

Happened While
I
Was Asleep



Crossing my legs over the carpeting before the fire grazes my nails ..

**

Are you going
to
show
for
the
show,
or
should we go ahead
and
barter your hides
and
drink your
liquors ..

Oh,
so
you
may just go ahead and show with
your show?

Don't
be
surprised
if

they're
both

gone .. gone ..

away ..

good gone ..

**

Contrary to
popular belief
anymore
is
popular
belief in
a
nut shell ..

**

I'm
not going back
outside,
I just
going to walk through

the
door
and

back through the door again ..

**

RETURN TO SENDER ..

i love this return to sender shit ..

**

lesbians,
my lover
and
late night swimming pool

without
all
that
talk of movie stas ..

shit,
fuckin' yea,
pass
me

the mustard, baby ..

**

if you
splashed someone underwater,
that
would be a lot
of
fucking water ..

**

when are you going to have time to make time .. get that Eli Whitney fucker back here to
get the makin' machine making ..

**

his hand just won't
stop plucking the
chords of his
friend's piano
as
the magazine in the corner catches
on fire and the coffee table freezes like Alaska in a jar.

**

of all the people that have gone through my mind .. you're the only one that didn't clean up after herself after leaving ..

**

cherish is a term used by someone that can't get their hands around the mustard of love ..

**

if you're an American .. & you come up to me complaining about how there's a Spanish option on ATM's and they say that soon American's may have to pick up a second language .. if you are one of those that complains about this option .. don't come barking your disgust down my hearing holes .. American's on whole only know one language .. European's know at least two, if not three languages and they appreciate that opportunity and knowledge .. Americans drudge over it like it's going to cut into their prime time television plate .. fuck those people that can't accept that to be human is to be progressive .. if you cannot look beyond the English language, amigos, go fuck your toes in a garbage disposal .. these people should feel embarrassed for wanting so little in their mind .. so, the next time you go to Mexico, France, Italy, Portugal, Africa, Prussia, Russia, Yugoslavia, Germany, etc. .. keep your ears perked as to how many people speak English .. they don't complain about how they had to learn another language .. they complain at how many complaints and the lack of energy Americans have towards learning anything other than what they already know .. so, you'll have an easier time fishing a splinter from a porcupines paw than trying to convince me of your lazy disgust, fuckers ..

**

the farther you get away from it .. the closer you get .. not in this case .. the dream began with arriving at the airport .. a friend and I were boarding an extra large 737 for a flight overseas .. when we got to the airport .. we found another good friend of ours that promised to try and get us a discount on our tickets .. we had a handful of tickets and it was hard to decipher which ticket was going to get us where .. so, we handed over the stack, or my friend handed his over first .. I went on ahead and tried to load the vessel .. told them I was going to take care of the problem on the inside .. so, my friend got his ticket situation figured .. I was inside trying to work things out with the woman in the back of the plane .. she wouldn't budge .. my ticket package included one stop in Phoenix for a connecting flight to Florence. So, as it happened, my good friend working for the airline came back and grabbed my stack of tickets .. telling me he was going to get me his employee discount .. so, as I waited in my seat and began talking to a woman in the center aisle .. the doors closed, I had no tickets in hand and we were getting ready to roll out as the lights flickered on and off .. so, we roll down the runway .. in the air .. not but 10 minutes later we're landing .. landing in LA .. Christ, what's the story .. the captain tells us that they undershot our gas levels .. it was going to take several minutes to correct the problem .. the problem is corrected .. we angle out on the runway and begin taking off again .. we start to gain speed .. faster and faster .. then the speed juts down .. all our heads lunge and the aisle hawks with drinks and food coming out already lurch forward violently .. then, the plane begins dipping all the way back .. shit, in the lurch of a free fall .. I wonder what everyone's last act is going to be .. we're in the fall .. everyone is waiting for the truth to hit .. then, BAM .. we hit the ground and slide .. no explosion .. just people climbing out of the torn machine .. everyone is OK after all is said and done .. feeling deliberately part of a training exercise, the great world keeps turning as I look back at my friend .. go up and ask him what he was doing on the way down .. he said the girl next to him unzipped her pants, grabbed his hand and the rest was instinct .. all he could hear was her moaning as he forgot he was falling in a jumbo jet .. I lit a smoke at the moment, brushed off the sound of a circling helicopter above gathering the story for LA .. though, the fucked part was that we all climbed back onto this spacious plane .. ate our in-flight food and waited for further word on whether they were going to repair that vessel for flight or if we were going to use another plane to hop overseas .. looking around at all the calm resignations of the people on the plane, it struck me odd that we would carry on so naturally in a broken plane after the treat of death .. though, there usually always is a threat of death depending on the way you walk and think .. so, keep on falling through your airplane dreams and tear down the fucking street in that car of yours ..

**

Musical sprays of fountain acting like water .. why did the alarm horn start honking when the thieves stole what they were looking for a whole lot long ago?

**

Top suite of your
pH – penthouse
Loving as the basement sweepers get their domicile
Ready for action ..

It's a swift click from
Anywhere
& a turn towards somewhere ..

**

Smelling trash stench on a hot day
Is like tasting blood on
Any old day ..

**

If it is possible to be impossible .. then we could try to make it possible ..

**

In the beginning, there was light .. In the end, I believe there will be lotto ..

**

Comic genius only comes at the expense of the one telling the jokes ..

**

With this .. I give you the last of the conch & the first of the halo ..

**

Saturday, September 22, 2001 - Kansas City, Missouri

I'm watching the lightning in the gathering clouds around my complex flicker pieces of bright white as the rain waits to come down in a pile to the pavement, grass, people and pets on the ground .. the Lawrence, Kansas radio station plays retro music for the hipsters to orchestrate better conversation .. papers lay on the ledge of a trip to London from Paris and an appeal that I'm going to make to the airline for a reimbursement .. I lie here awake with cold beer in hand as the neighbors from across the way have loaded up their truck to move on to Chicago, Illinois .. I'm officially back in America as the hummingbirds wait for the photographer and the elm's look to the sky for a nice dose of rain to get their leaves laughing and roots ready to go further down .. sure, it's only been three days that I have been back in America and it's never looked better .. the solidarity was something I didn't come close to seeing before I left the country .. Now, it's an indelible part of the oxygen going from one house, apartment, person and such to another .. yes, I began a journey on September 4, 2001 with my lady friend from the United States of America to Paris, France .. the eight-and-a-half hour flight was to plunge Sarah into her first full venture into Europe .. she is now officially Eurotrash and we officially are back into the clutches of what we initially felt we were going to have a hard time coming back to .. though, our favors and preferences changed over a week into the

venture to have a palatable thirst to get back into the states .. So, our journey began in Paris .. weaving through a Champes-Elleyse, Eiffel, nameless bridges, the Seine, trains, subways and the countless huddled buildings that made up the Parisian town .. shit, we had kicks .. a good dose of bread over and over .. haven't had that much bread in my entire life .. a good noseful of piss .. bidets signing in water and slow trains that almost kept us in Paris for good .. So, as we moved past our Paris segment and the fashion that followed it around on it's purveying leash .. we took a 12-hour train ride down to Venice, Italy .. from 8PM to 8AM, we would slip from the stare of France to the old country .. shit, it was nice to get back down into the kettle of Italian soil .. pulling some heavy luggage from the train station over many bridges into the heart of inner-Venice .. took us some time initially to find a hotel room on our arrival .. though, once we found our room .. we took to the streets like a couple of starved tourists will plenty of finagle in our jangle and more time than the trip knew how to deal with .. going several days through the city .. our third day was the day that America heard the planes and searched for the next breath in what was at prior a perfunctory human reaction .. following the news and being 7 hours ahead of schedule .. we watched the news and waited for the following morning to see the American and Italian headlines of what exactly happened in America .. the night before .. we watched Italian television on what had happened .. took down a bottle or two of Italian wine along the Grand Canal as we both talked our way into going back up for some sleep .. When we finally did .. it wasn't hard to get our bones into relaxation .. I had vivid dreams all night long about how everything was going to look in the papers and what was going to transpire after the global attack in America .. Time slipped away from that evening and the next morning was along the way .. I remember having a good dose of dream being tossed around stage four in regards to what the headline was going to look like .. looking down the loaded barrel of history .. square in the chops and right down the center of the eyelids .. the next morning, the Italians were moving along on their collective way as though nothing had happened in the world .. it was refreshing and eerie seeing the non-chelant, yet knowing that America was pulling their hair out from the back of their hands .. I bought the papers, one Italian and one American, to catch up on the events .. with the gal waiting at a cafe with the coffee and pastry .. I went down by the Ferrovia kiosk, bought the papers, stopped in the middle of that busy cobbled street and listened to the hairs stand up on the back of my neck .. it was rather surreal to see that your home country was in the stages of declaring war and picking up the pieces of an all out attack that made Pearl Harbor seem like a mock exercise in terror .. so, we gathered the papers, went to the train station and boarded our bodies for a trip to Cinque Terra .. likely one of the most peaceful places on earth .. once on train, we settled down to talk about history as we knew it and how the charter for the remainder of our vacation was going to go down .. not letting events get in the way, yet mindful that we were in a whole different sand box as Americans on International soil, we went about our way as the smile parted the lady bugs wings .. from the peace of the Ligurian Sea and a little Italian village called Vernazza, came Paris once more .. we went to Paris, specifically DeGaulle Airport to determine our fate in the skies .. dodging the French Foreign Legion in high boots and loaded AK-47's with finger on trigger .. we found out that our flight from Paris to St. Louis no longer existed .. gone .. off the charts and several more options were presented .. must note that at this point in the adventure, we were both broker than bad jokes .. so, we were to recoup our own finances to stay in Paris another seven days and start three days into the wait to hang out and try to fly out on stand-by .. or, we could take a train to London and leave in three days .. though, London was out of hotel rooms as the woman behind the counter told us and Paris was starting to get colder physically and mentally .. after a cigarette and a look over the latest developments in America, we picked up our shit and priced several train tickets .. one ticket to Amsterdam and on to London later or a straight shot to London .. due to cost, it was much more feasible to get our asses straight to London .. this was our fate .. we booked a hotel online in DeGaulle and grabbed some food in anticipation for the train .. ends up, that we were about 12 minutes late for our train, though the line was clogged to get on .. as it happened .. there was a bomb threat on the train before ours, which impeded the loading of our train .. so, we finally made it to our train .. settled in .. started reading more about the new war America was launching on the bad guys .. then, a woman (Helen) from Boston starts talking to us with her bottles of red wine and stories of Southern France .. we end up moving our shit to the middle of the train car .. smoking and gettin' plenty liquored up .. we laughed while burrowing under the waters of the English Channel by train .. we made it to London and the opposite side of the Road .. flew out on time to the United States and cheered once the wheels touched down on the runway .. shit baby, America never looked so good to this kid .. for now .. this is where the story continues .. though you may want to know when it ended .. it doesn't .. America looks flat fucking good and I need some more looking time ..

**

early
on
the
right side of bed,
stage left,
as
the
country
tries

to
figure
how
to
work
out this terrorism
shit

going
down
in
the
House
and

in
buildings ..

**

the sword swallowed
the
knife
as
the
eclipse
came
knocking
on
the
gun's trigger
asking,
"who took the toast before the heat had it's time to speak?"

if
I can
answer this one ..

"it was the reaper in joker's cloth."

**

Dogs should really be the ones yelling at humans .. not the other way around ..

**

There's something all together peaceful & silly about watching these orange duck feet paddling under the water as their glass eyes pass questioningly over you ..

**

We have to be the luckiest & most doomed sort in the universe ..

**

When they have sold all that you're worth .. at least you'll know what you're really worth ..

**

Flight 880 from St. Louis, MO – USA to Paris, FR – September 4, 2001

So, as we fly above the eastern the Atlantic and US .. over Scotland – Germany – parts between Eastern Europe .. For what it's worth .. political genocide .. American domination .. global economics & corporate conglomeration are going to continue to exist in the world once my trip to Europe comes to an end .. (WHICH IT DID WHEN I FLEW FROM LONDON TO ST. LOUIS ON WED. SEPT. 19, 2001 IN THE WAKE OF HORRIFIC TERRORIST ATTACKS ON THE PENTAGON AND THE WORLD TRADE CENTER IN NY, NY)

This is what else will still exist .. likely unchanging and what will change over this flight and the ever after—

--Men's and women's bathrooms in airports will continue to smell like a solid union of piss, sweat, vomit and shit .. enough to keep on from washing their hands to get out of the door quick and escape the cloud ..

--The Pope will take off his hat and call a stranger ..

--Another dog will be born & bred by a bitch as the chickens shit all the eggs we eat ..

--Horses will be slaughtered in France for human consumption ..

--Parents will go another day missing their kids, whether they see them or not ..

--Someone will take a panorama of the Eiffel Tower ..

--A dry piece of land will turn into a body of water & a body of water will eventually get polluted enough by waste that it will have to be deemed unsanitary ..

--The earth will follow the sun, while I follow my instincts ..

--Pop rocks and Coca-Cola will actually kill the Mikey character from the Life Cereal commercials and make international headlines ..

--Another aging rock group from a forgotten decade will make a ridiculous run for a reunion to make all the money back they shot, snorted or fucked away ..

--Someone in Africa with a gun, knife or arrow will kill a cool animal like the zebra ..

--Our current President, Bush, will likely not be re-elected ..

--I will eat another big jar of pickles when I return to the states ..

--My ass, chapped clean while splaying around on a Sea Doo over lake water, will heal ..

--Another poor motherfucker will cook a big heaping helping of Jack Mackerel and think it's the greatest meal they have ever had ..

--Light will refract off glass or a mirror while the dark just sits there like a slim piece of metal that fell between the cracks of the mater heater & just sits there .. getting hot and rusty like Sophia Loren and the Italian coast waiting to come out with the next fad in melba toast .. it will be a lot like the cheese and crackers bit .. but this melba toast shit will be melba toast/cream cheese and/or butter in the plastic tub tray .

--Quick idea on a cereal box toy gimmick .. Inside your standard box of cereal with a toy .. you will get another fantastic toy on the flip top portion of the box .. it's a makeshift foldout plastic bowl that the kids unfold and pour all the cereal into the get right to the magic toy inside the box .. That's it .. no ignorance or gimmicks as to if the kids will wait till they eventually eat all the cereal leading to the toy .. fuck no .. same with the cracker jack box .. give it the disposable bowl on the top of the box and go .. we all rip open the box looking for the goods .. so let's not kid the kids .. they need the bowl ..

**

Why would the clown take off his make-up if he knew they would all still laugh at him ..

**

The snail stuck in the snake's shed skin is the lizard stuck in the shell and the whale still coursing through the oceanic fantasy well all see ..

**

A jab in the dark is a stab at the light ..

**

Your medicine is someone else's reason ..

**

credibility
is proof that we can be civil ..

**

more than 1 time a day
I want to give the world a solid
shot of classic jazz across their front teeth ..

**

9/6501 – 8:32AM – Paris, France

Smells like Paris the 1st morning after as the women below our Prince Hotel Forum with its French/Japanese motif poke their eyes over the shoe shops and the old French women bring open their windows for a fresh gust of cool, cold morning air. Don't hear much French being shouted or mulled over in the early Thursday morning street from this second story window. Just shuffling feet going over the rain that washed the area clean of all the frites and gyros. Staying in the District 10 here in Paris . Lost of sex shops, shopping houses and flat European charm. My French is poor, but enough with the lady friend to get a cup, bread, admission or the other necessities to make it through the city. Tell you, as with Italy, these

people live easy as a pillow. Floatin', laughin', glidin' and goin' about as though they have it all figured out.

We arrived in Paris on Sept. 4, 01 at about 11AM and tooted around the airport. We had some Panini, grabbed the shuttle and headed to the RER train station to get straight to the heart of Paris. So, there's a Metro system and the RER train system that feeds into and away from it. Thus, the initial jaunt into the heart of Paris' train system was a true juggernaut to figure out with fresh American eyes and new views of a completely different lay of the land. We took the Metro to the Chatelet Malysess, the center of Paris and found a room. We let the day flow from there after dropping the luggage off at the hotel. Saw the Notre Dame, French faces, the enormous face of people floating like a sky of birds. Weaving in and out, though not hitting each other in the slightest fashion. All the while, sounds of cop cars and ambulances would break up the murmur or silence here and there. A cacophony of sound, silence, motion and the French being very civil, cool and collected the whole way down the European pipe line. Finally, saw my first European wreck on the other side of the Seine and the Notre Dame. A car smashed into the back of another during a gridlock moment of rush hour traffic in Paris.

**

9/6/01 – Paris, France – SECOND FULL DAY IN THE CITY

Several observations .. the blacks here .. a number look like they just came over from the Ivory Coast of Africa, though many look like the brothers and sisters from the American side of life .. Yet, the stigmata of racism and economic disparity present in current day America is non-existent .. the blacks here move with the whites, Indians and Orientals as though it's no sweat .. they dress well, speak well .. though, to hear the brothers and sisters speaking French is rather whacky .. yes, the equality and quality of life out here is indeed high .. the USA should take note .. I have seen zero ghetto overtones, snide looks or submissiveness in the black women especially .. they roll as confidently as anyone around .. in addition to the blacks, the people out here are good lookin' .. the women move fast, quick and well ..

We're staying in the sex shoppe district of town .. velvet curtains and people poking their heads in and out of a brief visa of sexual escapism .. there are French voices carrying on long and strong down here on the streets .. yesterday, we awoke to find a new hotel room .. our first night in the European hotel circuit was a modified French/Japanese motif with a Japanese man at the front desk struggling through a bit of English with us to get the key and currency exchange taken care of .. hand to hand .. this joint had the smallest elevator I have ever ridden on in my life .. just big enough for my small frame and my big bag of goods .. the room was pricey at about 730 francs (\$104 in US) .. though, we found a cheaper 2 star hotel down the street .. another small swing door elevator in this joint .. great view from the hotel window in our room .. straight down on the street .. the man who checked us into this room was a knock off character from a spy film .. had to be ..

Saw the following yesterday:

- Metro Subway
- Eiffel Tower
- Napoleon Castle of War History
- The Louvre
- Museo of Modern Art
- University of Paris
- Champs De Eleysse
- Notable and unnotable buildings
- Enough reasons to stay (for now)
- Not enough to leave (for a while)
- All the restaurants and cafes place menus on a big chalkboard or in framed glass for all to poke about and sneak a look into .. classy.

The food in Paris was weak .. this was probably due to the fact that we just flat didn't have the scratch to pull together enough for a good restaurant .. we had a bread/cheese/hot dog concoction, plenty of good French wine, too much fucking bread, gyros, a bad/raw steak that was hard to finish before boarding the train to Venice and other oddities that were easy to forget at this point in the discussion ..

9/7/01 – CONTINUED

Staying another night in Paris .. leave for Venice tomorrow morning at 8PM and arrive there 12 hrs. later at 8PM .. So, we saw the Mona Lisa, other Da Vinci's, Italian Sculpture, large French paintings, stared at the outside of the Louvre for a while, Renaissance tapestry and a shit load of other pieces on our way to art overload .. these people still give us that *"I know you're American look. You won't fool me"* constantly .. Though, I've also noticed that there has been a particular sour eye cast upon my scuffed up shoes and shit .. these people know how to transit from place to place .. whether it's train, taxi, bus, car, roller blades, motor scooters or just clever walkin' .. they have the shit down .. feet movin' like they all have somewhere to be quickly .. the conviction welling behind their eyes as though the world is going to tip backwards into the sky .. finding you're way through the fire is easy once you find a climate like the one that's going on around here ..

Just had a gyro style sandwich with frites around a fountain in Pompadou .. hard to say what sort of meat it was that the Indian man sliced off the enormous triangle of meat hanging off his hook .. they shaved the bits and shavings into a metal scoop with a machete .. in the 'Centre G. Pompidou' square .. ate the food .. started getting knocked up by locals to donate or give a little money to their secret cause .. one woman with her child wouldn't budge .. titling head .. giving us the sad eye for more than a couple of seconds .. I had to say "NO!" for her to leave .. she left apologizing .. look, I've had many people ask me for money in my time .. I give it sometimes and don't a lot of the times .. though, if someone says "NO", that should be a clear indication to move on .. to belate the issue is not cool .. ask once .. the shit can get tiring .. I'm as poor as the next guy, all right .. Now, there was this shirtless Indian cat sitting Indian style on the ground in a rather deformed mode shaking and waving a Pringles can about with the change clanking loud to get some fresh, new or old francs .. So many other things along the way .. even the McDonald's on the corner .. can't make myself even go into a fast food joint .. there was a Kentucky Fried Chicken we almost ate in because the food we were buying up to that point was so fucking bad ..

We tried to get into a jazz club down the street last night, but it was too \$ to get into .. almost \$8 to get through the door .. smokin' jazz going on upstairs and downstairs in this packed house of liquid smoke .. I heard them playing some vintage Parker and started licking my Kansas City chops .. Instead we opted for another cheap bottle of French wine, frites and tuna sandwiches on the streets .. made it back to the hotel room with time to spare and had a good sleep .. which we deserved for the first time since we made it to Paris ..

In the morning, the hotel staff (maid) brought up some coffee, orange juice – strong ass shit, good strong coffee also .. the Europeans know how to make a cup .. nothing like watered down American Folgers going on there .. some croissants .. we leaned back to touch and relax as the morning unfolded like a letter opener pulling back the adhesive slow and good .. then, hopped up for a shower and get our tickets out of Paris .. our time was running out in the city of Romance .. THE ADVENTURE HAS OFFICIALLY BEGUN & IT WILL CONTINUE TO GO ..

**

9/8/01 – PARIS, FRANCE

Fourth full day in France or about halfway – it's noon – yesterday (the 7th) we went to the following places in the city on the Seine ..

- Museum of Modern Art – Bed of fire, morning ass, grocery store shot, the mirrors, wolf in a cage, gal trying to keep her eyes closed ..
- Notre-Dame again .. with hunchbacks angling up for a shot ..
- Hotel De Ville .. what a fucking dome, baby ..
- A nice aerial of Paris from the Pompadou center .. Museum of Modern Art ..

All this shit seems so far away on a map, though in actuality it's all really close together .. when taking the subway or walking on foot, it's hard to decipher where or what is going to come next .. You know, these French really aren't all that bad .. very accommodating and willing to kick the splotchy language around with you .. though, the gal has had a time in the train stations trying to talk some sense when the French just doesn't gleam like a frite jewel ..

Last night .. we went to a Jazz club down the street from our hotel .. saw a smokin' quartet covering Coltrane songs smoothin' through the night into the morning hours .. ran into a cat from New England way

that brought his friend down to see a new musical form called Jazz .. the guy had so much drink in him that his head was dipped forward the whole time .. the guy only caught remnants over a dream likely .. he asked me if I knew when the busses were running back to Nord station .. friend was still hunched over from the drink .. too bad, he missed a helluva set .. the energy was fucking raging full on .. the drummer had eyes and charisma that could have lit a menorah .. had a good slug of wine and gin last eve .. still feel the effects of such now .. we ready to leave Paris today for a return soon .. when it comes to the smell of Paris .. overall it's not too bad .. the subways smell like piss, Pompadour smells like piss and select other areas have that distinct piss smell .. though overall, the French don't stink it up all that much .. the first real bad case of body odor that hit this American nose was on the bus from C. DeGaulle to the RER train station .. fried onions with a side of rye ..

**

9/8/01 – PARIS, FR. – continued ..

Paris to Guy De Lyon .. a little African girl writing a French word for her mom in the golden station on the foggy window .. tis is what makes you feel alive .. that event a stranger carries out while you look around with familiar eyes on a foreign situation in a foreign land .. we took a taxi from the Gare De Lyon to the Paris-Buoy station in order to catch a train down to Venice, IT .. back to the land of love .. there was slight anxiousness in getting all our shit straight with the ticket and such before leaving France ..

Today .. took a tour through a traveling A. Hitchcock exhibit .. Janet Leigh's bra, Dali paintings and his role in the shadows during the design and execution of many Hitchcock films, rings, scissors, knives, snake bracelets, an exact replica of the 'murder' shower and the black and white home video of Hitchcock being Hitchcock and the banana going backwards into his mouth .. we had a steak/frites at a small restaurant across from the wrong train station we were supposed to catch our ride to Venice .. good frites .. though, the steak was very rare and punchy .. used a mustard sauce to drip the meat to kill the taste .. before going, I broke a glass on the ground while the rain fell hard to the ground .. spreading joy wherever and at whatever means .. saw a good Oscar Wilde quote in the Hitchcock exhibit today .. it went like this .. "WHAT MAN LOVES WILL INEVITABLY KILL HIM" ..

Waiting in the train station .. the charges of life traveling through the eye of a needle .. into a puddle being sucked up into a hearty/hungry syringe .. a man driving us from train station to treno stazione had the classic, pungent French smell .. he was dousing his body odor in a good supply of cologne .. didn't give a tip for an expensive, stinkin' up the joint ride from the wrong train station to the right one in the nick of time .. yes, I have continued the trail of finding a key in each big city I have visited in the past 3-4 years .. found a key in Paris for the fucking smell of it all .. the Parisians started getting pretty touchy about the language barrier in the waning days of French time .. though, I have little room to speak .. I know very little French .. yet, Italia is right around the bend ..

**

9/9/01 – Train in Southern France at night – En route to Venice –

The train has stopped at a station called Brig .. sounds of foreign voices echoing over and through the corridor .. Then suddenly, it's 3:35AM and we're clearly in Italy right now .. the sound of footsteps, rapido italiano, coughing from other bunkers, the gal breathing in her sleep, things falling to the ground and this paper crackling as my hand moves from left to right like a good Englishman driving their car down the road .. so, the end of my first four days in Paris or France .. some recollections ..

A high, flatulent sort of personality going down .. generally a genteel group of kids .. though, the women are gorgeous and know it .. they all look like they're walking down some runway to a pre-ordained causeway ..

The older French group look like they have got the sore end of the stick somewhere along the way .. what I really think is going down is that they are flat tired of being French .. thinking they would opt to be Italian, Bolivian or Scandinavian ..

The subway stations flat smelled like piss .. even in touristy and certain quadrants of the city there was an abundant feel of piss and body odor going down ..

Didn't really have a solid plate of food in France .. there were mainly Greek joints with crepes/gyros/frites junked up and around the city .. I've had so much bread lately that I could vomit a French roll and I'm glad we're getting' towards Italy .. where there is a whole new way of attacking food ..

Yesterday morning .. had a croque .. a bread, ham, cheese and sauce drenched piece at a local eatery close to the hotel .. the woman behind the counter, which we visited all our days there, never warmed up .. the same thing .. just tired of being French .. the vitality of the Parisian population resides in the younger cats about and around ..

I feel a bit silly about not learning more French .. though, it's a language that does very little for me .. it's nice to get back to the familiar confines of Italy .. you know, the French have the expend so many words to get out a simple little phrase ..

Ok .. we just passed our Venice, IT stop .. the second to the last, which was unbeknownst to us at the time .. Real quick .. I didn't pick smoking folks .. smoking picked me ..

At one point I awoke shortly after sunrise .. the train was at a solid stop .. several Italians with big noses we're talking on a bench .. I had to smile .. leaned back and went on to sleep .. Oh, I hear the coffee cart of love coming down the aisle with it's little ring and ding a ding .. ready for our turn .. we all hold on to expectation as though it's our next breath and first reason to go on further into the journey we are in .. yes, officially out of France for a while .. ready to keep on my Italian pair of shoes I bought in America ..

We have officially arrived in Venice, Italy .. immediately we purchased tickets to Vernazza (Cinque Terra) and the return trip to Paris-Bercy .. headed out on foot .. again, it's so molto bella that it almost seems as though you are in a dream .. the winding grand canal goes to and fro between pequito pontes and other byways where boats float in and out of the mind's eye .. now waiting in a café/ristorante on a bold plate of gniocci .. ecstatic to have Italian food and being done with French cuisine, if you could call it that .. too many eggs, too much cheese and way the fuck too much bread and starch .. again, not a real solid meal the whole time we were there .. though, you likely need \$.. much of it to delve into fine cuisine .. as it stands, we're poor and on that pint the plate of gniocci has arrived ..

Grilled horse and all the fucking seafood you can eat ..

Waiting in the water boat subway in Venice for something to happen while events keep on happening as my body waves to and fro as the waves and the 12 hour train car from Paris to Venice pulsate through my bones ..

NOTE .. 2 Coperto (cover charge en ristorante)

**

9/10/01 – Venice, Italy

Fell asleep rather early last night .. we had a box pizza, a bottle of rosso vino on a dock by a canal .. later, due to the fact that the pizza didn't quilt our hunger .. we went down to a ristorante down the street from our hotel .. got a plate of fried squid – calamare – and got a real pissy waitress .. there's been several times here in the past several days that Italians have been a pain in the balls .. so, my minor sickness has become a full boar leaky nose and sneezing face .. yet, things are going better than all right .. it was Sarah's first plate of squid in her entire life .. the right place to have it .. a tasty plate of goodness .. while the boys and girls in the bar huddled around several tellies and watched the Milan and Florence team kick the soccer ball around ..

Now, my body could use some Dramamine .. it's rockin' back and forth like a gull on a high wave .. took the taxi ferry all over Venice today .. ended last night going to San Marco Square .. began today by going to the same place .. by the by .. a full-day pass on the water taxi's was about nine dollars and the whole time we were in Venice not one guy asked to see our tickets .. whereas, we would have been stark red handed busted if we tried it on any subway system in Europe .. especially Paris .. one of the more difficult ways to travel .. tiny corridors to squeeze luggage through, zone specific single tickets and there was no full boar all-day, all transport passes like there was in other European cities .. so, we began the day in San Marco square and saw a Frida Kahlo exhibit and a cool art/war exhibit on Venice .. it was also a historical crosscut of what has happened in Venetian history .. there was weaponry and plenty of BC paintings of Madonna and child's ..

The sound of Italian television and clinkin' plates are going on all over the place .. this Venice doesn't even seem real (a fitting preamble to what would take place on this vacation) .. It's all so good lookin' .. yet, I can't shake this crazy case of the fish legs and leakin' nose ..

I'm taking a whole lot of cold medicine and cough drops to get over this nose, cough and throat issue ..

Ready to go out for a bite to eat next to the water by our hotel .. Hotel Martedo ..

The city of Venice is 178 miles square and the people of Venice .. the Italians continue to hold their charm .. So, as the world turns, I turn with it and domani es el dia .. sound of Italian voices roving and rotating

through the air as the sound of eaters .. carnivores and herbivores dig through the food as if a hungry mouth ready to tackle in air .. again, many animals and such around .. fucking red around the nose .. curled around the Frau .. I don't feel too much more on my face .. hey, that is flat Ok right no .. listening to the water lap up beside the dock steps .. Venice is turning colors at night, artificial colors made by people and the sounds of eaters, kids crying, waiters taking food orders, people walking up the canal way, tourists trying to find their way and all the wandering boats under the half moon darting .. dancing .. trying to find their way despite the end of the sun's shine ..

Oh & the people hanging out of windows looking for something new and examining something old .. some sort of twinkle the gods exchanged on them for the price of Italian beauty in the land east of the Baltic Sea .. just dripping with Mediterranean overtones ..

Smoked all my cigarettes in France .. I believe the country probably gave me this cold that I have now .. should feel better soon .. still running on boat 216 on the grand canal as I go over another 217 reasons why I should stick around here and not return to the United States ..

- Drying shirts
- Waving lamps on water
- Wet steps
- The slight fish smell when the ole' factory is working as it should
- Cool, comfortable night
- Si, perro una donna – buon giorno
- A ponto (bridge)
- Rubber on shoe soles squashing the Italian cement
- Sounds of passing Germans
- One more drink
- An Italian rowing team in yellow boat/red trim going determined down the street
- Irish folk going past – walking a dog
- Few in the world knowing exactly where I'm at but myself
- Street artists taking the hairs over the canvass
- The man in a red hat eating a bag of caramel corn
- Christ on a cross saving Guatemala
- New reasons for an old set of hats
- Boats – shuttle and taxi rounding the bin for the next round of bins
- Peruvian business men selling Italian blown glass
- Many masks in the land of opera & performance; being sold; suppose it's a big institution down here .. they're all over post cards and in storefronts ..
- There's something in the way they speak and more in the way they rise and fall ..
- Going into the 3rd and final day in Venice
- Open one more night and closed all the rest of the del dias

**

9/11/01 – Venice, Italy – Something entirely different brewing in the United States as we stand about 6 hours ahead from the Central Standard time in America ..

So, here we are at about 10:30AM in Venezia .. voices are floatin' around by the water from the window of the Biasin Marte hotel here .. they didn't clean our room last night as we came back to find that our sheets were rumpled and the old wine bottles were standing around with that look in their eyes .. suppose they know I heisted an ash try from the room? I hear the gal in the shower (douche) giving it a good go .. the sick feel is fading .. Oh, went to the pharmacy down the street from our hotel on Lista Di Spagna part of Venice by Senestra Levante taxi stop .. went in to get some antihistamine .. when we buzzed the door .. a face poked out through a 6x8 wooden hole in the door to take our order .. I gave it .. he was back rater quickly and we were on our way ..

Last night, the gal and I were hanging out on a bridge overlooking the grand canal when a guy in about his mid-20's or so came up to us in a drunken slumber .. he starts asking us jive in Italian .. it's hard for me to

keep up .. so, I tell him that I speak English .. oh .. oh .. oh, he starts .. then, picks up English quickly to make the conversation smooth on .. he was a cool kid .. just a street hustler as we found out later .. so, he talks of being a sociology/philosophy major at a French university and that he's in Venice to learn Italino .. says that America is superior to Europe, Bush is an idiot .. he voted Gore .. so, we talk some on the bridge as he asks us if we want to go on and get a beer in the Venice eve .. we agree and start heading down the steps of the bridge and run into Georges .. he's a homeless cat that this friendly chap said was content living on the streets .. he told us several times in his drunken wobble that he offered this man a place to stay on a number of occasions .. Georges refused .. he liked the streets and the way he was living just fine .. continuing on our walk towards the bar, he tells us that he is Egyptian by origin & knows German, Italian, English, French and Arabic fluently .. kept on apologizing about his English and his lack of range .. we said everything was va bene .. (It's now about 5:30PM – 11:30AM US/CST) as I write .. continuing the story from last night .. the Egyptian man asks us if we want to go get a couple of beers with him .. we say 'yes' .. going toward the pub, he tells us that he's all for the fraternity and brotherhood of humans .. big fan .. we get into a bar .. he starts talking to a gal .. older .. behind the bar as she and two other guys start giving this cat the wry eye .. Sarah picks up on this and smells a rat immediately .. I assumed he was a punk after the sour introduction into the place, but I always heard that young folk in Europe have a defined charm about going out with foreigners and showing them the ropes .. if they know English, etc. .. so to speak .. we get 3 big beers .. we pay for them and even give the gall 5,000 lire (\$2.50) extra on accident .. they all played dumb when I asked for change .. the rat was slowly getting exposed .. so, my defenses and Sarah's went through the roof .. we drank our drinks quickly and made our way the hell out of that joint .. we told this cat (can't remember his name) that we had a curfew to make it back to the hotel before they locked it up .. he nodded, shook our hands and we headed back to the hotel .. we drank some more .. some rosso vino, poured salt water (calda) up my nose to stop the incessant draining and went on riding the night right into the next morning .. In light of what happened with the Egyptian man on the bridge and in the bar .. it's seemed as though it was an eerie preamble to what was going to happen in the United States on the 11th of September .. this man had the tan, dark-haired look of several of those hijackers .. just a vibe .. me and the gal both commented on after hearing about the horror going on down in the Unites States .. several expatriates pulling at the laces, while trying to find out where our feet were planted .. though, this guy almost had that shyster vibe that he was behind something the way he was wanting to swindle us that night on the bridge and in the bar .. likely he was going to have us pay for his drink .. roll us later on .. take some cash and perhaps our passports .. you know, there are some evil motherfuckers that exist in the world and he reigns as a good guy and evil one .. for to take advantage of friendly strangers in the name of selfish greed to get drink, money or other is just fucked .. never understood that crime .. how one could be some approachable and benign .. then turn the ugly ear and eye towards you .. suppose that's how they get their gig going and stay on the streets at hustlers for as long as the do .. in light of the attack on America and the fed apprehending so many folk worldwide, I wonder if anyone made a report on this kid .. he certainly had a regiment inked out .. by the by .. he kept telling us over the beer in that pub that the woman behind the counter knew him well because he tried to court his daughter .. he really loved that gal and it was apparent that this gal didn't even want him in the bar .. wonder if we knew Italian well enough if she or her co-workers would have let us know that we were being played like a fiddle from undoubtedly one of the most notorious street players in the area ..

THIS IS WHEN THE TWIST WENT INTO THE VACATION .. CHAOS BEGINS IN THE UNITED STATES .. UNBEKNOWNST TO US .. UNTIL LATER AND IT'S ALMOST TOO LATE FOR MORE REASONS THAN ONE ..

It's about 5:45PM as a 30-somethin' Italian man and his dog poke their heads past the green shutters to watch the pigeons, motor boats and gondolas fly by .. the old, local Italians sit on the benches as I do and take in what the birds, tourists and other passerby's have to leave behind ..

Bought some slippers today .. assumed they were Italian .. have the name on the sole and etchings on tags .. though, upon further inspection they are really China slippers .. good, good for them ..

Having a splendid time with Sarah .. low pressure, nice laughter and the smell of the walk is a welcome and jovial jostle to the nuts .. Haven't noticed too many black folk down here in Venice .. the only ones have been the dar, dark ass Africans that sell designer/fake name brand purses on white – bleach white sheets .. The gal on the bench beside me /w/her father or older relative/friend is reading the special ad of the day – CELL PHONES – everyone here in Italia and in Pari is smoking and on a fucking portable telephone –

- Who the fuck are they talking to? Are there as many people on the streets in homes as well?
- How can they make that many fucking cigarettes? Do workers in cigarette factories really smoke also?

My sense of smell has returned to me just in time for my last full day in Venezia ..
Had a canoli, pizza pie, other pastri, stromboli and such with my renewed sense of taste and smell .. bring on the fucking fish, folks ..
Just had a good solid day of catching up with the walk and looking about the Venetian Island .. this island really has it's way of throwing a solid switchback here and there .. went to the farthest reaches of the island .. go stranded at some pretty far off stops .. tied together a way of getting back into the mainland .. if you can call it the mainland being on an island .. a continual case of the sea legs .. the gal said the wobblin' sensation is a lot like doing acid .. if that's the case .. I'll just stick to catching a boat and letting that shit flop me around for a while .. need nothin' under this tongue of mine 'cept a mint or somethin' creamy .. The pink/red feet of these pigeons and their sneaky ways .. always alluding the human approach and never running into anything .. they're like cats landing on their feet ..
3:36PM – Sestre Leavante transfer to Vernazza ..

**

9/12/01 – LEAVING VENICE, ITALY – LAST MORNING – ONE WE'LL NEVER FORGET FOR MANY MORE REASONS THAN THE ONE – GOING TOWARDS VERNAZZA (PART OF CINQUE TERRA, WHICH IS RIOMAGGIORE, CORNIGLIA, VERNAZZA, MONTERROSO, MANAROLA)
So, about 4:00 PM in Venice and 10:00 AM in America .. we're riding a water taxi to the other side of the island .. our first such venture yet to the other side of the island .. smooth ride until the voice came .. hanging out in the back of the taxi, lapping in the water, clouds, buildings and general nostalgia of the area while snapping photos when an Italian man begins speaking to me .. he asks first if Sarah and I are American .. 'why yes' .. we instinctively respond .. he's from Milan and has a pretty broken palette of English, while I limp along with the Italian .. he keeps pulling his pinkie and thumb up in a phone illustration to see if we have one .. to be honest, at the time I had no idea what he was trying to ask us .. we are feebly marching along in our talk .. as the conversation went on, I assumed that he was a con man looking for a hand-out as has been the case thus far during the journey we have been on .. with the Egyptian man on the bridge last night, Bosnian women and local Parisian homeless cats .. it has come our way as English speaking Americans and I was keeping my eyes peeled this time for shaky shit goin' down .. So, he was asking if we watched TV, then he made a motion with his hands .. going up and down saying "Nuevo York" .. looked like he was alluding to two buildings side-by-side .. well, in New York that could only mean the World Trade Center .. I said, "You mean, the World Trade Center" .. he just shook his head not catching my gist .. I shook mine back as if not understanding and I told him I would look up the words to get back with him .. the whole time a look of horror was etched into his eyes and hand motions .. something wasn't right about his body action .. something in his eyes that was a prelude to us finding out about the destruction in the United States .. shit, at that point, we had no idea what was going on or went on .. no inkling of the coming magnitude .. so, after the ride back to our stop .. I said 'arvederci' to the man from Milan that I will never forget .. ever .. for he was the one trying to convey the message that I couldn't get .. a very clear indicator .. in a long line of indicators .. that I need to become fluent in the speaking the Italian language .. shit man, as I hopped off that boat .. my feelings went from running into a legitimate con man to someone trying to give us the 'news' of the world .. at that point, we must have been the only people around us that were completely oblivious to what was going on in New York and Washington .. in fact, we got the news from this Milan man before the fourth plane went down in that Pennsylvania field ..
So, we got off the taxi .. went back to the Biasin Marte Hotel to drop off some shit, change and get ready for the eve .. though, before that, I called my father back in the states to say "hello" .. without knowing what was going on or had gone on in the US .. in general, the call was to tell him that I was alive .. he immediately dove in telling me of the 'high alert', 'panic', 'terror', 'I've never seen anything like this in my entire life', 'I don't know what's going to happen next', 'I thought I was never going to talk to you again.' .. he told me that the north tower of the World Trade Center had just collapsed .. a plane smashed into the Pentagon .. we talked for several minutes .. the hair was raised on my neck and back as I relayed to news back to the gal .. we shook it off as much as we could and readied ourselves for the last dinner we we're going to have in Venice .. we had some lasagna/spaghetti combo and spent the evening drinking cheap red wine along the canal .. exploring the odd circumstances of hearing and knowing that the United States was falling apart, while we were 6,000 miles away from home in a fucking beautiful land .. shit, with the auspicious air about us, Jim Morrison could have walked up to us and several pulls off our wine along the water's shim-shim-shimmering' edge ..

So, as the evening of the 11th wore on, we finished our wine .. tried to get online to get some more news .. to no avail .. yet, we did talk to vendors along the canal listening to the radio about the happenings in the US .. I remember walking by one window in particular that will stick permanently in my head as the day our country was viciously attacked by evil motherfuckers .. I saw through the bars of a little window leading into a residence of an old Italian couple (in their mid-to-late 60's – early 70's) watching the TV with rapt attention .. saw the light flicker of blue going over their faces and chests in the dark room as they watched the horror we wouldn't see for some days to come .. just read about it all in the papers .. I stopped in the dark alley .. peered forward and listened against the wall to get some information .. nothing but a fast set of hard balls in a language I don't have the savvy to hold onto for that long .. so, I just listened to the hum of Italian float and dreamed of what was going on back in my home country as the gal walked on ahead of me towards the water .. one splash of water in a whole city full of splashes while the world was hung in high alert ..

So, we got back to the hotel room .. the gal made some calls .. he mom said the same sorts of things we had heard all day .. fights at the local gas pumps here in town as prices skyrocketed .. we finished the rest of the wine while watching Italian television and some of the images they were flashing of the disaster back home .. then, we just slipped into a hard Venetian slumber with window open, voices laughing and voices floating in bliss .. that familiar Italian bliss that is unmistakable .. shit did I have dreams all night long of what the headlines were going to look like in the papers .. dreamed at one point that I was crying uncontrollably by a kiosk looking at the horror while Sarah patted my shoulder .. consoled me and kept asking as though she didn't know anything about the horror .. “WHA'TS THE MATTER?” .. I told her, “I CAN'T BELIEVE THEY FUCKED UP SO MANY LIVES.!?” At one point, I dreamt that George W. and Al Gore teamed up to be a 1 President team ..

Morning finally came and it was beautiful .. the loud brass clock shot through the cool morning air and such was baking the old Venetian roof tops and colorful building fronts in the background .. check out of the Hotel (Room 111) and headed down along the long, long flight of steps towards a paper machine/kiosk to get the enormous headlines ringing out around the world and in particular, here in Venice .. grabbed some coffee and pastry .. I remember getting the local Venetian daily and International version of the USA Today .. chaos was going on back in America and the hair stood up on the back of my neck as I unfolded the words and pictures there in the middle of Lista di Spagna .. Goosebumps took over our skin as we sat there reading the horror and picking at our pastry and diminished appetite ..

Now, we travel towards Sestri Levante and looking over the mountains, passing stations, old rail cars, graffiti, grape vineyards and the lot of Italian life passing through us ..

- Stuck on the tracks .. looking at the mountains as the Italians speak English and the English try to figure out what is America anymore ..
- May just claim political asylum and stay in Italy ..
- Whilst on vacation, it's funny how the world can melt away and news stories bring you right back down from the aeroplane ..
- Every bounty hunter has been released in America, it seems .. something is going to go down soon .. the brewing of that pot of coffee has just begun .. we will smell it burning before we have time to fully gulp down that cup ..
- Likely saw the pre-amblesprint in Italian declaring that WWII is eminent and ready to pop at anytime ..
- Beauty always kills war ..
- Thomas Man's 'Death in Venice' went through my mind yesterday as a massacre was unfolding in America before the world's wide, staring eye ..
- Yesterday was about one week out of the US for us here on our European journey .. there's another week to go between Cinque Terra and another go in Paris .. we will see what unfolds or unfurls as the case may be ..
- As Americans, we are the marked targets from this point forward .. it's hard to say whether we'll get back home on time or be expatriates in Paris ..
- The couple next to me now on the train have laptops on their person .. the first set of portable computers I have seen thus far ..
- The US may be falling apart .. though, the rest of the world here in Italy is happily humming away as the holy war between the Israeli's and Palestinians could bring demise on many strangers around the globe ..

- Had about 4-8 clean transactions with the Italians in Venice using the native tongue ..
- Took a picture of a gal – an old gal – with her dog walking down a sidewalk .. I waved to her and she started telling her dog that I took a picture of them .. at this, the dog started barking and running after the water taxi we were standing in the back of .. happy like a couple of larks ..
- Just rolled through the Milano Train station .. on our way further into the Italiano dia .. should make it into Cinque Terra around 4PM ..
- Rolling through a familiar tren estazione in my past .. The Milano Centrale .. looks a whole lot like it did before, which is just fine with me ..
- Was thinking in Venezia about a hoax that biologists could pull off .. biologists with an emphasis in marine biology meeting a cloning expert .. they come up with a way to make a new sort of fish to throw about the grand canal in Venice .. a small mermaid-style fish with tits and a vagina .. the Venetian men would just stare into the water for hours and marvel ..
- Got off on the wrong stop or failed to get off at the Vernazza stop in Cinque Terra .. waiting here at the Corniglia stop for a train to take us up a bit of the ways back to the correct station .. this, as the gal unfolds the largest map I have ever seen in my life of the Cinque Terra region .. the scale has to be 1:3 ..
- Been looking out the various headlines in papers on the train .. ways that the terrorist attacks have been depicted in the Italian newspapers .. a whole lot of pictures and alluding to the fact that it's all out war from this point forward ..
- So easy how it's assumed worldwide that the United States is willing and ready to immediately go to war ..

**

9/13/01 – CINQUE TERRA – SARAH'S BIRTHDAY

Got into town last night .. took the train through to a transfer point .. missed the Vernazza stop coming into town .. had to buy a ticket and came towards Vernazza again .. the stop is a boring into the side of the mountain .. there's a sign within the dark caverns of the train stop .. though, we failed to see it the first time .. had no idea what to expect .. except the stop after and on the way down we saw glorious visages of ocean and hunks of mountain dipping it's rock into the blue, clear blue waters .. though, we caught the correct train to Vernazza .. go off at the stop and started making our descent into this small, overtly friendly utopia on the edge of the Ligurian Sea ..

So, we found out about the region through a PBS guru by the name of Rick Steeves .. after arriving .. we mounted the steps and began our downward slope into town .. Sarah had to get some money out of the cash machine and I'm standing there looking around with giddy excitement .. looking at the compact street and living quarters .. pets walking freely .. old men and women sitting on benches looking marveled at the large flow of tourists bombarding their small fishing village .. there is a boat down a ways laying off to the side as the sound of voices take over the air and the sound of the enormous ocean wading just out of our visual reach at that point .. so, now that we have the set-up .. Sarah's getting cash out of an ATM as I hear several Canadian girls in a 2nd story window yelling in my direction, "HEY RICK! WE WATCHED YOUR VIDEO ON EUROPE AND LOVED IT. THANKS!" They were waving to a white man behind me in a very clean blue shirt .. he's with another woman that has an enormous, beautiful nose .. no doubt a local Italian woman .. and no doubt that it's no other than fucking Rick Steeves .. he's there in his polo shirt, perfectly combed blond hair and big ass glasses .. didn't take long for me to get an EQ on who it was while the gal is going through her International transaction for cash .. I tell the gal that Rick Steeves is right behind us .. she didn't believe me .. going on with her transfer .. I tell her again .. she turns around and saw it for herself .. quickly, I snapped a photo for proof .. this was the cat that was responsible for us coming to Cinque Terra and he's standing right next to us at the entrance of the finest town in the Cinque Terra region .. after this, we turned and headed towards the mouth of this town full of restaurants, shops and life .. As we went through, people were giving us the eye for having so much luggage and apparently no clear fronts of lodging in this particular town ..

- While writing, just caught a healthy noseful of Basil .. listening or slightly stymied by the sound of people shuffling by .. getting this kid mixed with passion and coffee to flop straight forward through this day more .. Godspeed to the peoples ..

- Two old gals at the foot of our new hotel room are saying “CIAO BELLA” to me as I leave in the morning and talking non-stop through the day ..

AS THE ARRIVAL STORY TO CINQUE TERRA CONTINUES .. As it happens, I keep the luggage with the gal on the sidewalk and begin a trek up some ascending steps narrowly making their way up a ways through winding steps that may lead to an oasis of rooms .. we need one .. been luggin’ around the luggage for too long .. as it has happened in every city .. we’re itchy to get rid of our luggage and begin light as we run through another European chance .. I find nothing but scenery .. Walking back down, Sarah is talking to an old local cat with a “NEW HIPPIE” shirt on .. he tells me that he knows where a room is at that we can stay in .. he calls us forward as our luggage loudly lunges along the old cobble stone road .. the only road in town .. towards a fork in the road .. we follow him as his dog, an old tan cocker spaniel, follows obediently behind .. we were keeping up with his fast pace as he turns around and holds up his hand for us to halt .. so, we waited for a minute or so and a gal next to us waved us up an entryway .. a large door and big step-up where several old local gals were hanging out on the stoop watchin’ folk .. we we’re heading toward a room .. we get up the steps and the space is an immaculate assemblage that looks like an apartment .. we look around .. I speak to her in Italian .. holding back my excitement after our tourist trap in Venice .. I motion her to write down the per night price of the room after she shot it out verbally rather quickly .. 120,000 Lire (\$60.00) a night .. cheap as jive .. packed to the tits with amenities, right on time, perfect location, washing machine, full kitchenette, nice hide-a-way bed .. enough not to write too much about right now .. so, we made it .. dropped out shit off .. got several fungi/pesto pizzas and some beers on a platform by the ocean just in time for sunset .. watched the sun go down on a bordering town along the Cinque Terra called Monterosso .. then, we went to get several bottles of wine .. went by the sea on a collection of rocks .. some guys were fishing at night with fluorescent/neon bai as we drained some red drink and looked out at the stars .. just flopping through the eve as though it was a dream .. the center of the milky way splayed out over us like a surreal moment .. we went back to the hotel later .. rolled well .. went back after cleaning up the love to soak some more in .. both of us were neglecting the fact that we needed sleep and didn’t want the ocean, Vernazza or being together to end .. we ended up fainting into sleep later that eve into the AM hours .. a mere day after America was going through a new hell ..

- We just keep passing the same people over and over again in this town that seems to cross tracks over and over .. like a day of foot prints in the sand while the ocean’s foot waits just out of reach to wash it away for a new day ..
- Sound of church bells and the tower echoing out over the sidewalks and lands here in Vernazza, IT ..
- The water here in Vernazza is clearer than a glass of water on a waiter’s table ..

**

9/13/01 – MONTEROSSO, ITALY – NORTHERNMOST OF ALL THE CINQUE TERRA ISLANDS – CHARMIN’ FUCKIN’ PILE OF ISLAND

Woke up this morning before the gal .. listened to the sections of talk at the fork below, people sailin’ boats at the mouth of the harbor, feet shufflin’, women laughin’ .. “CIAO – CIAO – CIAO BELLA!” quite a bit about and around the surroundings .. actually, it’s quite loud down there on the streets as people move about their way .. local and tourist alike .. stark distinction .. even though the USA is under complete attack, all is like a splendid dream here .. the people of Cinque Terra are unbelievably gracious and accommodating .. not a bad vibe going through their blood even though this is a complete tourist hub .. we have been given a cheap room, a lighter & wine opener, along with being trusted with any number of things here on the island tied assemblage of Cinque Terra .. So, I woke before the gal .. pooped .. she got up .. showered .. I went to fetch coffee, pastry, a flower and post card to commemorate her birthday .. when I went to get her flowers, there was no shop in town to buy them from .. so, I went into a restaurant that was preparing for the afternoon rush .. went back to where the chefs and line cooks were chopping and slicing food .. asked one chap to come on out and pointed towards a vase of flowers .. I asked him if I could buy just one or two of the flowers .. “NO .. NO .. NO .. SIGNORE .. POR DE RISTORANTE,” he said .. I came back, “POR MI DONNA .. UNA SOLAMENTE .. PER FAVORE .. “ .. he said, “POR SU DONNA.” .. “SI – SI – SI,” I said .. he shook his head and said, “NO PROBLEMO .. PER FAVORE.” .. he proceeded to point towards the vase for me to help myself .. so, I grabbed a line and headed back to the hotel .. we took down the breakfast .. left to buy me some swim trunks and film for the day’s journey .. did both .. got a ticket for a ferry ride between all five cinque terra towns .. which is where I sit now looking at

the Ligurian water and rubbing junk on my body to keep it moist .. a good way to repel the salt and keep it from getting' flaky and silly on my flesh ..

Still seems as though a fictional line when looking at the papers about the twin towers/pentagon sabotage .. the papers make it look like our homeland is fucking crumbling at the seams ..

Still haven't seen the live TV feeds of the planes smashing into the side of the buildings .. no TV in hotel room and we have the next two evenings to ride out here in Vernazza .. everything now .. the scenery here in the 'poor man's riviera' & the terror back in the USA has a real surreal overtone ..

Listening to the sound of gals showering on a short jaunt up the mountain side after swimmin' and floatin' around in the warm ocean .. sure, this ocean water has that initial sting of cold .. then, you start sinking into the warmth like a rock sinking in quick sand ..

Now, we're sitting on a beach that's free, while we have to the dedistra (right), all those that are paying 5,000 lire (\$2.50) to sit on a plot of sand where there are a bunch of lawn chairs ..

Just saw my first topless gal laying on her side .. talking to her man ..

Drying self from the ocean lurking about my chest after floating on my back and eyeing the sun for all its light ..

By the by, found out before I left that tow of my pieces were published in an Italian-American journal of writing in Stony Brook, NY .. also, need to take down a show of paintings at a coffee shop when I make it back into the states .. though, home is thousands of miles away as the regional train comes barreling in and out of the side of a mountain ..

**

9/13/01 – RIOMAGGIORE, ITALY

Just saw my first English CNN telecast of the World Trade Center blast with the second airplane .. there are Americans huddled around the small Italian café/pub .. watching .. watching in silence .. most of the tourists here in the other riviera are Aussies or Americans .. there are a shit load of Germans up here as well .. thinkin' that Rick Steeves really gets out there and promote the shit out of European lands ..

Took the boat from northernmost, which is Monterosso, to the southernmost, which is Riomaggiore, in the cinque terra .. now we are looking over the fucking massive Ligurian Sea .. listening .. listening ..

We made it back into Vernazza around 7:30PM .. it's a town full of stories and intrigue if your ready to delve into it as such .. masters of gelati to the dedistra and masters of bullshit and talkin' to the sinistra .. the townie, as it has been depicted thus far, comes by every now and then with cigarette in mouth, hands tied behind his back and just a strollin' through keeping an eye and ear on everyone .. getting the feeling that if this guy didn't make his regular rounds, this place would fold up .. he has a look of concentration and enjoyment mixed with some disdain .. he moves .. rotates & is as much the heartbeat of Vernazza as the rest of the citizens of this small port town are ..

The man with the guitar, shorts and sport coat is cooling off his hands on the city's only public water fountain .. the town's whore dog .. a small, pug-faced animal is looking for action wherever he can find it .. always in the middle of the road when I peek out the window .. the local, especially the young kids and teens fuck with the dog quite of bit .. just a good dose of human to animal banter ..

Tonight we're going to make our own food .. for the fact that we have a stove and utensils, because we're in fucking Italy and to save a little scratch .. cooking up some torellini, salad, foccacia bread, spinach ravioli & rosso vino for our evening here by the bay .. sipping the birra moretti in the window .. watchin' the world work here in fair Italia ..

Just finished clearing the dishes of a divine three course meal that will provide leftovers for the gallery to pick over tomorrow ..

Floated on my back across the ocean salts as the last of the sea gulls went to find whatever food is remaining from the pigeons clutched with their pink toes .. tourists are peering out of windows as the boys in Monterosso finish their game of baci ball in a small hall off the beatin' path of vendors and sandwich whores ..

French citizens are sticking beside the fallen USA, as the Italians keep America in their clutch and lazily float on by while the world turns inward towards the equator .. headlines mirroring those of JFK's assassination as the beauty of Italia and Cinque Terra has me by the balls and poking me in the eye ..

Old Italian me shouting numbers as the Ligurian crashes against the rocks .. recovering from the hot sun being dipped into it's enormous glass of salty drinking water ..

Fuck, the sea is salty, you see?

Nighttime fishermen and daytime boaters .. coming together at another chance .. trying the first thing in Italy .. while America hunts down its next dire enemy and it's Paris for this kid before America will be America again for me ..

Noble Italian sheets .. the sounds of splashing water .. erase your memory and put on your slippers once more .. we're going to take a walk .. a long walk around the pebbles in the sidewalks and come up with new messages never used on post cars and try to throw fresh Italian grapes in our glasses of rosso vino hanging on the ledge of the sea on the ocean as the masked mystery of Venetian drama comes tapping on my shoulder asking if I could give him the rest of my French cigarettes (Gauloises) .. as I nod 'yes', I catch the hand of a pickpocket .. point to the 'TOURISTS: WATCH OUT FOR PICK POCKETS!' on the wall and tell him I'll let it go this time .. 'CAUSE I HAVE A SUNRISE TO CATCH IN THE MORNING AND I WOULD LIKE TO SEE THE ITALIAN NME PUT AWAY THE DISHES INSTEAD OF THE WOMEN ALL THE TIME AS THE ROCKS ON THE COAST ERODE AND HERE IN VERNAZZA .. GOOD FLAT FUCKING GRACIOUSNESS IS STILL ALIVE AND WELL AND THAT RESTORES MY HOPE FOR HUMANITY AFTER THE EGYPTIAN IN VENICE TRIED TO FORK US OVER A WHOLE CART BLANCH PLATE OF 'BROTHERHOOD' SHITE, WHILE TRYING TO GET DRINK OUT OF OUR AMERICAN ASSES AND THAT WAS THE DAY BEFORE TERRORISTS DECIDED TO ANNIHILATE AMERICA.' .. so, as we stand in the walk to walk and see the walk and figure out the walk .. we know ultimately that we are the walk and that's walk enough .. period
Ready to heat the wax, seal the vino botella and throw it into the raging current of the ocean ..

**

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2001 – VERNAZZA, ITALY

The smell of fresh food comes through the windows here at 10:06 AM .. it's an overcast day, though the temperament of the people on the street paint and cast a whole different direction of human emotion in the passing parasols .. oh & the sound of the agitated sea acting out its scenes comes rolling in and out .. echoing down the main footpath cutting through town .. had a dream last night that I was trying out to be a shadow or cast extra for the production of the film 'SPIDERMAN' .. I tried, they hired me, but I had so many jobs line up already that it was going to conflict too much with what I already had .. yet, I accepted the job ..

It's raining here in Vernazza & the air is cold .. listening to the drops fall from the mountains as the ocean rages just outside our window ..

Went for some more coffee .. ran into some Australians trying to get down the pants of some American girls .. they tried the night before, but it didn't work .. they were workin' over some nasty discourse about how the girls were bitches and that they were better off .. a bunch of rich white kids traveling on old money or rich blood .. bunch of date rapists floatin' and floppin' about here in the land of the lovely ..
Fields of parasols floating by here in tourist Italy as the ocean swells .. swells .. and rises towards the people and their toilin' over the ground ..

While the gray Italian clouds hang about and the people keep yelling 'ciao bella', the man below our window continues to sell squid and shellfish as we read the newspapers .. a bout how America is recovering from the recent terrorist attacks .. from the newspaper reports, it seems that the International and domestic shock is a pretty serious pill for everyone to ingest .. stories of recovery, clean-up and last second heroism floats across the words and pictures as the bell tower screams out the 11 chimes and one extra for being halfway through the day ..

Wrapped in clear plastic .. the Italian, German and English voices go carry .. carry .. carryin' on through the streets as the little old woman in the yellow parka comes out of her green door across the way .. tries for about 15 seconds to get her door locked .. then, hurries up into the crowds of people darting .. to and fro like crabs along the sandy shore marking themselves for a return to the water ..

The velocity of a storm – Vernazza, IT – As the English speakers rival the Italians in total tongues on the island, things are movin' around here .. we go to watch the waves and ride the tide, baby ..

It's 2PM and the day wears on and about with wind, rain and waves ..

Tourists snapping photos of 3-14 foot swells in the ocean as pictures flash and the revolving photo gallery gains .. it grows while the ocean just keeps on pushin' water here and fro around the world ..

Firing off the missile of vacation's newly born surprise, we anticipate because we expect things & we continue on as such because anticipation & expectations work well together ..

We keep on running into the gal that rented us our room .. as with the bell tower looking over 3 of the 5 cinque terra cities, she is doing the same with us .. all movements as though she's an informant waiting to blow the brass whistle ..

We re-heated the leftovers of last night's dinner .. me in robe .. her in tank top/panties .. as the rain fell and fell onto the Italian ground .. we looked over each other .. the papers .. talking about America and the way life can be if you try to make it the way you want it ..

Waves are fucking with my center of gravity ..

The end of chocolate & the beginning of another food cooking journey as the turbulence kicks up outside .. the tomato, onion, basil, and garlic is sizzilin' in the pan ..

Feels like we actually liver here in Vernazza .. just a couple of tourists breezing through for 3 days ..

Need to call Debbie V. or e-mail her once we get back home ..

Silent Italia Telecom phones & Americans still trying to figure out what happened several days ago when the world got a little older and the wise men questioned the very practical wisdom they had garnered throughout their lives ..

My fingertips are split open like bastards because of all this cheese grading .. though, pain is one way of heightening your senses and laughing with pleasure ..

The waves sound like they are knocking down our fucking doors our there .. ?

Shopping for the second eve in a row for all kinds of shit to eat .. including wine, chocolate .. several people working those local grocery stores in town gave us a little of the stink for asking to get too much .. one was an older guy with a diamond studded earring that looked like her was always mad at least one of his kids .. the second gal was the kind of gal that would be working in an Italian grocer .. END OF THAT STORY ..

**

9/15/01 – VERNAZZA, ITALY

Last morning waking-up here .. again, has the alarm set for 6:45-7am to see the sun rise .. though, the clouds were thoroughly in the way of our view .. so, now I take myself a healthy poop and listen to some of the last words of Italian I will hear in some time .. we readied to go into Paris tonight and get ready for the fight, I mean, flight back home .. both of us were in the dreads to leave Vernazza .. if we were going to have to be stuck in Europe .. Vernazza was our choice .. not Paris .. though, the whole of Europe would work well ..

Found out last night from TWA that they're not sure when International flights would resume again .. four days after the US horror .. As of now, no light on that end of the home spectrum ..

Didn't even think about it till last night that TWA is owned and operated by American Airlines .. the planes that were hijacked in America several days back ..

Readying to check out at about 10-11AM and leave our luggage at the local grocery, then swim one last time in the ocean while the sun is high and hot ..

Puss the magic dragon .. the old woman walking from the market as the old men sit on the bench and buy their bullshit for another good minuto of bullshit ..

10:15AM .. pullout of the remainder of our cat to pay off the cinque terra room and go on about de del dia ..

“NOI RITORNO A VENTI MEZZO AHORA” (we're going to pick up our shit at 8PM)

Waiting at the treno estazione .. waiting around some strangers with warming wine and a hunk of monzarella ..

Monkeys eating oysters .. waves licking rocks .. Godzilla taking a nap .. Vernazza making a straw chair .. another gondola gets painted get in the warm, loopy Venetian sun .. so, as the date remains today and the endangered species list fluctuates up/down towards the ground .. the humans keep travelin' away from the moon ..

Afternoon in Monterosso, IT – On the free portion of the beach again sitting around with the gal as the Italians take their shit off and get into the water .. one gal off to the right has a big set of saggin' tits with a long cigarette danglin' our of her mouth .. this kid's gonna keep his pants on ..

Another solid evenin' of vivid dreams .. dreams about returning to America .. dreams about what's gone down and going down there in Italy as we're about 9 hours out from loading the train and getting back to Paris ..

The old Italian men just go on about the beach in nothin' but a skimpy pair of skivvies .. these cats are damn old, too ..

Went by a hall of old Italian men playing baci ball on a pool table in Riomaggiore several days ago .. a glow-glorious sight of bullshit and merriment the way it should be ..

A world of sea full of book readers on a big blanket of sand as the Ligurian tide rolls in and out and the lazy trap continues to be set to snap any time soon ..

If not mentioned before, it's uncertain whether or not we will catch our flight to America .. Paris to St. Louis .. so, if it doesn't happen for several more days than expected (we have about 2-and-a-half days) .. this is what we can do:

- Take a hunk out of the Arc De Triomphe
- Take dog – put it in our luggage – ride the RER train – let it loose in DeGaulle Airport
- Put another note in a bottle wrapped in a bit of soap and throw it in the Seine River for the stinkers
- Go and see Rodin's Castle and flat fucking think like a man
- Try and figure out what the French keep on saying
- Have a tango in Paris and save the last and best for the Italians
- Wipe the sun off our shoulders, while the moon comes down
- Start talking Italian and English together as a new combined language to fuck with the French
- Not eat as much fucking bread

Not really one solid meal was take down in Paris (have I mentioned this already?) .. that final meal .. the barely cooked steak was so ripe that it was like sinking my teeth into a hunk of warm pussy ..

Haven't read a newspaper today yet about the new American Developments ..

Scuba divers .. sweat bee's on my chest as the ocean whispers and the people gather and yell ..

“NOI, SOLO NOI .. KE SHAM DUPLÉ!” – MARI – On a wall in Monterosso, IT

Oh, we spent a bulk of yesterday fucking, eating, cooking, looking at the angry waves of the sea .. mounting – mounting - & mounting more ..

The big Italian man with the skinny, topless blond gal is on his back – belly in the air snoring sounds to the world as I lay on my belly next to and listen to ocean magic, kids yelling and laughing – bouncing balls and the continuing folly of existence as I now it and will continue to mold it ..

Our last serious romp in Cinque Terra before going on the train to La Spezia .. then to Paris ..

Had several nice swims in the ocean .. got a good doleful of salt water in my mouth .. and a good bit of hot, red sun on my white American ass ..

Saw the headline from a paper in a trash can about America & the terrorism they're recovering from .. the Italian byline said enough that I won't have to repeat what you have likely already heard ..

Now, we have made it back to Vernazz and wait for several beers and pizza for the final time .. we are ending our time here much the same way we began our time here .. very apropos for such a kick balls joint .. food on the settlin' ocean ..

Waiting with a swarm of people in the Vernazza train station as the world melts, freezes and thaws closer to the autumnal equinox in the USA .. so, as we sit closer to the equator and guess the time .. the rest of the classes buy their pencils .. people are clamoring closer to the yellow lines on the track as the wrong train speeds through and the right train just rolls along like there's somewhere more important to be ..

Stepping on feet going to trains as most of the world says that USA – The American Dream has been destroyed .. easily brought to ruins ..

You know, after traveling abroad for some time you get the idea that Americans are some whiny motherfuckers ..

Is America still going to be America? Because I know Italy is still Italy ..

FROM LA SPEZIA, ITALY TO PARIS BERCY – 11:20PM IN THE EUROPEAN EVENING

Found out tonight that our Monday, September 17, 2001 flight from Paris to St. Louis has been cancelled .. which means that we are on our way to Paris to figure the fuck out what we are going to do .. we need to get back to the US .. but who at this point doesn't .. Terrorism has a way of getting in the way of things ..

So, we head towards Paris and we'll check in 1 day early if we can get the flight out that we are looking for .. NOW we are officially leaving Italia via La Spezia .. this is a somber moment for us both .. Paris is a good town, but we fell for Italy .. I fell again .. Sarah fell hard for the first time in her life .. it's a hard pill to swallow and you know what .. I didn't want to come back home the last time I was in Italy .. this time around, I'm anticipating the return home .. just want to get the skinny on what happened to our country .. and at the same time, we are somewhat marked targets as Americans abroad .. it's indeed a time where you just don't know how you fit into the International puzzle after your home country is the target .. not just a

country .. but the most powerful nation in the country .. there's a sense of helplessness and empowerment .. it's like tip toeing over lily pads not wanting to slip into that soupy water .. Just had a talk with my pops in the train station while we wait to leave Italy for good .. the call cut out early while I was talking to my mother .. maybe tomorrow .. Spent some time in La Spezia .. had a bottle of what seemed to be red wine champagne and had a plate of bread/morta della .. left the innards of La Spezia .. came back to the treno stazione with some time to spare to catch our train out .. now we ride above several old Italian cats that are having a hard time with our young asses above them doing our writing and moving with the flow of the teetering train car .. we had to wake them up to get the ladder and climb up to our respective top bunks for a little nap .. Whispering in Italian as loudly as they can, while the ladder stands in full stance and the United States is still known to exist as we know it .. So many foreign voices and many other different ways to slice a tomato for a snack we can all surely agree on to enjoy .. Sometimes you're ready for sleep .. other times you're ready to fight .. How can it be this difficult when they told me things were going to be easier to read and understand with a click of the hand ..

**

9/16/01 - SUNDAY – PARIS/BERCY (ON OUR WAY ANYWAY)

About 10:00 or before in the morning .. had a good slug of sleep all night .. we are sharing a train car with several old Italian folk .. on the top bunk .. listening to them whisper through the night and talk in the morning .. seems like a milky mix of Italian and French .. every time the man says something to the woman .. she says “huh?” .. it appears even when she understands what he's saying .. just giving him a good stab of his own medicine .. for all the years he likely didn't listen to her ..

Now, we get on our way to Charles DeGaulle Airport to figure out arrangements out of France – out of Europe – and back to our homeland .. I have a good feeling, though there is such a fervor now around the terrorist attacks that we will undoubtedly feel it while trying to get home ..

Laying flat on my back or rolling over to the side, we flew out of Italia last night .. though, my lasting grace from the old country are several Italians speaking to me in Italian as we are in the thick of France with fucking ants in our pants ..

When .. when are we going to make it back to America? Could it be now, then or did they take it and turn it into something else while we were in Italy ..

Thinking about a bottle of olive oil I got my father in Vernazza .. leaned back .. looking out of the moving window overlooking French suburbs .. getting closer to America .. just saw a graveyard stretching out ahead of me .. the bodies there couldn't match the disaster in New York and Washington .. so, as the world molts and rolls about on it's gravitational spin of speed and precision .. I'll be here with a dirty pair of socks and another word to be said ..

Just remembered . we were watching several graffiti guys spray a wall in the Pompadour quadrant of Paris .. out in the open .. with people streaming by .. seems as though they just don't get fucked with when they pull out their brand of artistic vandalism .. or not vandalism in Paris as it seemed to be ..

PARIS, FR – 2:00 PM

French Foreign Legion boys and girls are pacing about the DeGaulle airport with loaded AK-47's .. cocked .. finger on triggers .. waiting to play the terrorism game if an unlucky participant wants to throw in their doomed opinion .. We keep hearing over the loud speaker that there's an unattended bag on the curb at Terminal 1 that's giving airport security the sweats and anger ..

On a EuroStar train from Paris straight into the heart of London .. yes, I almost pissed all over the floor of Paris .. this is how it went ..

Running on a sunburn and in the span of 24 hours we will have been in Italy, France and England .. so, we arrive in Paris at about 10:00 AM .. talk to a nice little Italian couple we slept over from La Spezia to Paris .. once in Paris, we immediately took the RER to the DeGaulle stop .. went to the TWA ticket counter to find out that we had one of two options to get back to the United States .. our flight 890 from Paris to St. Louis simply didn't exist as an option and the entire International fleet of airlines were trying to catch up after having to shut down for a good 3-4 days .. here was our two options .. oh .. before the two options .. the shatter of the whole situation was that Sarah was going to miss her son's birthday .. I didn't like that a bit .. she and I could have forked through the European adventure, but the missing birthday and long space

of time away from the boy was too much for her to bear .. I could completely understand that .. so, our two options .. stay in Paris for another full week and catch a flight the ensuing Sunday on an American Airlines flight to Dallas – the on to KC .. OR .. pay our way to London via train, which would get us on a flight the 19th of September, 01 – a Wednesday .. the decision was easy .. get the fuck out of France and head towards a new town .. London .. which is we are heading now .. the only problem with going to London was that we are both broke .. and they said there was a problem with a backlog of Americans up there and it may be hard to get a hotel room .. we'll, we found an Internet terminal in the hotel .. logged on .. checked e-mail and looked for a cheap hotel near Gatwick Airport .. we did just that .. it was called the Three Bridges Lodge in Crawley, West Sussex, England .. it is a suburb town north of London way .. It is still 9/16/01 and we are in London, England .. the man at the passport counter under the English Channel stamped my passport and informed me that the US has officially declared war and we're supposed to be out of Europe in several days from now ..

**

9/17/01 – LONDON, ENGLAND

Lying in bed in West Sussex, England as the world continues to move ahead here outside of London .. listening to the BBC, while the locals ready their engines to get into work ..

Got liquored up with a woman from Boston, MA while flying underneath the English Channel for about an hour-and-a-half .. while in the train from Paris to London, we talked quite a while with Helen .. she's an antiques dealer .. just throwing around the English language like it's no sweat .. speaking of the US atrocities and other such items ..

Found out that the United States has officially declared war .. war on terrorism .. war on the ruling Taliban in Afghanistan ..

So, getting back to where I was yesterday in Paris .. when we initially got off the Ferrovia train from La Spezia to France .. we went to the nearby RER/Metro station and bought a stack of tickets for the journey to DeGaulle and the possibility of having to stay in Paris for an extended period of time .. there had to have been at least 12-15 tickets in this packet that cost nine Euro dollars .. so, we get to Paris .. go to the counter and mull over the options .. we bought our tickets to London from a mad man in the ticket booth .. he made me sign the back of my credit card before I could make my purchase .. in fact, he demanded such before he was going to make the transaction official ..

We happened to grab the slowest RER train in all the four days we spent in Paris .. it took a half-hour from DeGaulle to get to the Guy De Nord station .. had to run up the stems .. through the station to our EuroStar entrance .. before this, we tried to use a ticket in our pack of tickets to get through the gates .. not one of the tickets worked .. those miserable French fucks .. not one .. guess we got zone specific tickets that weren't going to work down the line .. so, we proceeded to hop the turnstile at DeGaulle and got stuck on the train with armed officers pacing back and forth through the cars .. we thought our asses were cooked .. that they had seen the gate hopping and were making us sweat before taking our American faces into custody .. we had to catch the 6:07PM train to London .. period .. it was about 6:12PM and there was no way to hop the gates and there was no ticket stand to be found .. I tore all the tickets up .. threw them in a confetti curl and left Sarah with the luggage to hop to the level below to get several tickets .. with no flair for speaking French and a cunt behind the ticket glass . she tells me 'NO' I cannot get tickets from her and to go back upstairs .. this was a complete load of shit and I gave her a look that was bordering on 'mental murder' before I left .. I'm surprised they didn't call security on me .. just flat beyond being livid .. so, I went back up to the gal .. she took the baton and went downstairs to buy the tickets .. they gave her several tickets for free .. we flopped the tickets in the metal mouth .. sighed .. went through the narrow doors and towards our train .. luckily, the train we were taking was delayed .. the train before ours had a bomb threat .. so, security was beefed up on our train, which kept it somewhat behind .. we got on after being pulled around by train employees who noticed our American passport .. around several lines of people they pulled us to the platform .. simply being nice a peach cobbler .. a giant stretch for some French folk in Paris .. we got on a smoking cart .. we smoked ..actually I rekindled the habit officially on the train since stopping in Italy .. we drank some dry ass gin the whole way into London ..

- A friend of Helen's, an English woman named Pita, took us to the Victoria Station in London ..
- I was fucked up seeing and hearing English in a European province ..
- US headlines keep streaming through the world and British waves ..
- Kept saying 'hello you' and talking to everyone I could ..

- Sara is officially *Eurotrash* – just got the English Channel stamp on her passport ..
- Grabbed a friendly bloke who took us to our hotel .. one hour out of town near Gatwick Airport .. a friendly sort of chap .. talking quite a bit .. gave him about 80 pounds for the ride up ..
- Driving on the left side of the street was fucking me up .. with Pita and the cab driver, I wanted to reach over and pull the wheel into my belly ..
- Had some fish/chips/fries/chicken in the taxi to calm our beating stomachs ..
- So, we finally made it to the Three Bridges lodge .. the hotel we made Internet reservations with from the DeGaulle Airport terminal .. the mat at the desk didn't have room for us .. no faxed confirmation .. though, he gave us a bottle of white wine, a paper confirming our war declaration and reserved us a room down the street ..
- Seems as though foreigners are gracious .. and sympathetic after the terrorism that has gone down in the USA .. the British have our back ..
- We all love the SCOTLAND YARDS ..

Waiting on a stranger as a friend comes through the room with an English accent ..

It's 3:45PM in London, England and troops are mobilizing in Afghanistan and I take a sip of clean lager in an Irish pub .. trying to find our way to the US Embassy to see the outpouring of support in Grosvner Square ..

**

TUESDAY SEPTEMBER, 18, 2001 – LONDON, ENGLAND

Heading towards Victoria station from Crowley's station .. which is down the street on the other side of the tracks from our hotel .. had a great go of London yesterday .. did the following:

- Saw the Tate Museum of Modern Art .. Picasso, Pollack, Rodin's "The Kiss" .. cool as shit stewin' about a cool little museum .. probably the best museum next to the Lourve that we saw ..
- Big Ben .. the Parliament building .. the Thames River all day long .. following the winding weaves of brown water love thinking about Benny Hill the whole time ..
- The Bubble .. the world's largest Ferris wheel .. at 425 feet in the air ..
- The Millenium Bridge .. which is now under construction .. it was closed about a week after it opened .. because after the grand opening .. while people were walking across the bridge it started to sway .. swaying more and more with more people on the bridge .. a real fucking blow hard for Londoners ..
- The cold and drizzle .. seeing the white and told old English buildings with their lines, points, rectangles and such ..
- Pulling for a little Benny Hill parody running past me while the credits roll ..
- Went to the US Embassy to see how Britons are responding to the US tragedy .. it was probably one of the most amazing things these set of eyes have laid upon .. yards and yards of flowers, cards, letters, notes and candles .. lined up and down between an FDR statue draped with an American flag on one end and about 150 yards directly across was a statue of George Washington .. the Embassy was nestled there behind the scene .. went through stringent security for the visit .. there was intense security all about an a tent with names of victims and a registry to fill in information on possible relatives that may have been in the tragic mess .. I left behind an empty box of flue pills I purchase in Venice as a memory of my sickness .. wellness and the beauty that still exists all about this globe .. the smell of the flowers, sound of the fountain splashing and rain pelting parkas as the Brits mourned the US loss ..
- Many of the notes return to the fact that the US was once Britain's daughter .. playing the mother role before the overthrow in Boston .. and that the US has grown up and moved along its way .. though, Britain will always be there in the middle of the night to take the call and console a relative that isn't living at home anymore ..
- From the Embassy, we went to the Victoria station in the darkening night to catch it back to Crawley .. popped a couple bottles of wine .. watched the telly and had a good sleep .. though, before we caught the train .. we had a good cup of coffee and discussed this unique situation in American/World politics that has been playing out through the newspapers before our amazed eyes ..

Talked to TWA at Gatwick this morning .. a call I wasn't looking forward to making .. expecting that the arrangements and reservations were going to me messed to the hill .. they said that we are confirmed for our flight and that there should be no conceivable delays .. she told me this within a matter of seconds .. so,

as I clicked the phone down and smiled to the young English gal behind the counter .. I talked to her and another hotel employee about why the Taliban, Bin Laden and Al Quida hate the US so much .. the correlation between the IRA and England was a great metaphor ..

A train in motion is a lot like sea legs in motion ..

Taken the following rites of passage in approximately two weeks on the European road:

- Local/Regional Train
- Plane (DC-9 and 737)
- Taxi
- Venetian water taxi
- Large-scale ocean liner in Cinque Terra
- Regular car
- And the such .. yo ..

The tumblin' world on it's pair of skates .. got off at the Victoria Station .. in the Shakespeare Pub waiting for a basket of scampi and chips .. just talked to a fellow about getting a double decker tour around the city .. after saying 'hello bloke' I asked how he was .. he said he was at 'half-speed' with the news of our new war being waged .. had the look of worry and war in his lashes .. said it was all necessary to serve justice to guilty parties and get back to livin' without so much fear ..

People are mobilizing in Britain and the United States for war and retaliation .. I believe the idea of terrorism needs to be inoculated .. not just a lot of wasted land in Afghanistan blown to bits ..

Just took a solid double-decker tour of London .. we saw:

- Busv Hovse – Home of the British Broadcasting Corporation
- Heard about the great fire of 1666 – started as a simple blaze in a home and spread through the city .. destroying most of London ..
- Kings erected and beheaded and the queen's moth balled gown ..
- Rap music in a coffee shop as it all goes down quick and the shift is about as close to the move as your going to get ..

The second gray, cold, rainy day in London .. though, there's something that radiates through all this English history that's good and nice to see .. to relieve at least once ..

Saw some protestors against the new War in front of a Winston Churchill statue across the street from Big Ben/Parliament Building getting interviewed by local reports with camera/mic ..

That friendly bloke in the taxicab the other night told us why English cabs are so tall .. they are forever tailored to be high enough for anyone wearing the tall English cap to ride in the cab without having to take it off ..

Drinking in the London version of a 'Cheers' bar to more than a few reasons as the bell rings .. speaking of bells ringing .. he heard the Big Ben chime once and it was just one chime at one o'clock ..

**

WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 19, 2001 – LONDON, ENGLAND

The last morning we are going to spend in Europe as the instant coffee warms my waiting lips .. fuck wrong .. all they have is instant coffee around here .. coming from the land of quality after quality cup in both France and Italy, this coffee here is putrid .. though, it's coffee and I need it and will drink it ..

It still looks wet outside as the English warm up their muffins and get themselves ready to walk to where they are going .. we pack .. silent somewhat .. working off the wine we took down over the last two eves .. at least a bottle of red wine a piece during each night in London .. had a bowl of cereal .. went on out to meet the Taxi for our fair ride to Gatwick International Airport ..

- The WC Bathroom .. which is what it is affectionately called all over the parts of Europe we were in means 'WASH CLOSET'
- The UK is the following .. for those of you bastards keeping notes: England, Scotland, Ireland and Whales ..

It's 1:05PM and we're leaving London, England .. our flight was scheduled for an 11:45 take-off .. the security in Gatwick was fairly tight for our trip out .. though my last purchase was two postcards and an Irish paper before leaving the UK and Europe as a whole ..

Yesterday (Tuesday Sept. 18) it was yet another gray, cloudy, rainy London day .. had some eggs and bacon in the morning .. their bacon was more like ham than the crispy love you get dished up in the states .. almost threw up that breakfast .. had to get up to the room quickly to lay down .. think it was due more to the wine the eve before than the ham and eggs ingested fairly slow .. took in some more sleep and went on down to the Victoria Station .. it was a good morning for a nap after breakfast .. for a couple of broke folk .. got on the "ORIGINAL TOUR BUS" for our ride around London in the top deck of the bus .. saw all the main attractions atop and above the rain .. saw the security in front of Margaret Thatcher's home and many items remembering and adorning Winston Churchill as a vibrant part of their past .. there was a statue across from the Parliament building that was to have him smoking a cigar, though they thought it wouldn't be the prudent thing to do because that is what ultimately killed him .. Saw the Buckingham Palace and St. Marks church ..

Heading back to the United States with a growing disdain for all the mounting headlines of war and such .. they say it will be a long, bloody and arduous battle .. a good time to have Churchill back around ..

Headphones in plastic bags and the sun about the English clouds as the Channel approaches us and the states are soon away ..

Haven't showered since Saturday the 15th .. should have the ripe, rife sentiments of four countries and one ocean on my stinkin' flesh upon return – Ligurian Sea, England, France, Italy and the United States of America ..

31,000 bloody feet in the air .. just went over Ireland .. the whole time between four-to-five thousand miles away from home ..

the day that death hit Venice had nothing to do with Thomas Mann .. had something to do with New York and a plot ..

Sarah and I had the worst and most stale meal yet on the European bon voyage by the Victoria Train station last night .. it was a French place around the corner that had all the makings for a potentially cool little joint to grab a mouthful of food .. instead .. I ordered a plate of the following: steak, eggs, mushrooms and tomato on one plate .. the waiter was French with bad English .. there were posters of Miles, Thelonius, Louis and Lester Y, along with the other boys all in B/W on the walls .. no jazz music .. just fucking bad musak remake of "My Michelle" coming loud over the sound speakers .. should have read the signs after I first sad down .. some drunk Englishman was asking where he could get a good hunk of steak .. they weren't giving him the right answer .. so, he starting giving them some heavier words for a headier answer .. they pointed him to their sister restaurant next door .. he immediately left as we should have .. earlier in the day I had some tasty scampi & chips .. and had some cod with tarter/vinegar .. some divine English food in a place called Shakespeare and in a town known for gin ..

Play me that next tune and turn up the volume pal .. I'm sitting in the darkly lit faint light roaming from overhead eyes and cabin air of condensed breaths and canopy dreams .. the bones and skins of many Americans coming off vacation to see what really happened and how this whole 'war' thing will play out .. the drama and beginning of generational rumor in the last quarter of the 21st centuries as the social war continues against the queers and the lowest common denominator is the tourist presiding over the king's court in a visiting city ..

Voices over the European phone to US has the distinct ring that doom as come .. went .. and continues to linger about ..

Oh, another bout with the airplane chicken as Chet Baker's relatives sell a carton of eggs for another jazz era that may come .. shit, seems as though the looming war and potential for solidarity (if it's not already there – not sure yet) that another wave of jazz could just a come .. come on breezin' through ..

Crossword puzzles and used ticket stubs from a Parisian line that only wanted to work when it wasn't necessary as the radio man tells of how Miles left us 10 years ago this month (9/01) and how the movies play over half crooked heads while far-reached governments meet to decide their fate as the tanks whisper and the aircraft carriers nestle in for the only ticket to the seat and the only reservation in the gallery of ice that is soon sure to melt ..

Venetian cats and

Vernazza cats licking the toes of Parisian dogs as the white English folk shake off the wet shit from their umbrellas and crack open the sun with a joke and stiff pint of ale ..

The thought process is what were stuck with, while the emotion is where we really stick it ..

John Lennon & Oscar Wilde would be a good couple of fellas to run into on an afternoon jaunt across the tundra to that region's last cup of lemonade ..

What's everyone listening 2?

There are issues you face, or objects you face, because they come straight down the visual corn pipe, then there are other things that won't back down because they need to be sliced before the loaf of bread evaporates .. speaking of bread, I've never had as much bread in my life as I had over the past 2 weeks – particularly in France ..

1PM US TIME – 7PM ON ENGLAND WAY

About three hours from landing in the sweet United States .. I already miss Europe and am crucially curious about America's whereabouts .. ?

I'm declaring one thing now on my declaration form .. I am indeed American ..

**

SEPTEMBER 20, 2001 – THE UNITED STATES – 10:00AM

Made it back on American soil last night at about 5:00PM .. landed initially at Lambert Field in St. Louis, MO to catch a quick connecting flight to Kansas City/MCI .. shit baby, it feels marvelous to be back on American soil again .. when our wheels touched down in St. Louis .. the entire plane went up into a collective round of applause .. a whole plane of folk happy to have fucking made it back .. The first thing we did once back was to go in for a plate of Mexican food on the Boulevard ..

**

I've been back in America for several days .. glorious—

- Half-sleeping
- Information Superhighway video
- The hummingbird in a tree
- Drunks walking towards oncoming traffic
- All the flags
- National Sept. 11 telethons
- The war .. new and old as it has ..

**

SEPTEMBER 29, 2001 – THE UNITED STATES

Been back in America for about a week-and-a-half .. I've delved into food specialties .. and I've been waiting to dig into:

- Arthur Bryant's bar-b-q
- D'Brox
- More Mexican food
- Pickles
- Cottage cheese
- Homemade egg sandwich

Since being back, my take on the September 11th USA attack has taken on a new, yet consistent feel .. for instance, sitting next to the downtown airport .. looking over the runways and infields .. they all look and feel different .. when that plane approaches me overhead, I think of a whole different set of possibilities for that one airplane .. when prior to the 11th, I would have wondered where those people in their craft were heading or what the ground looked like from their window or if they could see people or make out exactly what they were flying over .. shit like that .. not that the machine could careen into the ground, a building or any number of other objects on the ground .. and that's just crazy for all the cars and wrecks and all the trains and potential for derailment .. they're all about me right now .. yet, you just can't shake the figure of a plane taking out the Trade Towers in old NY, NY ..

**

EPILOGUE – END OF EUROPEAN SCRATCHING – ON OCTOBER 28., 2001

Been back for well over a month .. seems incredibly fucking longer than that .. as I have noticed it from my end of things .. the solidarity has continued to fly through the sky, windows and faces of Americans .. I've never seen as many American flags or slogans as I have in the past month .. sayings such as: "UNITED WE STAND" & "GOD BLESS AMERICA" .. just got back from several small towns in Northeast Missouri that had the banner of War, Freedom and such waving strong and long .. the saddest aspect of this battle waged against the Taliban and Terrorism is the injury, death and racism being waged against Muslims, Arab-Americans and those wearing turbans in this country .. by enforcing stupidity against a sect of people in society knocks us back down the rung we have tried so long to climb up .. it's a whole lot along the lines of racism .. there is no inferior or superior race in the walk of human .. it's deemed that way through human action in a long line of action .. we need to be careful about all this ..

So, Sarah and I have been back in the United States for over a month now .. we knew and know now that we were living something completely unique .. steeped in a barrel of surreal and dried with a towel of eerie .. we will never live anything like that again in our lives .. I wouldn't have been with anyone else in the world than Sarah .. yes .. that reminds me .. we send each other post cards from the Gatwick Airport on September 19th .. giving each other a load of words the minute before we were to load the plane and fresh with the luggage of two weeks of beauty in our minds .. well, neither of those post cards have arrived here in the States as of yet and I think they may never make it .. there has been a nasty rash of Anthrax spores being sent through the US mail system .. thus, some of this International mail may not make it our way .. shit, it could come to our places tomorrow, in a month, next year or when we're in our early 40's ..

Do I feel good about being back in the states? You bet your ovaries or ball sack I am .. a different set of auspices other than blood boilin' terrorism would have been all right .. but shit that simmered down and has since keeps you a little occupied over there .. got to say .. we kept our wits about us through the entire conflict that was raging in the states .. as atrocious and unbelievable as it was .. we saved up some fucking hard earned cash to plod through a cool as journey and we did just that .. the impending war and terrorist attacks did play their part in our minds .. the night before we left London, Sarah and I had a nasty argument/disagreements in the hotel room .. due to the circumstances and such .. it was taking it's toll on several stubborn kids that wanted to soak in the last of our toast in the sunny side of that wide smilin' egg .. though, how all this shit will eventually work itself out is the hardest fucking thing to say .. we may have entered a battle that won't be won and on this day in October of 2001 .. we could be slipping into another version of Vietnam .. these fuckers that thrive on terrorism, suicide missions and innocent murder in the name of the Quaran and Allah exist within our borders and in throngs outside of our borders .. they are likely plotting all kinds of other evil shit .. and that's the scariest part of this battle .. it's being waged in a big governmental chess game and all of us walking around are merely pawns no matter what is being said .. we're the small people swallowing the fear and garnering strength in light of burgeoning human ugliness .. that's just the truth .. I'm going to live hard no matter which way the bobber wants to float in the water .. fish biting or not fish biting .. my number is going to flash on the tote board well before I have that final surrender to my existence and I'm comfortable with that .. I'm comfortable with God and I'm comfortable with the fact that my number has been on that board well before I could conceive it or was even conceived in physical form .. so, as the bombs flash over Afghanistan and the bullets graze the opera's next to last note, I literally try to squeeze one more word in and it's this .. LIFE.