

Evasion Reviews

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Zines

Rikki Rocket, Poison drummer.

“What’s this?”

(Just hold still for the camera, brother...)

Hanging Like A Hex #16

Holy shit!!! Where did this come from? This easily makes it to one of the best zines I have ever read, hands down. And the funny part is, most of this thing is hand-written and cheaply photocopied. This kid obviously scammed all these copies as this thing is chock full of scams left and right. The rest of it is traveling stories of train-hopping and scamming even more in every town he hits. What a wonderful life this must be — stealing food, sleeping on rooftops, receipts scams to buy records, traveling the country, and being totally jobless. And I try to emulate that lifestyle as much as I can myself. Between reading “Days Of War Nights Of Love” on tour last year, and this thing on tour this year, it has fully brought me full circle into the realm of being what most people would call a “criminal”. But I just like fighting the man and being free. So how is that so wrong? Well, with a large dose of witty humor, and plenty of smarts this kid, I’m assuming feels about the same way. And that’s why I was so enthralled when reading this zine. There are more stories contained within the 100 or so half-sized pages to fill a few books, and the type of adventure that average Joe Foodbags will never realize in their armchair-ridden lives. So for anyone who has ever felt held down by a job, taxes, and waiting in lines there may be a story you need to inspire your own break into living free. I know it certainly gave me more than a few ideas. This zine actually came out a couple years ago, but has recently been copied again, though chances of getting it now are becoming slim. What you should do though is find the book version that Crimethink just put out that not only collects the stories from this zine, but also another 100 or so new pages of adventure.

Masterdick (Review one)

Of all the zines I have ever read, I can honestly say that thus far, the original Evasion zine was my favorite. This book was no let down. It contains almost all the original material from the zine (couple brief stories & the illustrations aren’t in the book), plus over half of the new book is new material.

Now, on w/ the review. The book is written in more of a form of, say, journal entries, very reminiscent of Jack Kerouac’s *On The Road*. His cynical style I love & he writes in a way that makes his every day experiences seem wild & crazy. Though then again, his every day life is pretty adventurous; hopping trains, dumpster diving, shoplifting & searching for new techniques to use while shoplifting, sneaking into rock/pop shows, scamming everyone from Walgreens to Greyhound, hanging out w/whomever whenever, finding odd places to sleep (under the movie screen in a theater, on top of a building, in a library closet, etc), plus much more.

This book is also very enlightening. It makes you realize that your 40 hour a week life is a fucking sham & this homeless kid who everyone seems to have pity on is living it up (FYI: he *CHOSE* to be homeless as opposed to becoming an employed slave). It’s also very helpful because he reveals all

his tactics on scams & just getting free money or CDS or whatever. This book could be treated as a freeloader's bible.

Basically, you either understand what he does & respect what he does or you consider it juvenile & you don't. Personally, I totally respect this guy (who remains anonymous, I'm sure for safety reasons) & what he does. People may say 'oh, he's just screwing us consumers because he steals & makes the prices raise in the stores &...' yaddy yaddy yaddy. Well, why must we all live as a consumer? If yr mad about that, maybe you should join him! We need a revolution & this mentality, if it gets far enough, could change a lot of people.

Rating- 10

Books

AARON COMETBUS (COMETBUS ZINE)

“Some people say it’s kind of hokey.”

(What happens when you think it would be funny to anonymously bring your own book to the counter of the Brooklyn bookstore where he works and ask for an opinion.)

Ramsey, AK Press.

“Stupid!”

(Makes more money from Evasion in a day then I will in a lifetime.)

San Francisco Bay Guardian, May 28 — June 3rd, 2003

With an always prevalent teenage spirit... the author is really just a small-town crook who exploits the existing system and is thus doing nothing different from everybody else. Claiming a moral superiority that is derived from a peculiar mix of not paying for things and militant straight edge veganism, the author can come across as a spoiled brat bragging about petty theft.

Thrasher Magazine

This is interesting, especially compared to Cometbus. The philosophies of the protagonists are essentially the same (live life well outside the borders of the acceptable, practice self-sufficiency), but the methods are completely different. The author of Evasion (it was a ‘zine, but has since been expanded and published by an anarchist press) is a straight-edge, vegan, dumpster-diving hobo. It reads like a well-written memoir of “the life:” hopping trains, dumpster diving, shoplifting, running scams, hitchhiking, squatting houses. It’s the kind of stuff which the earlier Cometbuses were full of: Finding girls, getting into shows, finding friends lost five states over, as well as humorous recollections of scams past pulled off and the ways and means of supporting oneself completely off of what others throw away or are too stupid to notice. It is not as though it is amorally written—there is an implicit code of ethics that drives “the life,” restricted further by diet. What is amazing is how the author makes everything seem so easy (which it can be) when things are going well, and so benign even when they are not. That is the driving difference between this and the people in the latest Cometbus, I think: embracing one’s environment with humor as opposed to rejecting it with scorn...

Heckler #52

Evasion is a zine, but now it’s been re-issued as a book. At 288 pages this isn’t a quick easy read, but it’s something you should seriously check out if a life in the malls and suburbs of the USA doesn’t seem to fit into your future. In a general sense, what’s being evaded here is the sheeplike mentality of the worker bee aspect of the American dream. Evasion comes in many forms; train hopping, dumpster

diving, squatting and shoplifting (which I think is bogus) but the bottom line is a certain freedom from the day to day grind that most of us deal with at some level. Minor theft issues aside, this is a great read.

Arise! Infoshop Newsletter, Fall 2002

This is a story of making every day an adventure, quitting your job, and enjoying the world without trading hours of life for currency. The author summarizes his four years after high school, which included hopping trains, living on rooftops or in abandoned rooms, dumpster diving, and shoplifting to the point of boredom, er, as the author explains, in a life where one is not tied to a job or a house, boredom never lasts. It is just the point at which new cities should be explored and new techniques should be applied to finding transportation and food.

I believe this book is one that will force you to remember the reasons for living the way you do and help you understand that there are other people in this world attempting to model a lifestyle of freedom.

Heartattack

This book blew me away. Evasion began as a zine found on coffee tables in random houses. It detailed the life of a young man living a life free of work and regular responsibility; one of traveling adventures, dumpstered foods, return scams, and sleeping in shacks. Most copies of the zine were simply remade and passed out to people as they met. Like many things in the author's life, there was no formal system for it. This book is a collection of reprints from the zine you might have seen, as well as a complete printing of everything the Crimethinc people could assemble into one book. It is well organized, educational, honest, and really funny. There are long sections about hopping trains, running scams, and doing what needs to be done in order to make the lifestyle work. It is a totally inspiring book. Kudos to the mystery man. — Lisa Oglesby

Microcosm Catalog Summer 2004

Evasion is a modern day literary masterpiece, a non-fiction hobo travelogue in which the author manages to evade the authorities for trespassing, squatting, and dumpster diving. Evasion is a metaphorical tale depicting the rejection of the 40-hour workweek and hopeless boredom of modern living. The journey documents the author's reclamation of his life through rejection of the 'American Dream.' the spaces surrounding them a life worth living and a world worth fighting for. The author of Evasion is a hitchhiker, train hopper, and urban scavenger. The roots of the novel stem from ten photocopies of the original manuscript scammed from Kinkos. Rapidly, the zine was mass duplicated and proliferated by thousands of its fans. 8,000 copies have been sold to date without a single advertisement. I found a few things offensive or distributing in the grand scheme of things but I think this offers a whole new horizon to bored middle class teenagers and twenty-somethings.

Dusted Magazine

I have problems with this book which is supposedly a pile of zines published by some random straight-edge white boy. But I like the spirit of what he is saying regardless of the fact that he speaks from the perspective of someone who is able to get away with a lot more than most folks because of his social strata as a middle class Caucasian male punk or not. As an artist I think it's important to always practice thinking 'out of the box' in terms of dealing with society, taking normal mores and

perspectives and just flipping the shit completely. This book will give you some new things to ponder in that direction.

Masterdik (Review two)

I know this may sound weird, but just imagine this: catcher in the rye, updated for the millennium, with references to assuck, reversal of man, dumpster diving, squatting, and pulling off return scams on a daily basis. Got it? Ok, well, that is what EVASION is like to me. I know this is dumb to be writing the review when (at this writing) im a little over halfway through the book, but oh god, this book is beautiful. Its seriously making me re-evaluate the way I live at this point in time, and whether or not im actually living. At times, its sad, then brutally truthful, and then absolutely hilarious, the things this kid does to survive, things he observes, its amazing.

Surely it will require a second reading after finished with the first, but only because it just hits you. You have to read it again. It's a kind of book that will make you go around, quoting from it, bringing it up in conversations, even just thinking about it. I know good and fuckin' well that every time I see a dumpster or a train, I think there's some kid in that dumpster or in that train, and he's fucking living completely free. I admire that immensely.

So, in conclusion, kudos to you, oh unnamed one, for having the courage to completely abandon the concepts of civilized society, to live without restrictions or (most) laws, and to be free. Get this book. It probably will change your life.

Slug And Lettuce #71

Evasion is a book filled with first hand accounts of people (???-ed) who live life according to the ideas laid forth in Days of War, Nights of Love. There are exciting stories of theft, squatting, train-hopping, and living life freely in the cracks of an oppressive capitalist world. Both books are very inspirational, and really make you want to go out and chance things for the better, or at least, go on a shoplifting spree. Well I fell like eating some potato chips, see you at the Frito Lay dumpster! (Reviewers note: Last night I Òleft handedÓ a 12-pack of Samuel Adams!)

University of Oregon Insurgent, October 2001

One of the most romantic and celebrated cultural icons in America is the train-hopping hobo, who travels around the country as he likes, free to roam, the other side of the country only a train hop away, not knowing when his next meal will be, but not willing to humiliate himself enough to get a shitty job.

Well, Evasion, the newest publication from everyone's favorite DIY punk anarcho-individualist (add your own misrepresenting label here) publishing house and propaganda machine, CrimethInc, brings back the hobo for the youth of today. Originally published as a 100-page photocopied zine, Evasion made the rounds in the zine world until, as legend goes, it was picked up and passed around through CrimethInc.'s extensive Kinko's connections and distributed. CrimethInc. agents attempted to contact the author to no avail. They sent a final email to the only contact info in the zine saying that they were going to publish Evasion in book form anyway, without permission, since they though it was so good. They finally got a response and the good news that the original Evasion zine consisted of only about 60% of all the writing the author had to date that was open for publishing. Using the seemingly plentiful CrimethInc resources, Evasion finally was published in book form this August, in almost 300 pages for our reading pleasure.

And the book is a pleasure to read. This reviewer took Evasion along with him on a cross-country Amtrak trip and it served as a perfect compliment to stopping through no-name Montana towns and

endless miles of strip malls. The Evasion narrative weaves in and out of different times and places, not going in chronological order, crisscrossing the country, hopping on trains, hitchhiking, living on top of bagel stores, dumpster diving, shoplifting, squatting, and falling in love. Evasion has it all.

Although it includes the repetitiveness (yes, for the 50th time, we know that you don't like to work, and think shoplifting from big chain stores is way cool and liberating) and the self-righteousness that you should expect from any straight-edge vegan rant that pushes 300 pages, Evasion offers many beautiful stories about surviving in voluntary squalor that are human and touching, yet liberatory and hopeful at the same time. There's a functional aspect to the book as well, in the form of great tips on train hopping, hitch hiking, shoplifting from specific stores like Barnes and Noble's (to which many pages are devoted), and many other how-to's in the underground world. For Eugene readers, the bit about holing up in the Knight Library and setting up a bedroom through some door marked "Emergency Exit Only" is particularly interesting. Part of the beauty of this book is that I could have run into this kid about a thousand times in Eugene and never known.

The author of Evasion is a product of his time: an alienated high school dropout that refuses wage-slavery and commodity economic systems in the only way he can, by becoming an outlaw. While clearly not a blueprint for revolutionary action (no one's saying it is) as CrimethInc writes in a short preface, it is one model of revolutionary activity in which at least one person has found solace and meaning in this absurd country we're living in. It's nice to know there are still people living outside of the radar screen of society, and writing well enough to tell us about it in a way that is enjoyable and offers an insightful and critical account of the United States.

Bad Subjects, December 2001

"Something happened when we quit our jobs, quit paying rent, quit paying for anything. And I think back to the early days—when, like clouds parting to reveal the sun, we discovered what we were told had been lies, that it could be done, and that it would mean the time of our lives."

This quotation, taken from the introduction, provides a sneak preview into the world of Evasion—a world of overflowing dumpsters, political critiques, theft, excitement and freedom. Evasion is a collection of zines (of the same name) that have been compiled for the first time by the good folks at the CrimethInc. collective. While the book is focused upon the life of the author, it is more acutely focused upon the politics of living and the ability for people anywhere to drastically change the ways in which they live. The book serves as both a blueprint for how to live outside of the market (providing excellent advice about dumpster diving, squatting, stealing from corporate chain-stores, freight hopping, etc.) and also as an invitation to those of us trapped within the tumultuous cycles of work and consumption. However, the real essence of this book lies within the energetic and meaningful prose of the nameless author. While the entire book is well written, there are moments of pure genius that arise without warning, sweeping the reader into a different reality and a whirlwind of possibility. During these moments, the nameless author could best be described as the Thoreau of the alley—one who lives/writes deliberately, and without regrets.

It is very fitting that the author remains nameless because the idea being explored is that this could be you, your life, your freedom. Evasion suggests that true living can be done both for oneself, and in spite of capitalism. More specifically, Evasion teaches one how to live off of the excesses of the capitalist system without contributing to it. The ethic presented to the reader is one of exploiting the exploiters—robbing the corporate chain-stores in order to get by, eating what others carelessly throw away, living in houses that people abandon, riding for free on trains that penetrate our landscape. Despite the daily schemes of theft, food acquisition, travel and housing, the author is explicit about his/her devotion to a lifestyle free from animal products, drugs or alcohol. Individuals that live a straight edge, vegan lifestyle sometimes have the tendency to assume the 'holier than thou' platform of which they can be

critical of a cruel and sinful society. However, the author's lifestyle choices are reflected upon in order to demonstrate to readers that one can live this lifestyle without compromising one's ethics.

Furthermore, the author never expresses contempt for individuals who subscribe to the capitalist system, but instead, he/she fully understands the symbiotic relationship at work. The author is not critical of people because they are blind sheep or mindless sinners, but because they have not challenged their world view and they are not living lives of enjoyment. While the author's lifestyle may not be appealing to everyone, it is well worth your time to explore what it is about, and how one can accomplish it. Regardless of your disposition, the message presented throughout is one that all of us can understand: life can be exciting, positive, fun, daring, and rewarding...but only if we let it be.

Evasion not only challenges the assumptions of what it means to survive, but also what it means to truly live. It is not too often that a book can really change the way in which you think about life.

This is one of those books.

Book Magazine, (Evasion book tour feature), March 2002

On the road with the evasion kid: an underground author shows how much @#%\$ fun you can have when money doesn't matter. Liz Seymour.

A FEW CAVEATS TO BEGIN WITH: All of the facts you are about to read are true, but not one of the names is real. This story is about a book that will never show up on any traditional bestseller list, will never be carried in a chain bookstore, will never cross Charlie Rose's desk, a book whose success is never going to be measured in anything but the amount of pleasure the writer got from writing it—and by the difference it made in the lives of the people who read it. It's about a fifty-two-year-old middle-class woman (me) driving around with a bunch of good-natured anarchists less than half my age—members of a surprising underground community you probably don't know exists. It's an author tour of sorts, and while you won't find any of the usual book tour complaints about bad airline food or early-morning-talk-show hosts, there is quite a bit of the language usually represented as @#%\$. I'll leave most of it out, but drop it in anywhere you want and you'll probably be right. Also, there's a lot of shoplifting. Actually, there's a whole lot of shoplifting.

The trip was originally planned as a take-no-prisoners barnstorming road show through the Midwest. The book was called *Evasion*, a shaggy, picaresque, anonymous autobiography of larceny and adventure. "Eight kids, a van of books and utter disregard for tradition," its twenty-five-year-old author—I'll call him Ray—wrote in the hand-lettered flyers he scammed at a copy shop before we left home. "Maybe it's 'promotion,' maybe book tours just aren't dangerous enough, but we—the criminals—are bringing the *Evasion* 'Break Down the Walls' book tour to your town, with the simple challenge: 'Dare us to sneak into something!'" Ray—whose aliases have become so confusing that most people just call him "the Evasion kid"—was feeling pretty unstoppable after he and two friends had sneaked into Madonna's sold-out, \$88-and-up concert in Miami the month before, using a combination of hard hats, coveralls and bravado. "The most exclusive concert event in history," he says, "and we owned it." Next, Ray planned to own the world.

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Ray was a kind of suburban every-boy, a middle-class white kid from California who grew up skateboarding and goofing off in school, destined for college and a white-collar job. But an epiphany led him to veer off at a fork in the road, leading him to, well, more skateboarding and more goofing off and a considerable amount of breaking and entering. "I had always hated the town I grew up in," he says, "and suddenly the whole world flipped on its head and the town was one big playground." Four years into his new life of petty crime, Ray decided to write it all down. In May 1999, he spent a month in a Little Rock, Arkansas, coffee shop drinking free refills, sleeping at night behind a movie screen at

a local multiplex, eating scavenged popcorn and composing an episodic account of the preceding four years of his life: He'd spent them as a full-time hitchhiker, train hopper and scam artist. "The only two really happy people in this world are the millionaire and the bum," he wrote on the first page. Salted among the tales of sleeping in empty houseboats, digging through Dumpsters and watching the stars from rooftops were practical tips on recovering receipts from the drugstore trash and returning small items for credit. "Relieve yourself of guilt and strife over exchanging pieces of your life for money," Ray writes, "and exchange vitamins and power tools instead!" There are also tips on sleeping in library broom closets after-hours, swimming in hotel pools and grazing the bulk-food bins, not to mention an all-important "left hand" shoplifting technique. Evasion was a how-to and why-to rolled into one.

"I had never picked up a pen in my whole life, but I really wanted to give the drug-free perspective," says Ray, who is not only a vegan—a vegetarian who doesn't eat eggs or dairy products—but also straight-edge, meaning he doesn't use drugs or alcohol. "Anything that covered the way I was living was kind of clenched-fist, all about being cold and hungry, getting drunk and going Dumpster diving. I really wanted all the straight-edge kids to quit their jobs and go out and have fun."

To hitchhikers and train hoppers and punk kids, self-published pamphlets called "zines"—which is what Evasion was before being turned into a book—are what The Wall Street Journal is to commuters on the Long Island Railroad: essential reading. When it was done, Evasion added up to 108 full-sized handwritten pages. In June 1999, Ray scammed ten copies at the local copy shop (there are a number of ways to rip off a Kinko's, often based on the idea of paying for a little but copying a lot), passed them out to a couple of friends and then caught a freight train headed west. "Over the summer I made maybe fifty more, and that was the end of it," he says. "It was part of the past."

In fact, the Evasion zine would have quite a future. One of Ray's copies made its way to a stack of zines in the bathroom of a punk house, one of the many stops on the underground railroad of run-down houses and crowded apartments where visiting bands and traveling kids crash on couches and floors on their way through town. A guitarist took it with him and began scamming his own copies for friends, who in turn scammed their own—one legendary copy-shop employee was responsible for making some 2,000 under-the-table copies—and passed them along. Within months Evasion had become the underground equivalent of a bestseller, the must-read of the summer in punk houses and anarchist info shops, passed from town to town by kids on their own hitch-hiking and train-hopping odysseys. By the end of that year, conservative estimates put the number of circulating copies at more than 5,000. For many middle-class kids raised on Nintendo and shopping malls and MTV, Evasion's simple message—that it's possible to get up and get out, to live beyond the edge and enjoy it, to make your own extreme sports out of the suburban materials at hand—was as powerful a call as Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* had been to a generation nearly fifty years before.

The first intimation Ray had that something was going on came early in the spring of 2000. Although he has no fixed address in the real world, Ray maintains several e-mail addresses in the virtual one, which he checks regularly on free library computers wherever he happens to be. One day, he discovered a fat batch of fan mail. "It was like someone had flipped a switch," he says. The first message was from Israel, the second from North Carolina. They started coming in from all over, a dozen or more a day: Louisville, Philadelphia, San Diego, Pensacola, Albany, Seattle, Germany, England, Sweden. People started posting messages on punk message boards and online diaries. ("More inspiration for when I finally give up on this silly made-for-TV life and jump a train to eternal spiritual liberation" read one. Another simply said, "The guy who does this zine should be a role model to all of America.") "Doing the Evasion thing" entered the punk lexicon as ranks of worried and puzzled parents watched their children quit their jobs, drop out of school and start writing travel zines of their own.

That kind of reaction was gratifying to Ray, who owed his own career to a photocopied zine called *Scare* that had come into his hands in June 1995, the last weeks of his senior year in his northern California high school. "It basically detailed this kid's life living in an abandoned hotel in Miami, reading books, riding bikes around, playing guitar on public transportation," says Ray. Before *Scare*, he says, "It had never occurred to me that you didn't have to work. It was one of those defining moments where you

close the book and say, ‘This is what I want to do.’” It was a blinding personal insight, but as it turned out, it was not a unique one: Beginning in the early 1990s, and accelerating since the anti-globalization protests in Seattle in November 1999, a radical anticorporate, anticonsumer, anticapitalist movement has been gathering force, largely under the radar but numbering in the hundreds of thousands. One of the central tenets of this new movement is DIY—Do It Yourself: Take responsibility for taking or making what you need in life, including your own fun.

Among the e-mails that crowded Ray’s in-box after the Evasion zine began its global wanderings was one from Paul F. Maul, a member of something called the CrimethInc Ex-Workers Collective, a loose organization of punk kids and anarchists that puts out newspapers, CDS, zines and books. The CrimethInc imprint was already widely familiar in the train-hopping/Dumpster-diving/ protest-going DIY community for its first book, *Days of War, Nights of Love*, a compilation of romantically radical artwork and essays with titles like “Eight Reasons Why Capitalists Want to Sell You Deodorant” and “Tricks of the Tradeless.” CrimethInc claims that *Days of War* sold more than 10,000 copies in its first year without any advertising, marketed at punk shows and on Web sites like anti-everything.com (“just like Amazon but with more swearing”). Maul asked Ray if he would be interested in expanding his zine into a book; many e-mails and sticky notes and free coffee refills later, Evasion the book was ready for its first printing of 3,500 copies. “We Dumpstered, squatted, and shoplifted our lives back,” says a blurb on the back cover. “Everything fell into place when we decided our lives were to be lived. Life serves the risk taker...”

ROAD SCHOLARS

So there I was, at the wheel of the Evasion book tour. The members of our ragged little collective included Ray (and his three cartons of books) and six others. Emma, from Florida, was one of the original radical cheerleaders, an organized group of genuine cheerleaders who have turned their talents to cheering on the revolution (One of their cheers: “R is for Revolution! E is for Everybody! S is for Subvert the system! I is for Ignite debate! S, Smash the state! T, Tear it down! Resist, resist! Raise up your fist! Resist, resist ...”). Starfish, eighteen, was a high school dropout and ardent train hopper; Fuzzy, seventeen, was a tall, quiet suburban kid who had discovered anarchism on the Internet; Sal, twenty-one, was a Kentucky coal miner’s son and a genius at the returns scam; Vernon, twenty, was a former boy preacher from Virginia; and Quinn, twenty, was a straight-edge vegan from Australia. I was on the tour to do research for my own book about the my community. Also, I owned the van.

Book tours have become an important marketing tool in the publishing world, but of course, our tour was going to be a little different. To begin with, there were two things Ray was adamant about: He wouldn’t sign books and he wouldn’t do readings. Also, if possible, he would prefer not to be at any of the author’s appearances. And he didn’t want to make a profit: If we started making more than gas money, we would give away free books until we brought our budget back in balance. That understood, we were off.

Louisville: The tour starts at a weekend-long DIY conference with a full calendar of workshops on subjects like how to squat a building, how to settle disputes in a collective and one called “Sew Yer Own Damn Clothes.” Books sell for \$5, of which \$3.50 has to go back to CrimethInc. Ray hones his marketing skills. A young woman with magenta dreadlocks: “Why should I buy this book?” Ray: “I have no idea.” Books sold: forty-five.

Bloomington, Indiana: We head north, stopping only once to get gas (paid for) and soda and chips (not). Our first real stop: an evening at Secret Sailor books, a cozy anarchist info shop near Indiana University. We get our first dare, and Ray and Sal, dressed most unconvincingly as fraternity boys—Ray in a striped shirt and his usual baggy khakis, Sal in a blue oxford cloth shirt buttoned over his wrists to cover his tattoos—sneak into the Lambda Chi house and report on what they find: not much. The Dumpster behind Marsh’s yields cabbage, potatoes, onions, pineapples, tomatoes and asparagus, enough for dinner that night and some left over for the next day. Vernon and Fuzzy dine and dash at a

local restaurant and just barely outrun the angry proprietor. Vernon goes into Papa John's at closing and talks the counter clerk out of an unsold cheese pizza. Books sold: six.

Chicago: Somewhere southeast of Chicago we stop at a shopping center to stretch our legs. Dozens of major chain stores. Sal: "Maybe we died and went to heaven and didn't even know it." Quinn: "We'll be stealing the @#%\$ angel's halos next." I get everyone into the van fast. Vernon comes back with two copies of the Guinness Book of World Records and one copy of The Satanic Bible; Fuzzy adds to his growing flashlight collection. We all agree that our event in Bloomington was lacking something. Back on the highway, the idea for an addition to the Evasion tour is born: Molotov Sock Tales. We'll make sock puppets in Chicago and act out an anarchist fairy tale called "The Rich Man and His Appetite." Everyone is hungry and cranky, but things are looking up.

Once in Chicago, it turns out that the anarchist collective where we are booked to do our presentation doesn't really want us there. And the tiny apartment where we are staying—mattresses on the floor, a snarl of wires hooking up the three computers—is really too small for the eight of us. Ray and Emma opt for the roof. MTV is filming The Real World nearby, and we've been challenged to sneak into the house, but a look at the security cameras outside the front door has given us second thoughts. The Vagina Monologues, our second choice, proves equally unyielding. While Ray and Emma are out trying to sneak into things, the rest of us stay back in the apartment making puppets out of socks from a charity thrift store—ethics dictate that we pay for them—and yarn liberated from a chain craft store. Sal returns one of the Guinness books and gets some CDs that he plans to sell later for cash, but we can't find any place to sell the CDs. Food is low. Vernon tries shoplifting using the left-hand technique, holding a bottle of juice below eye level while he pays for a package of gum, but he gets ratted out by the customer in line behind him. The returns scam at a chain health-food store yields enough for only dinner and breakfast. I offer to buy some groceries on my credit card. Vernon says, "The way I see it, paying for stuff is the same as blasphemy." We make do. Books sold: two.

Ypsilanti, Michigan: We had been booked between bands at a punk show in a little club on the main drag, but now the owner wants us to pay \$5 apiece to get in. We'd have to sell eight books just to break even, and the pierced and mohawked teenagers milling around outside don't look like a book-buying crowd. We set up on the sidewalk instead. I read an excerpt from Evasion and Sal and Starfish debut Molotov Sock Tales, but it's hard to compete with bands like Nine Shocks Terror, whose music billows out every time someone opens the door. Surprisingly, though, a few kids do dig into their pockets. "Vernon!" Emma says suddenly. "We're in Michigan! Do you know what that means?" "Oh my God," says Vernon. It's the Michigan bottle deposit return.

While Ray and Quinn watch the merchandise, the rest of us fan out to check the trash cans. Yield: thirty-seven returnable soda bottles, a box of oatmeal and a pair of galoshes. On the way out of town, we run into another bit of good fortune—the clerk at an all-night convenience store near the Michigan border buys twenty books and gives us free sodas. "We're unstoppable!" Sal shouts, pounding on the dashboard as we drive off. "We'll take over the world with a @#%\$ army!" "We'll take over the world with a @#%\$ army of sock puppets!" I say. Dead silence. "Did you hear that?" Sal says quietly. "Liz just said @#%\$. Well, welcome to punk rock!" That night we sleep under the stars. Books sold: Ypsilanti, nine; Crazy D's Truck Stop, twenty. Returned bottles: \$3.70.

Oberlin, Ohio: We drop Ray and Fuzzy off at the highway outside Oberlin. They are planning to hitchhike to Pittsburgh to sneak into a Lynyrd Skynyrd concert; two hours later, they call the house where we are staying from a pay phone at a Kmart, and I drive back to the highway to pick them up. They haven't found a ride, but Fuzzy has managed to slip a new pocketknife into his backpack while waiting for me to arrive. The Dumpster behind the IGA is full of apple pies and tomatoes. And bees. The show is at the house where we are staying, mostly college students. Vernon and Fuzzy take their turn with Molotov Sock Tales. Sal sings a song about quitting his job at Wal-Mart. Starfish reads a poem about train hopping. The town is lovely, the hospitality is warm and I have a sofa to sleep on all to myself. Books sold: three.

Pittsburgh: Eight people in a small van is really a lot—all big feet and sharp elbows and a lot of grumbling. Pittsburgh will be our last stop. When I miss the exit, the three-hour ride turns into four. By the time we park in front of the punk house on a narrow cobbled street east of downtown, everyone is pretty subdued. We make a dinner from whatever we can find in the refrigerator, plus some rice left over from Chicago. A new discovery: The bottle-top scare. Fuzzy uses his new knife to pry out the linings of Coke bottle tops while Emma, Fuzzy and Vernon slip in photocopied facsimiles of “Free Coke” offers. Starfish and Vernon go get free Cokes for everyone. By 9 p.m., the basement where the show takes place has filled up with people, and under the strings of blue Christmas tree lights our spirits begin to revive. Quinn reads a speech about traveling to America; Fuzzy reads from *Evasion*; Sal sings. *Molotov Sock Tales* rises to a new level: It turns out that anything is funny if you put in enough swearing. Applause is thunderous. Maybe we will take over the world. The next morning we head home. Books sold: five.

Final accounting: Ninety books sold, one place sneaked into, no meals or rooms paid for, and we heard later that one kid who had been at our show in Pittsburgh was so inspired she quit her job. Some lessons learned. I relearned things I had nearly forgotten, about the excitement of risk and the pleasures of making something happen. And I learned something new and useful: It’s amazing how much fun you can have if you don’t care about the money.

THE KIDS ARE ALRIGHT

What happened next? Quinn went back to Australia and fell in love. Vernon spent three days in jail in New Orleans for taking change out of a public fountain. Starfish caught a freight train to Chattanooga. Fuzzy was pepper-sprayed in D.C. at an anticapitalist demonstration. Sal found an old typewriter and began writing stream-of-consciousness poetry. Emma sent me a postcard from Florida to say she was back with the radical cheerleading squad. I came home and took a hot bath and slept for twelve hours. Six weeks after it was released, *Evasion* sold out its first printing; with a second printing, there are now 7,500 copies in print.

As for Ray, he came through town again not long ago. He’d spent some time in Florida, gone up to Minneapolis, toured with a band. But his best experience, he said, had come shortly after we said goodbye. Hitchhiking back to Florida, he and Emma had been picked up by a trucker hauling a transport stacked with new cars. Ray had idly remarked that he had always wondered what it would be like to ride up high in one of those cars, at which the driver pulled over and said, “Pick one.” That’s how it was that the last remnant of the *Evasion* tour consisted of Ray flying down I-95 at seventy miles an hour in a shiny red Pontiac twelve feet up in the air, watching the world from an angle that you and I will likely never see. Life serves the risk taker.

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