

Front Facing Camera Chronicles:

Denver

A Jack Simon Traveling Story



We both laughed and looked back at the grave. "This is how you start a road trip." Said Bobert. I had driven past the highway sign for Buffalo Bill's Gravesite probably over a dozen times by now, all the times I had driven the three and half hours to and fro on I-70's Glenwood Springs-Denver route.

Bobert's suburban home was filled to the brim with contraband, two roommates and an untamable dog. All greeted me right as I walked through the door right into the living room as they lounged on the couch surrounded by smoke watching Youtube. The dog didn't belong to Bobert, it was one of the roommates but the house took care of him. This roommate once worked for NASA and a weapons-making company. Bobert always had a knack for attracting interesting people. Before we could settle in with them Bobert insisted we should start by going to Buffalo Bill's Gravesite. "That's the sort of thing you do on a road trip." Now we stood staring at a legendary carnival man's alleged final resting place. Later I would learn more about the man but then I knew little and felt nothing. I know now that his prowess as an outdoorsman was rivaled only by his logistical skill in moving his show around so regularly. Pennies, nickels, dimes, and a few quarters covered the grave. I never found out why. I think it's just something people do with famous dead people. Punks still leave liquor bottles for Sid Vicious at his gravesite which is profoundly sad. That tombstone should read **"John Simon Richie Sacrificed to History 1957-1979"** You think Johnny Rotten ever just sits around and misses him?

We walked off after only a couple more minutes. I bought some fudge at the gift shop and Bobert immediately began gnawing through it. I didn't mind I let

him. I don't even like fudge I couldn't figure out why I had bought it. A panoramic view stretched back towards the wide valley I had driven through. It opened up beneath us before getting cut off by the Rocky Mountain's giant peaks. I didn't relish the drive the following day. It would start with a dog food factory belching smoke and only get mildly more appealing from there. Colorado certainly isn't ugly but there are pockets where the mere sight makes you wince. We drove back down the mountain, switchbacks forcing me to take the Smurfmobile slow. I wanted Bobert to take me to Murder Tacos for dinner but he kept balking. He hadn't shut about this place in the however months since we had last seen each other and now he wouldn't take me. It was apparently delicious but left you with a 50/50 shot you'd be shot at.

He mentioned a Nepalese restaurant that wasn't too far away. Don't know how Nepalese cuisine hasn't become the most popular thing around. He told me to order online because it'll take too long to get a table so at least the suburbs of Denver respect the culture. I got Garlic Naan and Yak Thikpa, a dish comparable to a thicker, richer chicken noodle soup and Bobert got Garlic Naan and Chicken Masala "I get it whether I'm hungry or not if I'm near here." We sat in the parking lot waiting and debating if I should get a gun or not. I travel alone relentlessly and camping out in the dark can be unnerving. I wanted a revolver, he thought I should get a Glock. "If you're in a shootout you fire three shots right away you've got only three shots left. Unless you're carrying rounds with you."

“If I get into a shootout it’s already over. I’m looking for self-defense not to be John fucking Dillinger. I’m worried about taking down a mountain lion or a bear. If I don’t hit what I’m aiming in six shots it’s graveyard for me anyway.”

“You’re not taking down a bear with a revolver.”

“You understand what I’m saying though.” We looked up prices and revolvers were cheaper.

“What type of revolver do you want?”

“Something easy and mobile. Snub .38?”

“Get a .44 Magnum, that’s what Harvey has.” Harvey is his NASA roommate but it’s not actually his real name because his real name would get us all in trouble.

“He got a custom one for like two thousand dollars in Utah and drove back with it.”

“That’s what bugs me out because I’m crossing state lines.”

“Especially with your nefarious lifestyle.”

“What do you mean?”

“You get caught with a gun and pot in your car you’re fucked you’re going right to jail.”

“Do not pass go do not collect two hundred dollars.”

“No definitely not. When you buy a gun it says big right there ‘USAGE OF FEDERALLY ILLICIT SUBSTANCES IS ILLEGAL’ So weeds included, even if you’re in a legal state.”

“It’s always when I’m in Arizona or some shit that I’m terrified of getting pulled over.”

“Yeah, Dakotas not down with it.”

“Down with the guns and the freedom not down with the pots or the abortions.”

“No, they are not.”

“Which is weird.”

“Which is weird. You could still do it, it’s just something you should know. Do what Harvey did and just smoke dab pen all the way. If you’re gonna get a revolver and you want it small enough to fit in a pocket or whatever just get one of those two-shot ones that go up your sleeve.”

“Like the ones from Westerns? Like the one the dentist has in Django Unchained?”

“Yeah.”

“Those are real?”

“Yeah.” He pulled some up on his phone and pressed it into my face. “See.”

“How about I get a fucking shotgun how about that.” And we both laughed. “I’m gonna go see if the food’s ready.” It was and we took it back to his place to eat. Piling high my naan with whatever sauce I could get my hands on, I watched everything drip off the sides sloppily before gobbling the rest whole. Bobert brought out guns. First handing me the Glock he believed to be so precious, I check the chamber the moment I get it into my hands.

“Let Jack see your .44.” Ordering Harvey who was heating up leftover Little Caesar’s pepperoni pizza and garlic bread. He stopped what he was doing to oblige though. Bobert had a knack for having a voice people respond to. The hand cannon was a pretty thing, engraved with an oriental design on the handle and a

stainless steel head. Weight wasn't bad either, didn't feel like an anchor in my hand. I put the gun back on the kitchen counter and swirled some noodles with my fork. "We're going to have to add buying a gun to our list of errands tomorrow morning."

"What time did you wanna leave?"

"Around noon."

"Should have plenty of time. What do we have to do?"

"Dispensary, need to get some camping gear and I wanna buy a radar for my car."

"We can get camping shit at Dick's and Best Buy has radar guns." We finished eating and Bobert surprised me with an old friend from high school. His name is Eric but we all call him Rick. Happened the day we moved into boarding school. Nobody knows why the name came about. One day you wake up and you don't realize today's the day some fourteen-year-old decides your name isn't your name anymore. We talked and smoked and caught up and I was happy to see him grown, healthy, and happy but soon Rick got too high and went quiet. I fought to stay awake myself. We sat in front a warm fire on the house's marble patio. Bobert and I found blankets and snuggled ourselves up in them. We locked eyes and he grinned and burrowed himself deeper. It isn't fair he wasn't joining me again. He had planned on coming back but met a man in a bar who offered him a good job with a chance to make some real money down the line. I couldn't be mad. Few could handle his temper, it was like trying to corral a feral ostrich so it took a lot of yelling but it's nice walking around with your 6'5 best friend you feel invincible. When the fire went out we waddled upstairs and put on the "Scooby-

Doo 2” movie. Rick and I were asleep on the deep pleather couches within fifteen minutes.

We woke up in the morning’s soft sunlight, groggy and confused. I forgot to take out my contacts the night before. The morning felt very reminiscent like we had never graduated high school. Bobert came out in his grey velvet robe that has his name embroidered on the breast smoking a deep purple glass one-hitter while chiding us for falling asleep in the living room when he had set up beds. Rick humbly asked Bobert if he could Venmo him some cash so he could call an Uber. Bobert told him that he had always assumed he would just drive him home. We’d drop him off and then run my errands. Later Bobert would tell me that Rick had done a lot for him lately so this wasn’t any big ask. “Do I need to follow you in my car?” I asked Bobert as we walked out onto the front yard’s dewy green grass. “No, we don’t need to do that.”

“I don’t want to get caught up and get out of here too late, if I take my car we can do the shit and I can bounce right from there.”

“Get in the car and trust me.” And so I did. When I clambered into the shotgun seat I continued.

“I think I’m going to go on this trip and buy my gun when I get back.”

“I think that’s a good idea.” Rick lived on the other side of town and when we dropped him off I gave him a big hug goodbye and told him to call me if he needed me. I don’t know what I could help with but I want to help him with something.

We pulled into what Bobert referred to as the Apple store of dispensaries. Legitimately cool, the displays were lit up by different turquoise, gold, and

lavender neon. Soft neon that was easy on the eyes, not gaudy or tacky. The budtender rang me up with a tablet as we went along. Bobert helped me out by using his industry discount. Bobert had a knack for being a good guy to have around. Nearby was a Dick's which had a neighboring Best Buy. "Now I get it." I said

"Now you see the vision?"

"Now I see the vision." We went in together and Bobert busied himself monkeying around with the complimentary putting green (he does not play golf) while I pulled shit off shelves. Only finding an overnight duffel and a foam roller on my long list I dragged Bobert upstairs with me to help locate the rest. "Find me a chair and a cooler."

"What kind of chair and cooler?"

"Cheap tailgate one and a cheap small one." I tracked down a Dick's employee to open up the glass case containing goodies. The man I found was talking to a coworker and seemed very glum that he was at Dick's. I asked him to first pull out the stovetop igniter after he unlocked it. When I collected it he went to close the case but I told him I needed more from behind it. A grunt came out at the effort of pulling the case back open despite it appearing to be easily handleable. I asked for the binoculars and the bear spray and then relieved him from his efforts. Bobert came bumbling back with a chair over his broad shoulders. "Cooler?" I asked.

"They were all big and expensive."

“All right.” I made us walk back to the other end of the massive store to see the coolers for myself and we became distracted like two children. We fooled around in the gym equipment section with the fighting equipment like we were training for a Golden Glove fight, tried on a rainbow color worth of baseball gloves before rolling around on the skateboards they were foolish enough to leave unchained. Way better than the Walmart preassembled boards. In the end, he was right though and the coolers were all too big and expensive. I did scoop up a portable propane stovetop on the way down to the register. “Just burning through money today.” Bobert said to me as we rode the escalator.

“You know I don’t spend money on anything so that when I spend money I don’t have to worry.” I said rather too defensively.

“I know.”

“Stovetop will be for car camping, burner if I got to hike in somewhere. Make my life infinitely easier.”

“I get it.” Best Buy was a bust, the radar guns too expensive for even my suddenly lavish tastes. Bobert waited with me as I loaded the Smurfmobile with my new exciting purchases. Neither of us had ever been good at goodbyes so we shared a quick hug and he said “See you around.” Those are the saddest three words because they mean you won’t see somebody for a long time. A lot of times it meant you would never see them again. All I said was “Yeah.” and got into my car. Aspen to Denver had just been a prelude drive, now I was on the road again. I went back to my tradition, put on “The Wanderer” by Dion and the Belmonts. Drove east.