

Much of the blame for the plight of hippieland, however, can be traced to a

difference to cleanliness has angered many middle-class Negroes, themselves

## GENTLE MARCY: A SHATTERING TALE

At 17, Marcy is a gentle girl. Her face tends to plumpness, her streaky blond hair needs retouching and she uses no make-up. She wears baggy gray workman's pants topped by a floppy green-and-black sweater. She is genuinely pretty. Her blue eyes, however, are glazed and dreamy; she is nearly always high on drugs. Marcy is a runaway living a hippie life in New York's East Village.

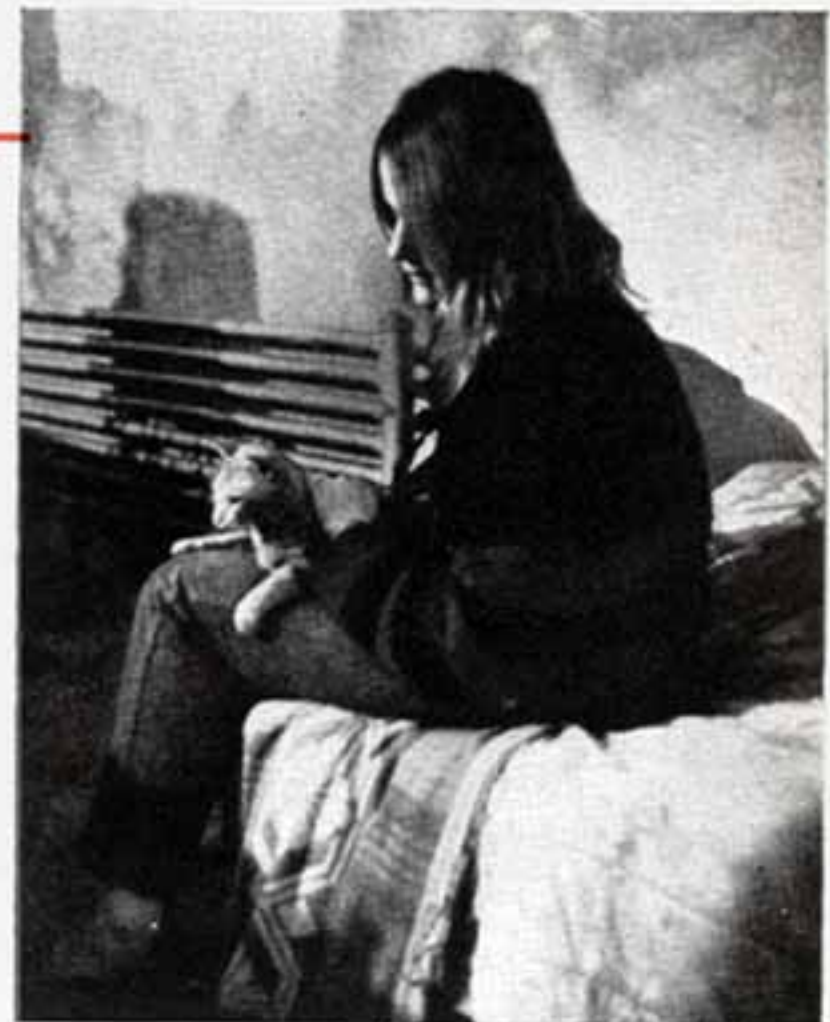
Not every runaway to hippieland is just like Marcy. She had a deeply disturbed background long before leaving home, while some runaways show a past that is relatively normal. But Marcy is not atypical. Increasingly, the hippie subculture in cities is becoming a poignant skid row for young derelicts like Marcy—an accessible underground where they collect like sediment because there is no farther to fall.

Marcy grew up in the tough, industrial city of Flint, where her father owned a small store and a comfortable home. She remembers she had a pet turtle once and that her father killed it. Another time, as punishment, he tore up her garden of potatoes and watermelons. "My father would yell at me for little things, nothing things, like I left my books on the table

or if I stayed out until 4 in the morning. He was always putting kids down, the way they dressed and all. I had a boy friend and I really dug him, but they didn't like him because he had long hair. His name was Twig."

**'They're Kind':** Several days before she turned 17, Marcy packed a suitcase with clothes and records and hitched a ride to Detroit. She also brought along her cat. "But I couldn't afford to feed it. So the cat ran away. We found it later, but its eyes were all infected. I really loved that cat." In the hippie district around Prentis Street, she fell in with a motorcycle gang called "The Outlaws." "They were really nice people. They didn't even put ashes on the floor. And they're kind. But I don't drink, and they got drunk. It really scared me." Marcy then moved in with a 28-year-old pusher who furnished her with drugs. "I got turned on to everything free, acid, STP, everything. It was groovy, I tripped twice a week—it's not good more than that—and I slept until 1. He was really cool and he was smart. He had a doctor of philosophy. I used to call him Walrus from 'Alice in Wonderland.' That's *my* book. I was the rabbit."

Marcy fell out of a car on a Detroit



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expressway and dislocated her leg. Her pusher shot her up with morphine and tried to set the leg, but it became inflamed—"It turned beautiful colors, but they said it was gangrene. And it really hurt." So he took her across the border to Windsor, Ont., for hospital treatment. Marcy was sick for two weeks after that and just lay around in his pad. Then, toward the end of July, she hitched to the Newport Folk Festival. "After that," she says, "I ended up here."

Since then, Marcy has lived from pad to pad, some 25 in all. She eats when food is available, begs on the street when

Newsweek

thing more tangible than lower power. Linda coped better than most; when her stake ran out, she turned to a part-time

it isn't and gets her clothes from the Diggers' Free Store. Drugs she gets free from friends. "I live for them now," she says, still flying on a 24-hour acid high reinforced with codeine. "I know every other word I say is 'drugs.' They take away the bad things. But I've had some bad trips. Last week I was climbing this mountain and fell off the other side. I thought at first that drugs were groovy, and I guess they are. I live for them because they make things worthwhile when you come down."

Marcy thinks she is too fat and that she can take off weight with Methedrine. "I'm going to take 'speed' for three days, then come down for a little while, then take speed again for four days," she says with a certain pride. "I can lose 20 pounds in a couple of weeks . . . I don't know if I can stay up that long. I'm up all the time now. I can't come down. I stop taking stuff for three days and I'm still up."

**'It Hurts':** Marcy was not raised in a slum. Like a tame rabbit set free in the woods, she is easy prey. "I got beat up on Eleventh Street, not really beat up, a colored guy threw a milk case through a window and it knocked me out. I got beat up in Washington Square, though. I went to four cops who were standing around and told them, and they said, 'What do you want us to do about it?'

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. . . I walk around here at 3 or 4 in the morning, and I'm not going to be scared. Of course, you could get killed, too, or raped. Well, that's not the worst thing in the world, to get raped. But I don't want to get raped now. It hurts too much."

The reason it hurts is that Marcy became pregnant and had a \$200 abortion five weeks ago performed by a woman only a few years older than Marcy herself. "She seemed to know what she was doing," says Marcy. "But she kept making nasty jokes. But what are you going to do? You can't very well walk out. The abortion hurt. Boy, did it hurt. I'm sorry they killed the kid and everything. I like kids. But the scene is like this. The father was colored and I'm white. I just didn't want a colored baby. Boy, if my mother only knew. She is very straight. I love my mother, I really love her." Days later, Marcy developed an infection from the abortion and now visits the Beth Israel Hospital clinic irregularly.

For the past month, Marcy has been living with two "straight" men on the fourth floor of a loft building on East Eleventh Street. She is a human pet, prepares their meals when they return from work and has a little corner to herself. "I call it my room. I hate to be a burden, but I guess I'm not, here. I cook and everything, but I won't take down their laundry. It smells bad and it makes

me sick." Marcy hopes to get her own place where she can have cats and come and go as she pleases. "I need a place to be quiet in, even if it has no furniture or toilet or hot water. I need a place of my own. I'd probably be scared there, but I don't care what it's like as long as it has a lock on the door. If one of those Puerto Ricans comes up and hits me on the street, I don't do anything, but if he tried to break into my place—I'd kill him."

**Dressing Up:** At times, Marcy talks of having fun, but she is so befuddled she rarely gets around to it. "I wanted to go to the Palm Gardens to dance yesterday," she said, "but I forgot until today." And at times she talks of being pretty. "This chick she let me dress up in her dress to go to the hospital, and I had on some straight shoes. I'm not very pretty. I'm not. But it made me feel pretty." One moment, she dreams of getting money to buy a truck to see the Grand Canyon, the next of opening up a nursery school with a teacher friend. "Stuart Little" and "Chippy Chipmunk's Vacation" are among the books she has already set aside for the children's library.

Marcy has an animal vitality that has enabled her to survive—so far. But survival isn't happiness. She often sits alone in her corner of the loft stroking her cat. "The trouble with this cat is she's lonely," she said. "She's lonely all the time."

89