

1948

In the *summer*  
of 1948 I was  
14 and my *brother*  
was 18. *Our father*, who had *been*  
terribly poor after  
he got off the boat  
from Europe and  
went to work at 7  
years old, was very  
sharp and lucky. He  
had an exotic belief in  
spoiling children in very  
deep ways. Our father could also be a very just, stern, silent man.  
He was as tough as *nails* and he was also one of the few people  
I have ever known *who had* a real star twinkling in the corner of his  
eye. This summer, in one of the very last special creations of his special  
twinkling indulgence, *he gave* us each \$250 and drove us out onto a New  
Jersey highway. My *brother* and I hitchhiked to the west coast and back in  
two months. That *summer I* saw many things I never dreamed I would ever  
see: The Rockies, *San Francisco*, Kansas wheat, Yosemite, and many more  
things I had never *known* existed. And so many of those kind decent people  
who had been *on the* road exhausted and hungry through the Depression gave  
us so many *fabulous* rides and went so far out of their way to be so kind to  
my brother and *I that* to this day I easily believe that people who hate me like  
me. And in the luck of the road that brings all things that can  
come to those who stick out their thumb.



One August day  
 we were hitch  
 hiking from San  
 Francisco to Grand  
 Coulee Dam. We got  
 a ride in an old car from  
 two rather strange fellows.  
 One was big and scruffy and  
 mean and the other was little and  
 scruffy and mean. Their story was  
 that they had just escaped from prison  
 and were driving to Alaska. They asked  
 us if we wanted a ride through  
 the largesse of the road in those days. We said no, we  
 were going to the Columbia River. "Assholes, Mother  
 Fuckin Jerks," they muttered. Their teeth were like dog's  
 teeth. The big one stopped the car, grabbed an ax from under the  
 seat, and with wild curses ran into the woods, as he screamed it, "To  
 take a lousy shit." I'd dined in all kinds of fancy restaurants, had eaten  
 caviar and sour cream and drawn butter at the Russian Tea Room, seen  
 Pinza as Mephistopheles at the Met, talked to a robot who was smoking a  
 cigarette, climbed up on Rodin's Gates Of Hell, saw Joe Dimaggio hit  
 a home run, was indulged in all kinds of fancy stuff before I was 7, yet  
 the ax instead of the usual toilet paper impressed me immensely. All  
 that night we drove slow up the California coast in the profuse Pacific fog.  
 They had insisted that my brother drive. Route One wound dangerously on  
 ocean side cliffs. Turn after turn we reached the bottom of a hill in a dense fog  
 pocket and my brother, his eye-glasses just touching the windshield, had to slow the  
 car to a crawl to see the road. They would take their whiskey flasks out of their mouths  
 just long enough to scream fiendishly flashing their sharp teeth about how they were going  
 to kill us in the woods if we didn't drive right. The next morning we saw the beautiful Oregon  
 coast's huge rocks and crashing surf. Then we cut inland through a few towns, which we had to  
 drive through at least two times each as our patrons gleaned endless pleasure out of leaning out  
 the car window, rolling their red eyes, and giving every woman they saw the finger yelling shrilly,  
 "Wheeeeeeee! Whooooopeeee! Fuckeeeee!" It soon became evident to us that Mr. Big and Mr. Little  
 had exhausted themselves screaming all night and were too hung-over tired to rob, rape, or kill us.  
 They soon let us out of the car complaining bitterly about what fucking horsesasses we were for not wanting  
 to go to Alaska where a man can say whatever he wants. On reflection, I now believe that to Mr. Big and Mr.  
 Little, my brother and I must have appeared to be two ruthless peculiars who did outrageously affected bizarre  
 things such as read books, wash, say please, thank you, and who could go for hours without saying anything  
**no matter what was**  
**Our father's stern**  
**scared them more**  
**rustic hysteria**

**screamed at them.**  
**silence probably**  
**than their fathers'**  
**terrified us.**

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**fir forest in the middle of nowhere. Within 15 minutes a giant truck cab pulling 3 gigantic tree trunks chained on huge back wheels driving 70 miles an hour screeched stopped in the heavy rain and picked us up. Such was the luck of the road in those days. After we answered the usual, "What are two little kids like you doing three thousand miles from home," we asked the usual, "How did you get here?" The man who picked us up told us his story. He and his family had lived in Pittsburgh and they were sick of blacksoot and cinders covering everything in their house. He hated the steel mills in his lungs and heart. They packed up everything they owned in a truck and drove to Oregon. Everyone they knew said they were crazy. The man invited us to dinner. His home was a small black tarpaper covered shack on a wet mud lot in the woods on the side of the highway. He had a wife and seven children. One little girl was brain damaged. They all wore rags. Their routine of English was worse than Mr. Big and Mr. Little's. They were all very warm, kind, and sweet to each other and to us. The food we stranded, exquisitely spoiled Jewish boys from New Jersey were given for dinner was a thin soup of pork gristle in flour and milk. It was the most delicious dinner I have ever ate.**

***Swell to dine: Say in Moscowitz and Lu powitz in New York: or Lasserre, Paris: Sure: Yet shack shit poor: Relative to liberty: And kindne ss so ☆ up: In a shit shack pure:***

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So ends the first part of the life of David Daniels