

# Confessions of a Greyhound Veteran

by Matthew Temple

Athens-Philly, 1997

I'm a Greyhound veteran. I've ridden the Greyhound in twenty states. I heard a pitch for a screenplay on the Greyhound. I saw a woman and her kids get kicked off the Greyhound in the middle of nowhere. I once rode the Greyhound from Galveston to Houston, and back to Galveston, and back to Houston, seventeen times.

Every time I ride the Greyhound, I swear it will be the last time I ride it. That includes my very first Greyhound ride, from Athens, Ohio to Philadelphia in 1997.

I grew up riding the subway to school which is one of the reasons I'll ride the Greyhound. We were kids in Philadelphia, we rode the bus and subway forty-five minutes each way from Germantown to Spring-Garden street. Germantown is the largest cocaine distribution point on the east coast, that's what someone told me. There were crack vials on the sidewalk in front of our house. My friend's mom...you know how people collect pennies in those humongous jars?...my friend's mom had one of those full of crack vials. They were academics. She didn't smoke crack. That was just her collection. There are a lot of memories from there that mostly include outdoor Halloween parties in junior high trying to edge closer, in the cold, to girls named Lori and Maggie, about watching *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* with Megan (a really smart girl who was also a boxer) and picking her up by her feet after we watched the movie and being able to smell her vagina. And also, memories about Megan's friend Kate, her best friend, Kate Stroup, who loved *Betty Boop*. Her whole room was filled with *Betty Boop*. Kate had a pool. One time we got off the bus to go to Kate's house and there was blood and bullet casings on the street. The people at the bus stop told us that the guy who stepped off the bus before ours must have owed somebody money, he stepped off the bus, he got shot. The guy was still there. The police arrived as we got off the bus. Later at Kate's house we watched *The Blue Lagoon* and I imagined having sex with Megan and we all made out together in the bed in our wet swimsuits but Megan and I fell asleep in different beds and our swimsuits dried out and by the time it was morning it was hard to make out with Kate's mom making breakfast and Kate rearranging her *Betty Boop* paraphenalia and Megan reading the newspaper. As I mentioned Megan was very smart. I saw someone shoot a gun when I was on a bus coming home from school. They shot it off right next to my head, but they were outside

the bus and I was inside. The sidewalk cleared. It was full of people. And then it cleared. Guns really do sound like little flat cracking sounds. In north Philly there's no echo and there's no ricochet. It's just like crack, crack, crack.

So we rode the bus and subway to school. We did it every day. The same route. We probably could have done it blindfolded. My sister lives in New York; I keep a New York subway quick reference card in my wallet. You could drop us off in the middle of Tokyo and we probably wouldn't even have to ask for directions. We're urban kids, we're at home in the developed world. My dad, if you put him in the subway, it's like he's sightseeing, he takes his time, he doesn't know how to work the turnstiles. My sister, you put her in the subway, it's like watching Shark Week on the Discovery Channel. Once, the three of us tried to ride the subway together, I was trying to split the difference between the two of them, motivated by one part politeness, one part feat. It didn't work. My sister calls me now and tells me book titles she saw people reading on the subway. Things like "Glossary of International Banking and Finance Acronyms". Or, for instance, grown people reading self-help-philosophy books where the lessons are narrated by pigs. Recently she saw a woman who looked like Sylvia Plath, reading a biography of Sylvia Plath that had a photo of Sylvia Plath on the cover. My sister is past the point of even the aggression shown on the subway by native New Yorkers. If she has her foot on a seat and a straight-laced middle-aged woman sits on that seat, my sister leaves her foot on the seat. She makes the woman ride with my sister's toe in her thigh. She tells me things like, "There was this guy sitting next to me and he was one of those people who doesn't like contact..." (so my sister, who is willing to induce contact as an intimidation tactic, takes the upper hand). The point is we're urban people. We like subways and trains, and busses, and taxis, and bicycles, and walking. We'll do things like walk forty blocks to have dinner (and not think it's a long way). We'll also do things like take a cab one block, from work to the subway station (when it's that certain time of night). We're also wilderness people, which essentially is the same thing. I always wished they would let me on Survivor, I would disappear into the woods and then sneak into camp every night and start killing people. Can you imagine? Participants on these TV shows have no imagination.

Riding the Greyhound is different. To do it well requires a mix of urban and wilderness skills. I once had a camp counselor who was giving us a lecture on the importance of carrying foot powder and an extra pair of socks at all times. The only justification he gave for this, which I remember verbatim, was "You never know when a ten-minute hike is going to turn into a two-day survival trek." That's pretty much how I feel about riding Greyhound. If it's hot or if the bus has to go up a hill, the bus will break down. The trip inexplicably takes two to three times as long as it would take if you were driving. Crazy people will sit next to you (not might...will). Crazy people will sit next to you. People will start praying

with you, people will joke around about bomb threats, people will harass the driver. The driver will experience some sort of professional or psychological collapse. The driver will also be very funny, and will accidentally entertain you with an unexpected pattern of highly-developed banter like that of a magician, or a carnival announcer, or a hustler. You will stop in every little goddamn town in Pennsylvania, even ones with no Greyhound station where the Greyhound station is a gas station or the parking lot behind a McDonalds. The person in front of you will push their seat back all the way. You will push yours back all the way. The person behind you will suck their teeth in anger. The person behind you will put their seat back all the way. Hoodlums and teenagers will jet for the three-seater in the back that is just large enough to comfortably have sex in and conveniently near the bathroom. Somewhere on your trip, if your trip is long enough, you'll find yourself involved in a racial conflict that if you were among normal people they wouldn't have been able to conceive if they were trying.

Why do people take the Greyhound? Because it's slightly cheaper than the plane. That's really the only reason and it's not that much cheaper. It's probably much like the difference between making copies at Kinkos and making copies at the one-off computer labs that any student or writer in a big city knows. They provide the same services, you're paying for an aesthetic. At the hipster computer labs in New York the people working there are making you free coffee and giving you unsolicited psychological analyses for two cents a page. At Kinkos, it's the same technology, but there you're paying for "business printing". I could get all insightful on you and say that riding Greyhound is the same way, that for some people Greyhound is a way of life, but I'm not Ira Glass.

The first time I took the Greyhound was to visit my ex-girlfriend in Philadelphia. I was going to college in Athens, Ohio, where I had a girlfriend, the first girl I had sex with, but I missed my ex-girlfriend and school wasn't going that well so on Spring break I took the Greyhound to Philadelphia to see her.

When I saw school wasn't going that well, what I mean by that is that I was getting all F's and one A. James Carville told a joke I love that starts like that. I heard him tell this at a debate at Ohio University, in Athens, while I was going there. He was debating John Sununu and somehow he worked in this joke, which he told in the first person: I was going to college and my dad was paying for it, so he wanted to see my grades. At the end of the first quarter, I showed him my report card. It was all F's and one D. My dad looks at the report card for a long time, then finally he says, "Son, I think I know what your problem is. You're focusing too hard on this one subject." That's my favorite joke. It's the only joke I think is funny. Maybe it's especially funny to me because my grades were similar to those of the joke's narrator. Except mine were all F's and one A. I've been an A-F student since

the tenth grade. Before that I was an A-B student (mostly A's), but since the tenth grade I've been strictly A-F. I got scared my senior year in high school that maybe I had gotten stupid during my time at the ridiculous schools we started going to in the tenth grade (when we moved from Philly to Dayton, Ohio) so for the first quarter of my senior year I got all A's. Satisfied, for the rest of the year I studied fractals in calculus and read novels in psychology and barely graduated, even though I got the highest SAT score of anyone in the class. My girlfriend, who was smart somewhere on the level of Megan, but in different ways (this one could work a Rubix Cube with her eyes closed, after studying the faces for a few seconds)...anyway my girlfriend at the time went around the class asking everyone what they got on their SAT's to make sure she had the highest score. She had a 1405. I had a 1410. It didn't get in the way of our makeout sessions. Well, for that day it did. Years later I took the Mensa test with another girlfriend. She got in. I didn't. This is the type of thing I do with my lovers. My one A, at Ohio University, was in Political Theory with Julie White. Simply, it was the only class that interested me. In my communication classes, which was supposed to be my major, I wore sunglasses and tickled the girl next to me until she would laugh out loud and disturb the class. One time I left a lecture in a small-ish journalism class, walked eight blocks to a gift shop, bought a pair of sunglasses, walked back into the lecture with the sunglasses on, started tickling the girl. This girl, incidentally, sucked my dick one night in my dorm room. As a hallmate, before she sucked my dick, she was beyond aggressive, well into violent, she would scratch and punch people when she talked with them, and one night she and her friend were standing around in our hall and we were talking about journalism and she was punching me and I was like why don't you ditch your friend and come back to my room in five minutes. She and her friend went upstairs and I went across the hall where my roommate was watching *An Officer and a Gentleman* and was like I need your room key. He was like why. I was like, I need to make sure you don't come into the room in the next half an hour. So this girl, whose name I don't remember, came into my room alone and I locked the door and we gave each other oral sex and I thought she smelled and tasted horrible which made it difficult to keep my mouth on her cunt and when she was sucking my dick she was like I wish I could do something to make you happy and I was like keep going and I came in her mouth. Months later I found myself in the top bunk of a bed with a different girl, and on the bottom bunk was that girl's roommate, who was a lesbian. With the roommate, on the bottom bunk, was this punching scratching (and now sucking) girl from my journalism class whose name I don't remember. The professor in that journalism class was always making the distinction, while I was tickling my little friend, between that which is, and that which isn't, "real news". This annoyed me. For one of the assignments I submitted an off-topic paper whose thesis was that there was no such thing as real news. The professor gave me an A on the paper. I stopped going to the class. There were other girls, there was this girl named Amy Browning who I later named my car after. We used to have a radio show together. I would

parody the public service announcements. She met me because of my hair, which she liked to look at and to run her fingers through. She lived in a hall called Biddle, which she mispronounced "Biddo". She and her roommates mispronounced everything that way. Biddle was Biddo, Crawford was Cwafo, Spring Break was Spwing Bweak. She was an alcoholic, which took some time to see given that I was observing her in a field of college freshman. In Athens' calendar drinking starts on Wednesday afternoon. Monday and Tuesday, and maybe part of Sunday, is the school week in terms of going to class and doing homework. Wednesday through Saturday is the weekend. I used to babysit Amy and her quad-mates at the underage drinking bar with her one quad-mate who like me did not drink, we corraled them and walked them home. Sometimes we would lose one in the corraling process and she would show up at our table at lunch or dinner the next day and animatedly describe to us waking up next to someone she didn't remember meeting. One night me and the other girl who didn't drink looked at each other and headed to the bar. We didn't know enough about alcohol to know what to order, so we drank a tall Coors Light and six shots of Firewater. I drank six shots. This other girl did five and a half with the last one landing mostly on the floor. Amy saw this, pulled the plug. We were on Court street in Athens in January and I was too hot to wear my shirt anymore. I had already dispensed with my hoodie inside the bar, now I took off my shirt and then Amy was telling me there were cops and I had to keep my clothes on until we got back to the room and then people were talking to fire hydrants, etc., etc. So after I discovered that Amy was an alcoholic I found this girl Ashley and it was while I was dating her that I decided to take the Greyhound to Philadelphia to see my ex-girlfriend Sarah Holtz.

I don't specifically remember the ride to Philadelphia, even though it was my first Greyhound experience. I didn't have enough information, then, to suggest that framing my life in terms of riding Greyhound was a possibility. I remember getting to Philadelphia. I found a place to get a cheesesteak and then called Sarah to pick me up. I don't specifically remember us kissing, or whether we rode a cab or if she had a car, but I remember the way her mouth tasted, then and always. She's the first girl I ever French kissed, in a shared sleeping bag at a church youth retreat. We were fasting to raise money for hunger (somewhere) and our pastor decided it would be a good idea for us to watch a movie about Ghandi during our fast. While the rest of the youth group was conspiring to sneak some Kool-Aid from the fridge in the church kitchen, Sarah and I were negotiating sleeping arrangements. (Kool-Aid doesn't break a fast, right?)

Sarah: "I forgot my sleeping bag."

Me: "Let's share."

There was one other time in my life when a young woman forgot her sleeping bag. We

were going on a camping trip. I didn't fall for it the second time.

But the first time, I did. I had seen people French kiss on soap operas, but the expected mechanics remained a mystery. Most, I remember having an idea, before I had kissed like that, of what it might feel like...this abstract, dreamlike, and necessarily incorrect set of ideas something akin to how before I could read I thought the "sky" in "sky blue" (on the crayon) said "kiss". To me, before I could read, the letters "sky" looked like what I thought "kiss", the word, would look like. And it was something like that when it came to a) my pre-experience formulation of the concept of a French kiss, and b) the taste of Sarah Holtz's mouth.

My first kiss was three feet above a trampoline, in mid-air, in slow motion, with a girl named McKenzie Davis. That's how my sister tells the story, she was there to observe it. I found an old web site I made and it had a list of all the girls I had kissed. I had added some extras that I don't remember ever kissing and some were listed without names, like "by the lake" or "on the golf course at night". There were tons of moments in junior high where I almost-kissed. In the basement with (a couple different girls) it wouldn't quite happen. But the first time I kissed with tongue was in the basement at church in our shared sleeping bag watching Ghandi while fasting to raise money for--whatever. How two children on a church retreat were allowed to share a sleeping bag might be a point of curiosity for some readers. It was a progressive church. Let's just leave it at that. To go further into it would be a different story.

So we kissed, with tongue, and no one drank any Kool-Aid. And we did a lot more than that. It's feast or famine with me. My mom says I didn't speak for a long time, later than most children. But when I did, it was in full sentences. I went until the eighth grade before I ever kissed a girl with tongue and then I went from base zero to base three in one night. So on spring break after having met a nice girl at Ohio University with whom I had another first (the only one left), I went to Philadelphia to see Sarah Holtz. I guess I was tying up loose ends, which has gotten a lot worse since then, going down the list of girls I should have fucked back then and setting up weekend trips to fuck them now. And now they're married, they have kids, they're fat, they've given up on their lives. Their personalities are still in there, and are even more pronounced when experienced strictly through the filter of text-based instant messaging. Also, whatever directions drew their slight leanings back in high school now dominate these people to levels of fanaticism. And those old city streets, hangouts, coffeehouses, parks, old apartments, laundromats, midnight gas stations, alleyways, curbs, all that stuff is still there, it's still the same, just worse now because you know people who have spent the last ten years distilling in them. But you work down the list, you set up your weekend trips, you measure everything by the last girl you fucked.

Somehow that's all that matters, the last girl you fucked. If the last one was great then everything is great in that department. If the last one wasn't great it's a blemish to be erased at all cost. There's no peace until it's buried under a more recent last. Keep the freshest memories good. She gave me head in the shower, we slept in the same bed, we did everything we did the first night we kissed and nothing more. This dented her clearly. Why would we not fuck? Two adults alone in a bedroom with no supervision. Two people highly attracted to each other. Who like the taste of each other's mouth. There's too much put on it, that's why. And that's something you have to understand if you want to understand where I'm coming from.

I was building up to something the whole week we spent together in Philly. While we were watching movies in the Tuttleman Omniverse theater, while we were using computers in the departmental offices at Drexel to check email, while we were standing in line at the McDonalds on South Street swapping academic retort with random motherfuckers trying to decide what size french fries to get, that whole time I was working up to something but it didn't involve tongues or genitals. We went to all my favorite restaurants, which at the time meant Uno and T.G.I. Friday's, and by the time we had finished our 'tato skins and Monday burgers I was ready to say what had been on my mind for the last five days and before: my parents were getting divorced. When my dad told me I asked him if his and my relationship would be the same. I asked my mom the same thing. They said yes, and I said do what you have to do, and we left it at that. The transition has since proven itself to be less simple than I had thought. Of course none of this had anything to do with Sarah Holtz and I don't blame her for setting her Monday burger half-eaten down on the plate, for swallowing, without chewing, the Angus she had in her mouth when I said it, for going to the bathroom on our way out and probably sticking her finger down her throat and throwing up the angus in the shitter at the T.G.I. Friday. I could taste the bile when she kissed me after. All my girlfriends are bulemic.

You can't blame her for being disappointed. She likely had tractable goals in mind for the week: laughs, young sex, unsupervised R-rated city wandering, movie cab and subway makeout sessions, a boost to the subsequent content of our cross-country email, things we could enjoy referring to for months as though their re-occurrence was around the next forward-looking corner. She likely had tractable goals, and was met with brooding, abstract, irrelevant performance posing as emotion. Welcome to my life. Everyone is always secretly happy when they drop someone off at the Greyhound station and if Sarah Holtz was secretly happy when she dropped me off at the Greyhound station after our spring break week in Philadelphia I don't blame her. I was probably secretly happy to be going, away from trying to focus on Sarah Holtz's mouth on my dick in the shower, away from her chemistry-major roommate with her industry-screener cleaning supplies I had to

remember not to get on my hands, thinking about the tradeoffs between the plush brunette (Sarah's roommate) and the stick-figure blond (Sarah), thinking about going back to my dorm in Athens where Abercrombie-wearing future bank vice-presidents competed with each other at who could laugh loudest at Letterman, these are the same people, these future bank vice-presidents, who I accidentally overhear trading theories on why I take such long showers. The general current of their thought is that I was jerking off in the shower. These aren't people that I want to discuss this with. ("For one, I don't jack off in the shower. I typically like to be in a relaxed position while cumming...this usually means lying down." No, this isn't a conversation I engage in with Abercrombie-wearing future bank vice-presidents.) I like taking long showers because I like the feel of hot water on my naked skin. The previous statement is probably a goddamn universal truth, ringing true for every one of the six billion human beings on the planet and most of the other mammals. It's one of those truths that's just so simple and superficially personal that we must deny any action or indication that would even remotely imply it. Yes, hot water feels good on my skin. This is one of the topics that midwestern morality strictly forbids and that my hallmates came, inadvertently, to be discussing, given the revolutionary, heretical example I set by taking twenty-minute showers. Something else, I like to shave in the shower, it cuts my face less.

On the way back to Athens from Philadelphia, the Greyhound aspects of the ride were minimal until I got to Pittsburgh. A paranoid schizophrenic woman boarded and sat next to me. Shlepping her pillowcase crammed with Tupperware containers the encyclopedic contents of which we explored together over the next five hours. My participation in this exploration was that of a hostage. When she sat down this woman ingratiated us to the guys in the three-seater, who were black, by announcing that "we don't need the niggers' to say anything, not no more". I distanced myself from this statement in every way possible given that there were no open seats but comments from the three-seater began, and continued, to address my seat-mate and I as though we were an axis. This is the part where I'm supposed to go into a eclectic catalogue of the contents of the Tupperware containers in the pillowcase of my racist paranoid schizophrenic seatmate, but this isn't that kind of book. It was just a bunch of junk, a Fisher Price tape recorder and a peanut butter sandwich held together with masking tape. Stuff like that. Somewhere between Pittsburgh and Columbus I had one of the profound realizations of my life. Prior to this realization I was still maintaining a level of social politicality with respect to psycho, next to me. With each new Tupperware container produced from within the pillowcase, I feigned weak interest. With each offensive, irrelevant, jumbled string of words offered up in tandem with the presentation of the container's contents, I occasionally looked my speaker in the eye. Then the realization came. This was good shit, this shit she was saying, this was the kind of shit you can't make up, as a writer, this is the shit you strive to invent



authentically but never can. I broke out a notebook and started transcribing. She tried to look at what I was writing. I propped the notebook up so she couldn't see it, like a fort between us, and I took notes. That was the realization: you don't have to be sane with crazy people. In fact you're wasting your time if you do. People like this don't care if you prop your notebook up like a fort and transcribe what they're saying. Behavior like this doesn't bother them in the least. They keep right on doing exactly what they were doing. The same holds true to a lesser degree with uncivilized but clinically sane people you will encounter as roommates, classmates, workmates. Built into you is a reflex that says it would be wrong of you to give these people anything less than the respect you would give your mother. But that's wrong. The appropriate response to shitheads is, indeed, shit.

Fortunately this woman got off in Columbus, along with the guys in the three-seater and most of the rest of the bus, and I stretched my legs and pressed my face to the window and stared out at cornfields through the night, on the way to Athens.

Dayton-New York, 2001

I dropped out of college. Two quarters was sufficient time to learn that a journalism degree from Ohio University wasn't going to mean anything to me, even if it meant something to the Dayton Daily News. I went back to Dayton and lived with my dad in a five-bedroom house. This is where our family used to live. I stayed in my old bedroom, my dad stayed in the bedroom he and my mom used to share. My girlfriend from OU transferred to Wright State University in Dayton, this is the one I didn't quite cheat on over spring break by going to visit Sarah Holtz. She used to come over all the time and we'd have sex so much she would bleed. My dad told me to find a new place to live, which I didn't understand since it was just the two of us in a five bedroom house. We used to eat hot dogs and watch rented movies on VHS and he would talk about what went wrong with the marriage. I applied to every job I could find in the newspaper that didn't involve a pyramid scheme. The jobs I applied to included fast food. To these I applied in person, multiple times, with a cheerful promise to be the hardest worker they'd ever seen and a plea that I start as soon as possible. I am extremely bad at getting fast food jobs. Somehow fast food managers can tell that I don't belong there, even though when I speak to them I speak with genuine expression of my real and immediate need to do anything, anything, for a paycheck, even if it's a paycheck for around \$200 a week with no health insurance and a uniform and interminally smelling like grease. They have a sign that says NOW HIRING but somehow it takes two or three weeks to call back an applicant who is ready to start, immediately. I once applied to a Burger King in Philadelphia three times. I filled out the application three times, I kept going back once a week asking to speak to a manager. Yes, we're hiring people, we'll call you. They don't call me. I think it might be

something about the way I fill out the application, my handwriting or something. I applied for a trade name one time in Arizona and the form came back with a Post-It informing me, in cursive, that my application had been rejected on the grounds that my handwriting was illegible. Incredulously, I removed the Post-It and reviewed my application. Well-proportioned, capital printing in the black ink of a rollerball. I blinked at the Post-It, with its blue, arthritic, ball-point cursive. I crumpled the application and registered in New Jersey. Managers at fast food places and Arizona trade name clerks share a certain dim limitation of perspective, I think. I applied to all the restaurants I could walk or ride a bus to, and to every other job I found in the paper. I actually did go to a meeting for a pyramid scheme that my friend Maddy was part of. The speech was given by a whale-fat Texan cellphone millionaire and they had a nice buffet they made us sit next to and smell while the guy fumbled his lapel mike and tried to inspire us. It's exactly the same as free meals at churches, you have to listen to a sermon first. The whole time he was talking I could never understand what exactly we'd be selling. The important thing was my downline. All I wanted was to get out of my dad's house so he would have an extra bedroom to stare into and wonder what happened.

The first place that called was Softronics, a company that made software for people who ship things on trains. Apparently, when someone like Cargill, who makes corn syrup so that almost everything people eat can list something as a second ingredient, when they put corn on a train and pay the railroad to move it from place to place, they railroad is too dumb to keep track of where all the trains are, so this company Softronics stepped in to help. I went to an interview and my boss must have hidden his sleeping bag for the interview, but when I started, on the first day when I walked by his office, I saw it under his desk, blue nylon, the \$20 kind with no insulation. When Ray's wife gave birth to their third child, Ray was standing at his desk, sleeves rolled up, on a teleconference with a prospective client, our sales guy, and the company owner, who was calling, barefoot, from a mobile phone in the mosquito-net-enclosed backyard of his Ft. Lauderdale mansion.

I bought a car and when I drove to and from work I would listen to the same song over and over. The car had a ten-disc CD changer and one Saturday my dad knocked on my bedroom door and said I might have left my window down. As I approached the street I saw chunks of auto glass. They couldn't even steal the CD changer, it was bolted to the floor. The song I used to listen to, before thieves fucked up my CD changer, was Mona Lisas and Mad Hatters by Elton John. Try listening to the song, then extrapolate the depression of someone who is comforted by listening to it on repeat, day after day, month after month, driving to work, going to my makeshift desk in the back, on the way passing Ray's wife camped out in his office breastfeeding the new one, the other two playing with our Nerf guns. Ray pushes the door to.

I used to meet my mom for breakfast at Bob Evans and we'd talk about work. We'd find similarities in the dynamics of our job situations, even though she was a reverend and I was writing reports for rail transportation, and when I would leave Bob Evans I felt better. I remember one time pulling into the parking lot at Softronics, I saw an albino squirrel in a tree and started crying. The secretary's name was Tina. We used to joke around and she taught me the meaning of "executive decision making". Executive decision making is, for instance, when the guy in Florida mail Ray a note that says no more Friday pizza lunches for the crew. Executive decision making is when Tina accidentally opens, reads, and shreds the note. Tina and I got along fine. She used to call me Doogie Howser. I would have fucked her but she had a husband. Ray used to play Rusch Limbaugh on the radio and rave about the liberal logical fallacies. He used to sing along to Jimmy Buffet and joke about how anything that went wrong in the office was my fault. I called the guy in Florida and told him if this continued I would quit. Ray jokingly blamed me for one last thing. I went to Tina and said,

"Tina, I like working with you, I want you to know that."

"I like working with you too, Matt."

"I'm going to lunch."

"Cool."

"This is the last time you will see me."

A big-ass grin came across Tina's face. "Well. Enjoy your lunch."

"Thank you."

The sun was never so bright as when I walked out that door.

...fz...

living with Dad, sleeping in the car

working at Softronics, listening to Mona Lisas and Mad Hatters in the car

visiting girlfriends at their mall jobs, LexisNexis, John and me drinking and playing trivia and John shooting a hole through the wall, me flirting with John's daughters, ICP, 9live deals, eating caviar

gay men in Dayton, me hanging out with VA dudes, antique dealers, Nik and his entourage of women and clients, the wine bar, choosing the wines

the naughty, love stories, drug stories, eating mushrooms, the lake house, Rebecca's dorm,  
my warehouses, etc., changing my name

moving to New York

the rash

moving back

writing music: Michael Jackson, Eminem

Dayton-Austin, 2001

moving back from New York, working at Denny's, 9/11,

the electrical storm, tornadoes, driving to Austin without a map

...

Houston-Galveston, 2001

me riding along over and over, 9/11, working at Denny's after LN; me and Shringarar  
arriving in Galveston to play on the beach; me paying the driver in cash for a ticket back to  
houston

Austin: ... leaving Julian, the prostitute, and all, the trip with Shringara, women's business,  
meeting Julian at his work

...

Houston-Athens, 2001

the guy taping everything I said  
the woman and her kids getting kicked off  
(Houston-Missisipi)  
the saddest story I've ever heard

...

Athens-Dayton, 2002

leaving the football pot house, writing, delusions about being a sniper, on the walk home, deadly cold, the best thing to order at Taco Bell, people with PhDs working at Taco Bell

...

Dayton-Philly, 2002

living with Suzanne, ordering Chinese, reading A New Kind of Science, bridget foy's!

...

New York-Tucson, 2004

truck not starting in Madison NJ

picking up Shringara and Clover in Dayton in the truck, fucking Erin in Dayton

...

Tucson-Dayton, 2005

Rishi, the whole goddamn story

Tucson, the jealousy triangle, the curse of the jade scorpion, me working on CAs even though it didn't show up anything

leaving Tucson, the indian reservation

Dayton, Martha and Zochae, that whole thing

Rishi writing an article so I wouldn't be the only one who published in the Dayton Daily News

her leaving dayton, her coming back, her giving me good head, getting her writing area set up, her jealousy of me and shringara, our house sale

all the way through the last times with her in LA

...

Los Angeles-Philly, 2006

drug times in LA--to leaving--to NA with Dad, etc.

...

New York-New Orleans, 2006

eventually I got a job in New York, living with Suzanne and Autumn, working for a Psychopath

Autumn and I sharing cabs home after completely different evenings, and the tension of us possibly liking each other...Suzanne told me it couldn't happen, though, and for that reason among others, it never did

Balthazar & Anna's Corner

the dude I met in the park and went to smoke crack in Harlem

don't go to work, buy a ticket, and call Tat from the French quarter

...

New Orleans-Tucson, 2006

in New Orleans with Tat and Marcus

NO waiting area: dude's advice about foot powder

screenwriter pitches her idea (murdering gynecologist), gives me pills, we go to a hotel

how I become homeless in Tucson, washing dishes, cooking, working a day without pay, throwing a dish at Bilal

Ash picks me up and I leave to live with her in Phoenix

...

Phoenix-LA, 2007

denouement, the dude flips out and police pick him up, I'm making eyes with a girl across the commotion, I swear this will be my last Greyhound ride ever

... I mean, I go to where I am by being ridiculously good at something. ...

Every time I ride the Greyhound, I swear it will be the last time. Every time I swear it.

And every time I'm wrong.

These are the stories of my twenties, which are, thankfully, almost over.