**June 3 - 8 , 2015 : New York**

I wasn’t sure of myself. Would travelling alone be possible, let alone enjoyable? If I got stuck somewhere, what’s the worst that could happen. Visualizing myself by myself didn’t go over as well as I would have hoped. But something was pushing me.. guiding through the uncertainty. As I tried my hardest to fit everything within the edges of the thirty year old rolling softball bag, dark green like it was built for an army soldier, shaped like a duffel filled with everything I deemed necessary for my first adventure: a five person standalone tent being the largest of the gear and supplies. On my back carried a watersack backpack with reservoir and water bottle (for any drink you could think to fit inside).

A quick stopover in Los Angeles and a long flight to the East coast for my first time since I could walk landing near midnight in the Big Apple. It took some time to figure out the right bus to catch, and even longer to arrive at the bus stop nearest the campground somewhere near the edge of Brooklyn. Since my stay here, I’ve spoken with dozens of New Yorkers who still have no idea where I’m referring to when I tell them *I stayed at a campsite in Brooklyn, New York near an ice rink just before the bridge heading to Staten Island.* I can see in their eyes that many don’t believe the tale one bit.

Waking up to a quite haven surrounded by empty grass and more than ten sites all to myself, I left my belongings and caught the bus to the subway and then to Manhattan. Walking up the street, I witnessed some sites one could only deem as amazing. A man in a cab van yelling across the street in barely moving traffic, visually (and audibly) upset, until a loud crunch came from the front of his bumper as he collided with the car in front of him. Swiftly turning my head, I realized he was five feet from my left as both men stepped out with arms flailing faster than their mouths could move (surprisingly).

I passed by the stock exchange which was closed, Times square by night which was well lit. I even got to see a large scuffle between two cartoon characters, Minnie Mouse and Dora the Explorer threw hands at each other until both were decapitated and only their latin alter egos were on display, tossing what could only have been Spanish curses towards each other as policemen kept a steady grip on their oversized four-fingered wrists. As I finished a twenty mile walk filled with hot lates and cold beer, pizza was calling my name. I ended up at catching the tube to a grocery store that is determined to take your Whole paycheck. In my ever gabby mood, I began speaking with a lady, reflecting about my eventful day, who became noticeably startled, amazed at the fact I was there in person to witness both characters go at it. Apparently it had been all over the news that evening.

The next three days entailed music festival fun, catching acts like the Black Keys, Drake, Bjork, and even Weird Al. I would leave early in the morning and come back at midnight to washed and drying clothes hanging on lines attached to fence posts. I filled up on White Castle (highly overrated, unlike the Kumar and Harold rendition), witnessed jazz bands playing in beer parlors, ate at the number one pizza restaurant nearest me (train station pizza might have been slightly better), and spent the better part of three days dancing in mud and wearing my legs out. I enjoyed New York, probably more than most.

Not that all good thing must end, but the adventure is just the next step away. My last night rolling around a softball bag in the biggest city by reputation lead to little Italy. My hairy, emotional side was ecstatic. The restaurant featured a beautiful seafood risotto, two of my favorites, but at an astounding $40 a plate, I felt out of luck. I asked if it were possible to half it for just myself, and they obliged, it being more than enough with room for a cannoli left to spare.

I had a bus to catch, but not for another few hours. A light drizzle spotted my shoes, tickling my scalp, urging me to take one last seat before the 14 hour bus ride began. One speakeasy was closed, so I sat next to a woman and ordered a whiskey. She had been an athlete, a high jumper once trained for the Olympics, who was now waiting for her boyfriend to get out of the pen that evening. Her drinks went down as quickly as they arrived. Before I could witness the outcome, I handed a $20 ticket for the bus to a Chinese woman who gave me a seat number for the bus, a planned route from New York to Atlanta as the bullets of water came thundering down on top the refurbished hunk of metal sitting on four wheels.

**June 9 & 10 - A Bus to Atlanta**

While passing one of the Virginias, it began to rain. Now this wasn’t an ordinary type of misty drizzle, but as the downpour began, thunder and lightning cracked like whips in the dark distance, flashing reflections onto the shiny roof of the aging tour bus.

“Hey man!” pleaded a hoarse-voiced man in the back. “Stop the bus man! We’re gettin’ wet back here!”

Upon hearing his plea, the bus driver tucked chin to shoulder, peering over to catch a glimpse of the direction from where the voice rang out. Facing his head directly forward, he slid his hand under his pocked to retrieve the loose earbud that glided upwards, ending plugged into the side of his head as shouts from minorities added to the orchestra of noises. “Aww man.” The man in front of me sighed as he lifted up his backpack and shoes, now dripping with bus filtered rainwater. Looking up, the escape hatch meant to be a safety measure was merely an annoyance as water seeped in from the sides. I cracked open the beer that snuck in with me as I reveled in my luck as being one of the seats just far enough way to remain dry for the fourteen hour journey.

I took a peek at South Carolina but slept most of the way through up until Georgia, the peach state. When we were let out, the Chinese bus driver quickly noted that we were not left in the place we were supposed to be. I was lost in Atlanta.

Rolling through the bus stop (literally, with softball bag in hand), I noticed many folks were sitting on their luggage. We must be on route to the airport, I thought. Catching a few rides and asking for directions from people along the way, I landed in front of a building with more people surrounding their luggage. It was hot, almost 100 degrees, and enough humidity to mimic a sauna. I walked towards the building I was told was the motel I would be staying at. However, these loiterers gave off a ‘weird vibe’ as they came close enough to whiff the chicken and waffles in my second hand.

I walked swiftly past them all. Reaching the gates, a large security officer met me at the entrance, on guard. We spoke briefly as I informed him of my stay. Before heading in to do some much needed laundry and escape the heat, I had to know: “What’s with all these people out here?”

“Them? Oh, das a homeless sheltah.”

“Hmm. I should probably not walk that way then..?”

“Yeah,” he remarked looking down and back up, “probably not.”

Laundry was in the machine and upon meeting a lady who had exchanged quarters to get it running, I learned that this budget motel was mainly for recovering (and not so) drug addicts. I took note and fell asleep like I never slept before, AC blasting at full power.

One day in Atlanta was all I needed. Still ready to treck, I walked straight down the road until the rain began to fall. I ducked into a small bar and asked what was good.

“Do you like IPA’s?” the bartender questioned. I thought he’d never ask. We spoke a while about my (at that time) obsession for trying new beers. Having tried a few in New York, I was interested to see what was in store in Atlanta, or if they could even compare. “We make some of the best here!” He gave me a list of ones to try and some that might not be locatable within the city. Spending the rest of the night bouncing around from bar to bar, I ended up having more than my fair share of 10+% alcohol libations. Stumbling and speaking with whoever was near, I ended up at a bar with someone who took me to the last stop. I was fifteen miles away from the motel at one in the morning, wasted off my rocker, with a bus to catch at 8am the next day. I had no idea how I was going to pull myself together.

Luckily, after meeting his barking pitbull, the new friend made that night dropped me back at my temporary residence where I slept it off and was able to awake in time for another nine hour bus drive to an even hotter destination, fresh clothes folded and packed in its bulge.