



# ROAD MOVIE

Photographs by Sam Sebren  
Special Text by Beth E Wilson

## What Remains

*by Beth E Wilson*

It was a landscape like any other, maybe less so.

We drove out the city on a dirty, wet winter day. Christmas was some weeks gone, and everything was bathed in the damp slush of mid-winter. Unrelenting grey.

The car was old, and vibrated alarmingly every time we got it up to interstate speed. Wasn't much better in traffic, when it sputtered and coughed and threatened to stall out periodically, blue-white exhaust puffing out of the pipe every time you hit the gas.

We were heading South, a road trip out of Nowhere and into what we hoped might be Something Else. If we ever got there.

Vince had come through with a half kilo, a payoff (with interest) for a dozen or more loans he's cadged over a few years. It was always 'Can you help me out, man? I need to make the rent or I'm out on my ass,' or some other compelling excuse. And we'd scrape whatever we had in our pockets at the time, and hand it over. He was a charmer.

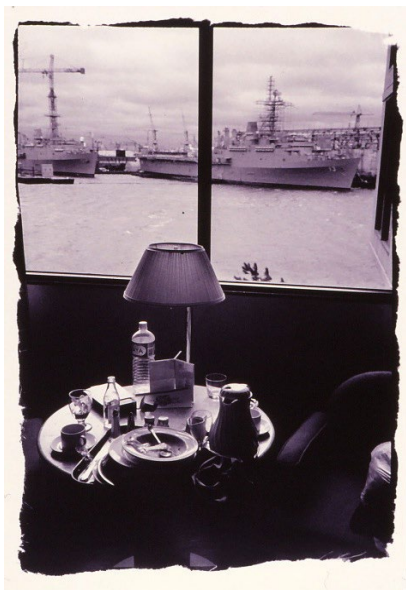
Never thought we'd see any of it back, and then that Thursday, there he is knocking at the broken back screen door, holding a tightly bound brown paper package and shifting nervously from one foot to the other. "Hey man, I've got something for you...paying you back for everything." He hands you the bag and takes off and when we realize what he's left, we know we'd better not stick around.

Time for a road trip.

First stop was in a medium-sized town just off the interstate. Some kids at the Sheetz buy a little baggie of the stuff, which goes straight into the tank. It's cold, but the car's heater is fucked and only runs full blast. So we drive until you can't feel your feet anymore, and then kick the heat on until the thing's a sauna. We finally went halvesies on it, driving with the heat on and the windows cranked halfway down—the worst of all possible worlds.

Between the two of us, we knew a few people on the way where we could unload some of the stuff, in exchange for money or sometimes in barter, like we did with that sketchy mechanic who strapped the exhaust pipe back on after we hit a bad pothole.





In Norfolk, we scored enough to set ourselves up in a Hampton Inn, a room overlooking the water. Or at least what you could see of the water, through all the Navy warships. You kicked back in the bed while I soaked in the tub, leaving a dark ring just under the skim of bubbles I

made with the hotel mini-shampoo. Made my mark there, I did. We ordered room service and it was great and we left a huge mess with cigarette butts crushed in the half-eaten eggs and everything seemed so easy, at least for that day and a half.

Even though I kept getting paranoid, thinking somebody was tailing us (the unknown somebody Vince had ripped off), we laughed a lot on that trip. When the car started overheating, we chilled out on an old pier with a six pack of Red Stripe for a while. Too cold to swim, and there was a suspicious petroleum sheen on the water anyway, but the sun was shining and you were funny and kept snapping all these photos all the time. It was alright.

A lot of that trip had faded

from memory, until I saw these crazy huge prints you spent three years making. Those haphazard snaps turned into a weird kind of movie of our trip. You told me some wild stories about staying up all night just to do one print (if you were lucky and it came out), with no real darkroom and just a hose and a clawfoot bathtub to wash the things, in an old warehouse space in Williamsburg.

And then the times you cadged some time through a friend of a friend in the studio of some guy who was the brother-in-law of some stupid-famous artist. (It was somebody I'd remembered hearing about, back in the day, although the name escapes me now.) My memory has gone to shit these days. Couldn't tell you why.



Funny, it's like these photos have brought the whole road trip back to me. Only thing missing is the smells of the places...gasoline, cigarette smoke, incense, piss. But out of that soupy mix of chemicals,

a residue of light and dark and emptiness and it's all washed up, in a grainy residue of the whole crazy trip, like that ring I left in the tub in Norfolk.

It's what remains.



"Self Portrait (Outside)", 1994, Soho, NYC

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by Sam Sebren**

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by Beth E Wilson

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**PHOTOGRAPHS**

*in order of appearance*

"Wheelchair", 1995, Seacaucus, NJ  
"Snow", 1996, West Side Highway, NYC  
"Room Service", 1994, Norfolk, VA  
"Vacation (Beer)", 1993, Eastern Shore, VA

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