

Car Chases

Make Me

Hungry



John Glass

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Dedicated to the spirit of writer Jack Kerouac, who
loved a good road trip! He once wrote the phrase
“religious wanderer.”





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I first got to really know Courtney Friday when she planned a long road trip throughout the South. She's one of my many cousins. At first, I didn't know her extremely well. I have over ten cousins, and it's hard to spend a lot of time with all of them. Family is like that, my dad always says. You might know some cousins more than others. The key is to just love them all, he once told me.

Courtney was trying to win a contest that had the theme of "All About the Beautiful South." The prize for the top three winners was a huge college scholarship! She had to create some kind of "history scrapbook." She planned to visit many historical sites to create the scrapbook.

It was summertime. All of our other cousins were tied up with baseball camps and soccer camps. Or karate or ballet. I didn't have a lot going on. So she asked me to go.

“To where, exactly?” I asked her one day when she came over. “Louisiana?” It might as well have been to Saturn.

“Louisiana, yes. And Mississippi and Alabama. Georgia. Maybe more.”

Goodness. Why so many places? She went on.

“I want to see the Bonnie and Clyde memorial,” she said. “And there are some cool covered bridges I’d like to see too. Plus, a lot of other places. I have a long list.”

“Who’s gonna drive us?” I asked.

“Uncle Larry.”

“Uncle Larry??”

“Yep. He volunteered to take us.”

Uncle Larry was the oldest of our uncles. He was a character. Never married, never had kids. Our parents were busy working but he had time to take us. He ran a small painting business so he controlled his own schedule.

“What do you think, Bobby?” she said. “It’ll be fun. Some of the other kids in my grade are talking about doing the same thing. So, I want to beat them and get pictures of all of the interesting places. We’ll be gone for about a week.”

We lived in Pensacola, Florida, and so we were already in the South. But the South is huge, my mother always told me. There were so many places I hadn’t visited.

“We can stay in cheap hotels,” Courtney said. “And have pillow fights and watch scary movies! And most of all, we can visit those creepy places you sometimes talk about.”

She definitely got my attention with that last part. Still, I wasn’t sure how I felt about being in a car for days and days. I definitely didn’t understand Courtney’s deal with history. The Bonnie and Clyde *what . . . ?* And what else? She mentioned the crossroads of some blues guitarist or something. I don’t think I was listening.

School was out, though, and I was bored. I mean, *bored*. Eventually, all I heard was “road trip for kids.” Which meant getting the heck out of Pensacola for a few days. It meant not being around my little brother. OR my parents. Doesn’t every fifth grade kid want this??

But what I especially heard was this: we could visit different spooky areas in the South! I had a book that described some of these places. It was called *The Big Book of Weird, Wacky Places*. We could see the Morganstein House and the Tomahawk Burial Ground. And there was a place called the Alabama Caves.

I hugged my parents good-bye and threw my overnight bag in the trunk of uncle Larry’s car. I don’t think I knew what I was getting into. I don’t think any of us knew what we were getting into.