another place anyway because my roommate and I were arguing a lot, so I decide, "Fuck it." and pack up my backpack which I got from getting cancer miles from Marlboro. All I pack is a sleeping bag, a jacket, four changes of clothes, three books, (a Stephen King, a William Gibson and a Dave Barry) and about ten metal, punk and rap cassettes and my radio.

I call the library and my supervisor answers.

"Union City Library, how may I help you?" she says.

"Diane, it's Peace. I'm not going to make it in today." I say.

"OK but realize this is your second unexcused absence. One more and you can be fired. I'll see you tomorrow." she says.

"Actually, no you won't. I'm not going to be in tomorrow either. I quit." I say and hang up before she can talk any sense into me. I call the Drug Emporium I also work at and tell them I quit also. I put on my backpack and go down to my grandmother's house. I tell her what I am planning to do.

"So you're gonna hitchhike down to New Orleans to go to the Mardi Gras? You're gonna be killed."

"Grandma, I have more faith in people than that. I know there are some lunatics out there but I believe most people are nice. I can't stand my two jobs and want to see a Mardi Gras before I die." I say.

"Just give me a hug and wish me well please. We have been arguing lately over bullshit and I don't want to leave with any anger between us. I will call collect once a week so that you know where I am. Don't worry about me, I will be fine." I say.

"Are you sure this is what you want to do? It's going to be dangerous and you will be broke. How will you eat?" she asks.

"Where there's a will, there's a way, or so I hear." I say.

"I am going to worry about you, but I know how pigheaded you can be, so I know you will leave anyway. I hope you make it there and have fun. I've always wanted to go to a Mardi Gras also. C'Mere and give me a hug."

I walk over to her and we hug. We watch TV together for my last time before leaving. I'm sure she thinks I'm

bluffing, but I get my backpack, give her a hug and go out.

I leave and walk up to Central Boulevard and buy an atlas and a sleeping bag. I then go to McDonald's and eat. I walk down Hudson Turnpike to a truckstop and call Grandma. She answers and I say goodbye to her again. She says that of course I can call her collect every week. I call a lot of my friends and tell them all goodbye. They all think I am joking and tell me they'll see me tomorrow.

I walk into the truckstop and ask all the drivers if anyone is going south. No one says they are. I eat again and go outside. I am now down to 6 dollars. A trucker pulls into the lot and I ask him if he is going south and he tells me he will be going to South Carolina in the morning. I ask if he will take me and he agrees. He tells me to meet him in the morning and goes into the truckstop. I go behind the truckstop and smoke a joint and it hits me how crazy it is what I am planning to do.

I watch the sunset as it begins to rain. I go across the street and stand inside a phone booth so I can stay dry. I end up sleeping in the damn thing.

In the morning I go over to the truck and Bill asks me if I am ready. I tell him yes and climb in. We go to Interstate 95 and start heading south.

"So, where are you heading to?" says Bill.

"I am on my way to the Mardi Gras in New Orleans, but first I want to see my sister in South Carolina."

We drive all the way through Massachusetts and stop at a Petro truckstop in [Rutherfren, Virginia](#) and have

dinner. We eat and talk some and then hit the road pretty much nonstop until we reach [Columbia, South Carolina](#). I go to an old high school and wish I paid attention when I was in school.

I head to the Columbia Mall and find some kids outside smoking pot so I ask if I can smoke with them. They let me and they ask me where I'm from. I tell them New York City and they all are struck with awe. They ask me a lot of questions about the City and I answer as best as I can.

I then walk to a Quincy's restaurant and sit down at a recently emptied table and order a refill of the soda that was there. The waitress obviously knows that I wasn't eating with the group that was there beforehand but she gives me a soda anyway and asks me if I want anything to eat. I say yes and she gets me a burger and fries. I eat and she talks with me for a while and then I go call my sister from a payphone.

"Hey Danielle, what's up?" I say.

"Nothin much, who's this?"

"Peace."

"I thought you lost your long distance again."

"I did. I'm in Columbia."

"What? How did ya get down here?"

"I hitchhiked."

"Bullshit."

"No, really. I'm going to the Mardi Gras in New Orleans."

"Want me to come get you?"

"What, you drive now? Hell yeah. I'll wait here for you.
I'm at the Quincy's"

"Okay, I'll be right there."

"See you then."

I sit outside and smoke a cigarette. In a few hours, my sister shows up in her bug. She gets out and we hug.

"I swear I thought you were full of shit! I thought I was gonna be pissed that I came all the way out here." says Danielle.

"Nah. I decided I wanted to go to Mardi Gras because I was getting sick of my stupid jobs. Work sucks."

"Yeah it does, but shit. Hitchhiking's crazy. You should go home."

"Fuck it. I'm gonna just take a mini-retirement now. What if I go to college, get a job, go to work for 50 years, then get hit by a bus on my 63rd birthday? I'm just going to retire now for a few years. "

"Yeah but what if you get picked up by a lunatic and killed now? Then you wouldn't have lived at all."

"Yeah but you know what? I have more faith in people than that. I think there are still enough good people in the world that I should be able to make it. I'll probably get tired of it after Mardi Gras anyway and go home then. "

"Okay. I hope so. Let's go."

We get into her car and we go to her house in [Taylors, South Carolina](#). She shows me the couch to sleep on and we talk for a while and catch up on the time we've been apart.

"What are we gonna do tomorrow?" I say.

"I have to go to school in the morning and I was thinking that you should come with me."

"What are you crazy? Wouldn't that get you in trouble?"

"No, I've brought my old boyfriend before. No problem."

"Well that's fine with me. I've got no plans anyway of course."

"I gotta go to bed. I'm tired."

"Okay. Goodnight. Sleep well, Sweet dreams and all that crap."

"Goodnight."

She goes to bed and I watch TV for a while before passing out.

In the morning I wake up because I hear her taking a shower. I still can't believe that I got this far this fast for free. She attempts to sing while in the shower and I wish I were still asleep. She gets out and I feign sleep.

"Wake up! Time to go to school."

"Fuck. I thought I finished high school already. I'm 19. I hope you know some cuties for me."

"I do but I don't think they're easy enough for you."

"Gee, thanks. Alright I'm gonna take a shower."

"Hurry up."

She goes into her room and starts to get dressed. I take my shower and do not sing just in case I'm as bad as she is. I dry up and go out into the living room. There is a new set of clothes on the bed.

"Where the heck did these come from?" I say.

"An ex. He was about the same size as you. I looked through your backpack and all your clothes are too trashy for me to introduce you to people. Just put these on and we're outta here."

I know better than to argue with her so I just get dressed and we get in her VW and start driving to her school.

"My first class is History. The teacher is half blind and never calls roll anyway so you can come in with me."

"Are you sure? I don't wanna get you in trouble."

"Don't worry about it. If I'm not worried, why are you?"

"True. But if you do get in any trouble I don't want to hear any shit about it."

"That's fair."

We pull into the parking lot of her school and walk towards the front entrance. She introduces me to a few of her friends and keeps boasting about the fact that I hitchhiked down here. Naturally, everyone tells me I'm crazy. We walk into the school, which seems to have been built recently. I follow her to her classroom and she rushes me in to sit at a desk next to her. In about five minutes, the teacher walks in and goes straight to the blackboard and starts writing the day's assignment. He completely doesn't notice that I've never been here before and I even answer some questions.

The bell rings when the class ends and we walk out into the hallway.

"Okay my next class is Science and this teacher is a complete bitch and would notice you. You have to find something to do for an hour. Sorry." says my sister.

"No problem. Where do all the juvenile delinquents here hang out? I need a cigarette anyway."

"Just go out the door at the end of this hall, make a left and go past the gym. There's an area to the right of it that for some reason the teachers here have never found out about yet. There's usually a bunch of kids smoking cigarettes there or even that pot shit."

"Sounds good to me. I'll be back here when this class ends. Think maybe you can cut out early? School sucked the first time around and this is only reminding me of how much it does."

"Maybe. There's this guy named Chris that smokes there a lot. I think he's cute. If you can talk him into coming with us then maybe we can go see a movie or something."

"Consider it done."

She goes to her class and I make my way to the smoking section. When I get there, there are seven kids hanging out there smoking.

"Hey. Someone give me a cigarette please. Are any of you guys Chris?"

One tall kid wearing a leather jacket and torn jeans walks over and gives me a cigarette.

"I'm Chris. Who the hell are you?"

"My name's Peace. I hitchhiked down here from NYC and am visiting my sister Danielle. She dragged me to one class already and wants to drag me to more. I asked if she'd cut out early and she said only if you would come. She thinks you're cute."

"Danielle Mann?"

"Yeah."

"No shit? Hell yeah I 'm down. Do you smoke bud?"

"Hell yeah. Let me just bum a cigarette first."

I finish the nasty ass Marlboro he gave me and then we smoke a joint between 4 of us. Three of the other kids bounced as soon as we lit the joint.

"So what are you dude's names?" I ask the other three.

"That's Brian in the jeans jacket. This is Jeff and Ron. They're brothers." says Chris.

"Did you really hitchhike down here from New York?" says Brian.

"No. I really came from New Jersey but it sucks there so I deny it. I spend all my time in NYC though."

"That's still far. You're crazy, man." says Ron.

"Someone's got to do it. So who else wants to cut today?"

"I will." says Brian.

"We have too many absences to take off today", says Jeff as he passes me the joint.

I take 2 deep drags and pass it to Brian. Then I use Ron's marker to write Sik Fuk on the wall, this time putting "NYC Ya Later' under the tag.

We talk more and they ask me a lot of questions about New York City. They can't believe that there are actually stores in New York that you can buy pot from. I tell them that is one of my favorite things about the city.

"Well, class is about to end. You guys ready?"

"Yeah." says Brian and Chris. We say bye to Jeff and Ron.

"One last thing," says Ron, "Where are you going? I know you didn't hitchhike all the way down here just to check out Taylors."

"No. I'm on my way to a Mardi Gras in New Orleans. I just wanted to say hi to Danielle on the way."

"Awesome! Can I come?" says Brian.

"How old are you?"

"17"

"Nope. If you were 18 I might think about it but it would be harder with two people anyway."

"Shit. Well good luck, man."

"Thanks."

The brothers walk off and Chris, Brian and I walk to Danielle's class and wait outside. The bell rings and she comes out. She looks surprised to see Chris.

"So you're down with this, Chris?" she says.

"Hell, yeah. I was just gonna go home anyway. You don't mind if Brian comes do you?"

"No problem. I'm not sure what we're gonna do yet though."

"Well I want to see Freejack. It's supposed to be pretty good. Is there a theater near here that might have it?" I say.

"I think so. Let's get to the car."

We walk through the parking lot and I am surprised at how many Beetles are in the parking lot.

We get to her car and Brian and I crawl into the back seat, better suited for a real beetle than people. Chris sits in the front next to Danielle and we take off.

"Wait up. How much money do we have?" says Danielle.

Everyone counts up and we find out that we have a total of 7 dollars between the four of us.

"Shit!! How are we gonna do this?" says Brian.

"I'll buy a ticket and you guys wait by the back door and I'll open it for you." I say.

"What if we get kicked out?" says Danielle.

"Then we don't get to see it. If I don't try, we can't see it anyway so what do we have to lose?"

"Makes sense."

We drive to the theater and we find out that it's playing in theatre 5. I ask them if they know where the back door is for that theatre. Brian says he knows, so I go get the ticket and the three of them walk to the back. I walk into the theatre and it is before the coming attractions. The lights go down and I walk over to the exit door. I open it and am pissed because the door goes directly outside and lets the sunlight in. The three of them rush in and we all go to the back row and sit down. The commercials come and go and the movie starts. Chris is sitting next to Danielle and they are whispering into each other's ears. After about 15 minutes, a theatre worker comes in with a flashlight and makes his way down to the exit door. He opens it and looks out. He comes back up the aisle and points his flashlight at Brian and I.

"Let me see your tickets." he says.

I pull out my ticket and show it to him. I then drop it into Brian's lap. He shows it to the guy and then he asks Danielle to see hers. Brian tries to drop it into her lap but the guy sees it and tells us to come with him. We get up and go out into the lobby. The manager comes over

and talks to us. He asks us to show him our tickets but now no one has one because the usher took the one we had. He tells us to leave so we do.

"Well, now what?" I say as we head to the car.

"We can go to my house. My parents aren't home." says Chris.

"Sounds like a plan."

We all pile into the car again and head over to his house. We pull up in front and Danielle parks. We get out and go inside. He puts some Guns N Roses on the stereo and pulls out a big fat joint from a cookie jar on the mantle.

"I can't believe you smoke that shit!" says Danielle to Chris.

"Hey, it's better than drinking."

"How?"

"I don't want to beat people up if I smoke a joint."

Brian, Chris and I smoke the joint and Danielle goes outside and waits.

"Do you think that means I don't have a chance now Peace?" Chris says.

"I have no idea. It's been a few years since I saw her. I didn't even know she doesn't like it. Good luck, but before you try anything I want to be out of town. She is my little sister, you know."

"True. No problem."

We finish smoking and I go outside and get Danielle. She comes in and we just sit there and watch TV for a few hours. After a while Danielle and I go home. We just

watch more TV and she asks me when I'm gonna leave. I tell her I want to leave in the morning because so far this time we have avoided any arguments. We just keep talking about random stuff and catch up as much as possible. We end up going to bed about midnight.

In the morning, we wake up at 6 so that she can take me to the highway and still get to school in time. She gives me \$20 and drops me off at a rest area on Highway 85. I give her a hug goodbye and she wishes me luck.

After about 20 minutes, I get a ride from a guy named Jeff and he tries to save my soul. I tell him that I just don't have any beliefs at all but that I appreciate it. He tells me he will be praying for my safety and I thank him for it. He takes me south of the Georgia line and drops me off in [Augusta, Georgia](#). I go to a McDonald's and have some McCrap. That leaves me with \$15 left. I sit there and keep getting free refills for a while and read some books. A red-haired girl and her boyfriend sit next to me. They are about 17, I guess.

"Where are you from?" the guy asks.

"New York City."

"Wow. How did you get down here?"

"Hitchhiked. My first ride brought me all the way to South Carolina."

"That's cool. Are you gonna go see your family?"

"I'm already done with that part. I'm going to the Mardi Gras in New Orleans."

"That's a great time. I keep trying to talk him into going." says the girl.

"I can't wait." I say.

"My name's Carla and this is Fred." the girl says.

"Nice to meet ya. I'm Peace."

"Of what?" says Fred, and chuckles.

"Depends who you ask, I guess." I say, having heard it a hundred times.

"Well, where are you gonna stay while in town?" says Fred.

"I have my sleeping bag and it doesn't look like it's gonna rain, so I don't really care."

"That's crazy. Aren't you worried?"

"Not really. The way I see it there are only 3 things that could happen and 2 of them are pretty much the same. I can get sick or be attacked and hurt or I could be killed. If I get sick or hurt, I go to the hospital, get better and go away. If I get killed, at least I was having fun on the way."

"Still crazy though. We're going to meet some friends in the back of a supermarket and get drunk, if you want to come."

"I should get outta dodge while it's still daylight, but sure, why not?" I say

We finish eating and go out to Fred's car. We drive for a few blocks and then park in front of a Piggly Wiggly supermarket. We get out and walk around to the back, where there are three kids hanging out with a case of beer and a keg. Fred and Carla introduce me to the other 3 people, Jeff, John and another Fred. They tell them I hitchhiked here from New York City and they tell me I'm crazy too.

I have a few beers and then Fred 2 pulls out a big joint.

"I found this in my Dad's room, so I hope his old ass knows where to get good shit." He says.

He passes it around except for Carla, who doesn't smoke apparently. We just hang out for two hours and get drunk. John tells me that it would be cool if I stayed at his place for a few days if I would help him paint it. I do and for about a week I stay there and we paint the place and just party for a week and a half since his brother is one of the few pot and shroom dealers in Augusta. Finally I tell him I want to hit the road so I can make it to the Mardi Gras. He calls Fred and Carla and they come over and then Fred asks me where I'm going to next. I tell him I may go check out Atlanta on the way. He asks me if I would like to get a ride out of town and of course I accept. I say bye to everyone. Then Carla, Fred and I get in the car and drive west on I-20 for about 30 miles and they drop me off at a gas station on the west end of [Thomson, Georgia](#) and give me \$10.

I get a soda in the gas station and ask everyone coming in if they are going west. I finally get a ride from a Navy guy named Jeff. We get in his van and start heading west on I-20. After about 10 miles we see a black guy in military fatigues hitchhiking on the road. Jeff stops for him and he runs up to the van. I move to the back so that he can sit in the front with Jeff. Jeff tells me that I can have some of the vodka behind his seat. I decline.

"My name's Joe. Thanks for picking me up. I've been out there a few hours." says the hitchhiker

"That sucks man. I met him at a gas station." I say.

"What, you're hitchhiking too?" he says.

"Yeah, I'm from NYC and going to the Mardi Gras."

"Holy shit! I'm only coming from Columbia and going to Atlanta. How long did it take ya?"

"Actually traveling? This is only my second day. I hung with my sister for a day. My first ride got me all the way to South Carolina."

"You were lucky man. I've had 3 short rides already."

"I grew up in a small town near Atlanta and if you guys would want to we can go to a park in my town and get drunk later." says Jeff.

"Fine with me. What about you, Peace?" says Joe.

"Well I don't drink much and I already had some today but I'll definitely hang with you guys. I smoke bud rather than drink bud, usually."

"Sorry I don't have any pot. Do you Joe?"

"Hell no. I'm a black man hitchhiking in Georgia. You think I'm gonna carry anything at all on me?"

"Good point."

We stop at a bar/restaurant and Jeff gets us all a burger and fries each. I have a soda and they have beers. We eat and put some songs on the jukebox. We play a game of pinball and talk with people at the bar for a while. Then I use the bathroom and we get back in the van. We get out on the highway at the time the sun is going down. We drive to [Acworth, Georgia](#), where Jeff

grew up. We stop at a liquor store and he gets a 12 pack of beer and some orange juice.

We go to a park in a woodsy area and open up the doors to the van and put on some music. I sit on a picnic table that is near the van and we all just play some 3 handed joker spades in the back of the van. After about a half hour when Jeff is beating the hell out of us in the game, a cop car comes rushing into the park with its sirens flashing.

Two cops get out of the car and come over to the van and tell us to get out. We get out and I walk over to the car. Joe almost falls down getting out of the van and one of the cops ask him if he is drunk. He looks up at the cop and tells him to fuck off. The officer walks over to him and yells "What?" at him. Joe shoves him and the policeman grabs an arm and the other cop comes over to help. Jeff tries to run off and the second cop catches him after about three strides. The cops call for backup as Joe and Jeff are both struggling with them now. I sit on the hood of the police car and watch. Another car comes rushing up and as soon as it gets there Joe and Jeff realize how dumb they are being and stop fighting.

They tell us that we are under arrest for being in the park after dark and for drinking in public. They put me in a car with Joe and Jeff in the other car. They drive us to the police station / courthouse / jail and bring us inside. They book us separately and put us in the cellblock. There are eight cells with four on each side of a main room with picnic tables and a television. Everyone

else is in there for various other petty crimes as well, mainly drinking in public.

Jeff is ranting about how he wants to call his naval station and Joe goes to his cell, unrolls his mattress and goes to sleep. I go into my cell and sit down and start playing solitaire. My cellmate, Chris, in for drinking in public also, asks me if I like Gin Rummy. I tell him I do and we start playing a game. At about midnight some Navy officers actually do come to the jail and Jeff leaves, promising to send us cigarettes and money. Joe pretty much just rolls over and falls back asleep. I tell Chris I want to sleep as well and pass out also.

In the morning I wake up at 8 when they give us breakfast and they tell Joe and I that we will be going to court tomorrow. He goes back to his cell and sleeps again and Chris and I grab the Monopoly set and go to our cell and play Runny Monopoly, where instead of using a pen and paper, we kept score with the Monopoly money. Other than going to get cigarettes and meals, which are carted in from the local diner, that is the remainder of my day.

At six the next morning I wake up to find out that Joe had been released during the night. Apparently he had some STD and the Sheriff had offered to let him go rather than pay for the medical treatment he would need. I go to the courtroom and see that Jeff is there. He says he is going to be tried in a Navy court rather than civilian but he gave me some cigarettes and \$30, which the jailer took. After about a half hour I go before the judge.

"How do you plead to illegal trespass in the park?" he asks me.

"Guilty, your honor."

"Drinking in Public?"

"Innocent."

"You will come back to court in two weeks for the trial."

"Never mind, I will plead guilty then, sir."

"Are you, in fact, guilty?"

"No, sir."

"Then I cannot accept that plea. Bailiff!"

The bailiff comes and walks me back to the jail area. I go back into my cell and play rummy with Chris. He tells me that the town gets \$150 for every prisoner per day from the state, which makes me realize why I was not allowed to change my plea. Nothing happens for the next two weeks except playing Gin and the Redskins squishing the Bills in the Super Bowl. Finally my day comes in court and I am brought before the same judge.

"How do you plead to illegal trespass?"

"Guilty."

"And Drinking in Public?"

"Guilty."

"Time served. You will be released in the morning."

I go back to the jail and go back to my cell. I have the last of the Kools that Jeff brought me and Chris and I finally run out of money to play with. Incredibly we end up with a tie at \$7570 each. I go to sleep and in the morning the sheriff lets me out. He tells me where the nearest truckstop is and warns me that if they see me

hitchhiking that they will arrest me so that I had better walk the five miles.

I get my backpack back and make sure everything is there and leave. I walk to the truck stop and ask every person that comes in if they are going south. A few people tell me they are going to Atlanta but since I had to waste so much time in Acworth, I decide that I want to at least get south of it so that I can get closer to New Orleans and hopefully get some long-distance rides.

I end up being in the truckstop all day and eat at the restaurant and buy a lot of junk food. I go into the TV lounge and watch a few movies before a long-haired guy in a lumberjack shirt comes in and asks where the hitchhiker is. I tell him it's me and he tells me that he is going to Florida, his name is George, and asks if I want to come. I tell him yes and he asks me how much money I have. I tell him that I have 15 dollars and he asks if we could fill up his gas tank. I agree and we go fill up and leave. We drive for a few hours and we get really low on gas around sunrise. He pulls up to a gas station and asks where the nearest church is. The attendant tells him and we drive to the church.

We get out and go into the church and talk with the pastor and he gives us a voucher from the Traveler's Assistance program for a tank of gas and a meal from a restaurant. We thank him for his time and generosity and go back to the gas station. We fill the tank and then go eat at the restaurant. We then hit the road and after another hour or so we have to do it again. We stop in a

succession of towns and follow the same pattern until we get to Interstate 10 in Florida. He drops me off at the junction of I -10 and I -75. He continues south and I go to the highway and wait.

As I'm standing there some redneck yells something at me and I turn around and yell back at him and I get hit in the back of the head with a beer bottle. Luckily it doesn't break but just irritates me.

Immediately after I get hit a guy pulls over in a Celica and asks me if I'm okay. I tell him I am and he asks me where I'm heading. I tell him New Orleans and he tells me he can get me as far as Pensacola, which I tell him would help me greatly. I put my backpack in the back seat and get in.

His name is Jim and he asks me if I have any weed. I tell him about how I just got out of jail for two weeks for drinking and trespassing and he tells me that is why he never goes to Georgia.

"I have a friend who lives in Pensacola, I'm sure she would be cool with it if I brought you over if you have time to kill."

"Nothing but time at this point." I say.

We drive for a few hours after we stop at a diner and he gets me an omelet. We go the rest of the way to [Pensacola, Florida](#), and he pulls over at a gas station and goes to use the phone. I sit on the hood of the car and have a cigarette. A Trans-Am pulls up and two gorgeous girls get out and one pumps the gas and the other one goes into the store. Jim walks back over to me and tells me that his friend isn't home.

"Penny!" yells the girl that had went into the store.

The girl that is pumping the gas looks up at the same time as Jim.

"Oh shit! Darlene! I was just calling you. What are you doing here?" says Jim.

"Well, Jake just got in from Key West with a half pound of really good Mexican Bud and Penny brought some great shrooms from Alabama and I have some acid. We just came out to the store to stock up on munchies and cigarettes for 2 days. We don't plan to come out once we start for quite a while. Who's this?" she says, looking at me.

"He's a hitchhiker from New York City named Peace."

"No shit? I just came down here from up there a few weeks ago, I was working at a strip joint but the rent up there is fuckin' insane so I came back down here." says Penny.

"Are you coming with us, Peace, or are you gonna go on your way?" says Darlene.

"Hell, I'm not in a rush. I still have a couple of weeks to make it to the Mardi Gras. You definitely sound like you have all the right ingredients for a party and I've never done shrooms or acid. Not to mention you two are gorgeous. Of course I'll hang." I say.

The girls and Jim laugh and then the girls go into the store and buy a lot of junk food and 2 cartons of cigarettes, Newports and Marlboros. When they get out they get into their Trans-Am and Jim and I follow in his car. We drive up to a nice little house and then we all get out and go inside. Jake is inside, rolling some joints from

a mountain of weed. He had already rolled about 50 and stopped when we came in.

"Who the hell are you?" he asks me.

"My name's Peace. I'm from New York."

"Yeah, my ass." He says and pulls out a gun from under the table and points it at me.

"Oh shit, Jake, chill! I picked him up about 2 hours ago. He's cool, man." says Jim.

"How do you know it's not a setup?" says Jake.

Darlene sits next to him on the couch and says "Yeah, you're right Jake. For all we know the cops could've known that Jim was coming, put a hitchhiker on the highway, hoped Jim would pick him up and then hope Jim finds me and then that they come over here. C'mon be serious. Peace, will you take a toke to prove to this over-paranoid man that you are not a pig?"

"As long as he doesn't shoot me if it's good enough to make me cough."

That finally breaks the mood as she passes me a joint and Jake puts the gun back under the table. I take a good-sized toke and actually do cough and that makes everyone laugh. Jake gets up to go to the bathroom and Jim sits in his spot and takes over the joint production. Penny goes to the radio and puts on some Salt-n-Pepa and I pass her the joint. Darlene goes to the kitchen and Jake tells everyone that we should just fire up our own jays since there were so many and there is no point in us waiting for turns. Naturally we all agree.

We smoke and talk for hours and play a lot of different card games. At about 11 PM , Penny says that

we should play strip poker. Jake says that it's not fair that there are 3 guys but only 2 girls so he calls a few numbers and finds some people who will come over.

We just play regular poker for about another half hour and there is a knock on the door. Jake goes and answers it and lets in 3 girls. The new girls are all beautiful also. One of them is Spanish and the other two are white girls. Their names are Selma, Susan and Staci.

Penny says that it is not fair that now there are more girls than guys for the game. Darlene tells her not to worry because girls are better than guys in everything so the guys should end up naked in no time.

We set up the kitchen table in the living room and bring both the couches closer together. We start another round of joints for everyone and wait until Penny comes back from the kitchen with munchies and she brings out the mushrooms as an added bonus.

She splits the mushrooms into eight piles but Jim, Staci, and Susan tell her that they are not going to do any since they have to go to Susan's mom's house later. Penny splits the mushrooms into five piles, with one twice as large as any of the others.

"The last one with any clothes on gets the extra mushrooms." she says.

"But what if it's one of the three that are not gonna do them?" Jake asks.

"Well this part of the game only includes the five of us, of course."

"Okay, just wanted to be sure." he says.

Selma gets the first deal and picks five card draw with sevens wild as the first game. She deals and it ends up with Staci winning the hand with two pairs, aces over 10s.

"So does this mean that all of you take something off? This won't last long."

Darlene says "Okay, so why doesn't the winner pick someone? We just can't pick the same person twice in a row."

Everyone agrees to this and Staci picks me. I take off a shoe and get the deal. I pick 5 card draw with no wildcards and end up winning so naturally I pick Staci. She takes off her shirt.

"What are you doing? Why aren't you taking off a shoe?" asks Penny.

"No one said that there is any order to the way we take off our clothes. Plus you guys keep this place heated like hell. I'm hot."

We keep playing round after round and smoking joint after joint. Jake ends up being the first one without any clothes on and he tells us he is bored of it so and plans to go watch some TV. Penny tells him that he can't put his clothes on even though he's not playing and tells him that if she had seen him naked before this month she would have been talking to him sooner.

This brings a big smile to Jakes' and he decides to wait after all. This is probably due to the fact that Penny only has her bra and panties on by now and looks great. I am down to my pants and think it's not fair that I don't wear underwear because only one more hand would take me out of the running for the extra shrooms. But then I realize

that it probably doesn't matter since I had never done shrooms before so any amount would probably wreck me. Staci has only her panties on now and she notices me looking at her breasts. She looks at me and asks, "See something you like?"

"2, but soon to be 10. How old are you?"

"17. Does that bother you?"

"Hell no. I'm only 19. I only asked because you either paid money or are extremely lucky."

"Actually, I used to be a fat-ass and I worked out a lot and lost a lot of weight. My tits stayed big."

"Well they are beautiful. You may all tease me now if you want, but I am actually still a virgin. I hope that that is how I will decide to stop hitchhiking. I hope to meet a girl and stop this craziness and just settle down. I don't really care where I stop."

"Why are you still a virgin?"

"Everyone I know that used to have great relationships gets all fucked up after sex. I know a lot of people who have gotten diseases and I know a lot more who now have to be a parent for 18 years, which is definitely not what they were aiming for. It just seems like a lot of trouble to me. I want to give it to someone I care about."

"Whoa, deep. Pass me a joint will ya?" says Jim.

We play for a while longer and finally everyone is naked except for Selma and Darlene, who only have their panties on. Staci and Susan start kissing each other and playing with each other's tits, which naturally gets a reaction from the three guys. Penny looks at the three of us and laughs.

"Guys are so easy." Penny says.

"We can't help it. For all we know you may be feeling just as turned on but it just isn't as obvious." says Jim.

"Well I am. I've always thought about trying it with another girl but never had the guts. So yes, I am turned on too." Staci laughs as she slides her hand down to Susan's crotch. Darlene deals the cards and grabs Penny and gives her a kiss on the lips. She pulls back and tells her that she had always been attracted to her but she was ashamed to admit it also.

"Well, c'mon and finish the game already. You have all night to play with each other. Actually the next two days. Let's just finish this." says Selma as she puts one card face down and grabs the top card of the deck. Darlene puts three cards down and draws three. Selma has the 4, 5, 6, 7 of diamonds and the 9 of spades. She looks pissed at Darlene's pair of 3s. She takes off her panties and goes over to Jake's lap and sits down on him. Darlene laughs as she pulls the biggest pile of shrooms over in front of her and puts the other piles in front of the other four chairs of the shroomers.

"Okay, if everyone can just get their damn hormones in check, let's do this right! Staci, Susan, feel free to ignore us."

"Are you supposed to do anything else to the shrooms or just eat them?", I ask.

"What you've never done them?", says Jim.

"No."

"Cool. What about acid?"

"Nope, I've never done that either, but two of my friends up in New York tell me I should do it at the Mardi Gras so I will not try that yet. I never did shrooms because they are really hard to find up in New York. Not many cows around, you know?"

"It is a great way to spend 5am, picking mushrooms. If I have to be up at that time there is not much else I would rather be doing. No, though, you don't have to do anything to shrooms other than just eat them, but a lot of people only do it as a tea or drink. It seems stronger to me when I just eat them."

Darlene splits the extra portion of her shrooms and gives them to Penny. They then both eat their shrooms quickly. I look at Jake and see that he holds his nose as he eats them, so that as well as the girls' speed they ate theirs with tells me that these probably don't taste too good, which isn't a surprise considering the fact they do grow out of cow shit.

Selma asks, "Do you want to really feel it or just get a sample of the way they feel for the first time, Peace?"

"Well, I feel safe here so I wouldn't mind getting ripped. I don't think I'll freak because I was told that this is a very introspective drug and the only reason my name is Peace is because I am at peace with myself, so I guess I should be fine."

"Well, good because I am planning to sleep in a few hours so here, take half of mine." She says and pushes some of her pile into mine, which is starting to look like a hell of a lot to me. I laugh, grab the biggest one and put it in my mouth. I chew and then grimace because it is

indeed nasty. I shove the rest in and wash it down with some soda so that I don't taste it that bad.

Susan and Staci had been completely ignoring everyone else in the room and are now on the floor massaging and caressing each other all over. Staci grabs Jim's legs and motions for him to join them, so he gets down on the floor with them. They become a pile of limbs grabbing and poking each other. Darlene and Penny are kissing passionately now on the couch and Selma and Jake are kissing on the chair. I walk over to my backpack and get a condom out. I walk over to Jake and put one in his hand. He gives me a thumbs up and a smile and kisses Selma more passionately.

Since everyone else is paired off I go into the living room and put on the Super Nintendo and play some Tetris. After about a half hour I notice that the little blocks are starting to change color when they don't usually, so I stop playing and walk through the dining room into the kitchen. It's hard to walk and my legs feel like rubber but it's funny having rubber legs so I laugh. I have no idea where the other six are so I just grab a joint off the table and light up. As soon as I take a hit, I really start feeling the shrooms and I start laughing out loud because I feel really great and nothing in the world seems important to me right now.

I just sit in the kitchen staring at nothing much for a while and then Selma comes in and rubs my shoulders.

"Where's Jake?"

"Sleeping. Why do you guys always fall asleep right after?"

"After what?"

"Oh yeah , you're a virj. After sex." She says.

"Oh I don't know yet."

"I've always wanted to be a virgin's first. Wanna try it?"

"Not this way. No offense but ya just got done with Jake, I'm watching stuff happen that's not really happening and I want to be straight when I first try it, not tripping or high." She stops rubbing my shoulders.

"Are you sure?" she asks. I turn around and her perfect breasts are in my face

"Not at all." I say.

We crack up and eat a lot of munchies. Darlene and Penny come in and grab some soda and chips. Darlene leaves to go get 2 bong from her room and the rest of us go to the living room, put on Pink Floyd's Dark Side of the Moon and play the Wizard of Oz. We veg on the way the two work together till Darlene comes in and brings two beautiful bong, one made of glass and a ceramic dragon with the bowl between the ears and you smoked from the tail.

We just have random conversations and watch the movie. Jim rushes into the room wild-eyed and tells us there is a bear in the bathroom. We remind him he is tripping and he just says 'Oh yeah', sits down and takes a bong hit. The rest of the night we just do numerous bong hits and watch different trippy movies until we eventually all pass out.

In the morning I wake up and am amazed that I don't feel any after effects of the shrooms. I reach over

Penny and grab a bong and take a hit to start the day off right. Jake wakes up and takes a hit as well. He tells me he has to go to Gulfport, Mississippi later in the day and tells me he would take me for the ride if I wanted to. Of course I agree. Soon everyone wakes up when they smell the herb burning and it's almost as if we had never stopped partying. At about 3 o'clock Jake asks me if I'm ready to go. I tell him I am and I thank Jim for taking me here and I thank the girls for letting me stay at the party.

We get into his beat up Escort and hit I-10. We smoke joints and listen to the radio. He insists on listening to country music even though I tell him I hate it since it's so depressing. But it is his car so I can't complain. We just fly through the rest of Florida and get to [Gulfport, Mississippi](#) and he gives me a nice sack of weed to go. He drives off and I go to the highway and fly my thumb.

Only about 20 minutes later, a couple pick me up. They are about 40 and try to convince me that I should find Jesus and live for him. They are going to New Orleans because they think that it is the modern day Gomorrah and they want to save people from their physical desires. I tell them that I think the Bible is one of the greatest books ever written and that it is a shame how many people misconstrue it into whatever they wish to see in it. I tell them that I do believe in a greater power but that I do not think man has the capabilities to understand it or write about it. The rest of the ride we just debate over it and I enjoy it.

We finally get to [New Orleans, Louisiana](#) on February 7th, 1992. They drop me off on Bourbon Street and then I party for a month or so and then decide to hitchhike to California and then bounce back and forth across America for the next four years.

This is when the free ride ends, so if you like it and would like to see what the hell happens next, you have to send me something to be updated as I write more. I don't care if it's \$5 or more or if you smoke a blunt with me, send me a CD or what.

I write something daily. Usually about a page a day. Some days not much at all. I am at page 152. That's after I made it to California and back to New Orleans once. That's 7 months out of 4 years.

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