

from Running Away

That wasn't a very nice thing to do, I know, but that's how we spent the summer and in the fall we decided to run away. I think, I'd probably thought about it for as long as I could understand the concept. Before I left for good there were some halfhearted attempts, it was like, "Well, let's go!" We'd make some sort of preparations and then realize we really didn't know where we were going, you know, that we were like 13-14-year-olds and that we weren't gonna be able to go out and get jobs. Well, when I was 14, Billy, his brother and me made it all the way to Arkansas before getting arrested. We left with half a bottle of wine, I remember, and we were on the road constantly, trying to avoid police and everything for 24 hours straight or so. We were frozen, of course we left in the winter, that was a good idea! We were going through back roads and barely out of this town, Newport, Arkansas, in the middle of nowhere at 3 o'clock in the morning. And it's cornfields and it's freezing, so we climbed into this huge piece of farm machinery, the corn picker, or whatever you call those things. We'd spent our last money on three cigarettes and we're in there drinking our wine and smoking our cigarettes, going, "Jesus, we're already in deep shit, what the fuck are we gonna do?" The next day the cops found us hitchhiking and it became pretty obvious what we were doing but, by this point, I think we all had a sense of relief when they picked us up. At least we could go someplace warm. But then, what was really weird was that they locked us up in the drunk tank, like with 20 guys, misdemeanors, they weren't like violent people who'd been arrested for stealing this, stealing that. They were all like good ol' boy types, really cool, nobody bothered us and most treated us real nice. The old guys had Prince Albert tobacco in cans and we could smoke cigarettes. And play poker. When we ate, we actually ate in a different room which is unusual for a jail. The meal was typical jail food, a slice of baloney *this* thick with a green rind on it, and these black-eyed peas that had roots on 'cause they'd been kept too long. But the thing was that the trustee, you know, who was on the other side of the bars - you know what a trustee is, right? Well, it's a prisoner who's got some special privileges because they trust him not to run away, and they have them in practically all jails. I guess, I haven't been in all jails yet so I can't testify to that but, you know, some day I might be. Anyway, he said, "If you guys ever get hungry, just yell out here and I'll get up. If you can stand baloney sandwiches at 3 o'clock in the morning, you can have one." It was the closest thing to Mayberry, you know, Andy Griffith's jail, like, "We don't want you to be uncomfortable." It wasn't just for us, they treated everybody in the room that way. The only real drawback was the sanitary facilities which consisted of a toilet right in the *middle* of this room, and 20 people in there. So the first thing in the morning, there'd be these drunks in there, coughing and snorting and then you would see this fat, ugly butt sitting on a toilet, blowing these pants-splitting farts. It was like, "Jesus, this is not a way to start the day." Well, we were there for a couple of days or so and since the jail wasn't so bad, we were like, "We can probably deal with this." For some reason, my dad decided he had to come down and get us, instead of just sending us money. We had already talked about taking the money and try to make it to Mexico. Of course, it wouldn't have worked 'cause the cops would have bought tickets for us and put us on a bus or something. None of us were looking forward to going home.