

Just Enjoy

Johnny stands on the grass broken asphalt of a parking lot covered in overturned cars. Glass crunches under his feet and a breeze carries the sweet smell of petrol and drying mulch. He feels the warm breath brush just under his nose and chin, eventually floating off into the sky. He chases it up the hood of a burnt out Volkswagen and stops on the roof.

“Why are some days so introspective?” Johnny looks around from the top of the van, sun hot on his cheek. The revolver in his jeans doesn’t quite fit, and the handle sticks way out of his pocket. A honey colored bear cub in a red shirt walks up to him on its hind legs. Johnny doesn’t even pull the gun out, instead angling it and firing through the wall of his pocket, the cub slumping over. The gun wouldn’t have come out anyway. He really needs to find some new jeans. This pair is way too tight, he can’t even bend over, let alone pull the gun from his pocket. Grateful the bear cub isn’t that heavy, he bundles it into his backpack. A nearby retaining wall supports a bunch of high density housing, and a handful of blond haired, blue eyed women are filling a truck with cut grass and trimmed shrubs. A grounds crew. They look busy. Better not to interrupt them. He fingers the holes in the front panel of his jeans, the threads crispy from where the bullets exited. *Where can I pick up some slacks? Maybe the library?*

The security guard at the library entrance requires Johnny to show what weapons he’s carrying. The man laughs at the old looking gun sticking out of his pocket.

“You can’t come in with that, you’ll be crucified. Common sense demands at least a semi automatic. I wouldn’t go in there with anything less than 50 caliber. Buy yourself a new gun.”

“I don’t have any money.”

“Then get a job.”

“It’s hard to break into the market.”

“That’s tough, kid. There’s a center down the road that specializes in getting people off the ground.” The man’s eyes swivel from his desk and the turnstile then back up the street. “Two blocks up. Around the corner from where those Swedes are mowing. Tell Dingo that Bezos sent you”

“Yeah....” Johnny sways back and forth, then thanks the man and heads back up the road. A colony of seagulls eat scraps of Grandma Hickory bread on a lightpost, little bits of fluff floating down like a duckling’s first snow day. A piece of bread catches in his lips, a quick spurt of saliva sends it flying into the lamppost, sticking with a couple pieces of white gum wedged between flyers and tape.

Johnny turns the corner to find a woman with a face like a dingo. A building sits behind her, heat shimmering off its roof.

“Dingo? Bezos sent me.”

“Welcome to the shady side of purgatory, son.”

Dingo frisks Johnny as he enters. She finds the gun but is unable to remove it from his pocket. She rips it out, leaving the pocket hanging limply on his jeans. Not that it matters much, the pants are already ruined.

“Thanks....” Johnny looks at the ground then at the gun being outstretched to him.

“You’re clean, sorry about the rip.”

“Yeah, I’m getting a new pair anyway.”

Aisles of ammunition, drugs, gray camouflage and computers are laid out inside. Nothing comfortable to wear, though. It’s rather cool in here, maybe the air conditioner isn’t that far gone. The gun now back in his hand only glints softly, the fresh polish on the other guns far outshining his battered revolver. He walks up to the counter, pulling out a wallet and leafing through his cards.

“Hey, we only accept MindCoin here.” The storekeep has her eyelids pierced shut. Johnny isn’t sure how she still manages to tell he has a wallet in his hands, but mentally drops the dough. It’s at that moment his backpack starts to get a lot heavier.

Suddenly the bear cub in his backpack explodes, shredding the backpack as a giant bear three meters tall bursts out, paws swinging wide, chest ripping its little red shirt apart. Johnny leaps back as the bear crashes over him, falling through a display case of napalm.

The shopkeep screams, her eyes opening wide and ripping out her piercings.

“Well great, buddy bear ate all my steroids.” Johnny unstraps a flamethrower from the wall, priming the torch as the bear jumps into his aisle. The bear's paws slide as the slimy napalm coats everything the beast touches. A yellow stream of fire catches the bear in the chest, and it becomes the center of a mini forest fire.

Three laps around the store and pretty much everything is on fire, including the marijuana. The dingo store woman fights, no, dances with the bear near aisle four. Johnny can’t tell if there’s more smoke or flames and gripes internally about losing the steroids in his backpack. His revolver sits on the shop counter, but it’s too late to grab it now. The lady with the piercings sobs into a ham radio, little teardrops of blood falling from where her piercings ripped out.

As Johnny sprints to the front door, strapping on a gas mask and oxygen tank, a chainsaw *brwahahas* through the wall, right next to “Miss Piercing’s” head. She screams as the Swedish crew rips out the wall and charges their truck through the flaming hole, knocking the bear through the front door like two billiard balls smacking together. Unfortunately the extra air rush causes everything to catch fire and the shop explodes, a giant white and yellow fireball backhanding the bear right over Johnny as he throws himself to the ground. Two volkswagens and a fire hydrant later, the bear stops its forward momentum.

Johnny regains consciousness just in time to see Bezos from the library and the dingo woman above him both empty hundreds of rounds into the charging bear's chest. He watches as the bear bites through their gun arms. Blood splatters onto Johnny's face. Bezos and Dingo rip away, yelling the Law of the End, spittle chawing to each syllable.

"Let the apocalypse end. From ashes rise flames. Together we are stronger. Our bond is unbred—" The bear stomps on Dingo.

"Dingo! I love you." says Bezos.

Undeterred, Johnny grabs a fallen arm and flings it into the air, causing the bear to pause. Its eyes widen and suddenly the bear is running up an invisible wall, five hundred feet in the air and still climbing. Rolling out an anti aircraft gun, Bezos and Johnny load an 88 millimeter shell and smile grimly, firing a flak straight up, the recoil throwing them onto their backs. Streaking up, up, and twisting, the shell punches right through the bear's chest, leaving an empty hole where the spine, heart, and lungs should have been.

Johnny considers the universal theory of gravitation as Smoky descends past the apex of his flight. The bear falls and falls, 'crack palming' the curb and landing in a crouch, the hole in its chest still slightly on fire. Johnny raises his hand into the air. His revolver has been blown sky high in the explosion, and now rapidly returns to earth. Seconds later, he catches his red hot gun with a satisfying sizzle.

Bezoz screams, this time like a little boy. The bear pulls a wicked looking scythe from out of nowhere, eyes nothing but smoking black pits and skin wrinkled and burned into a furry cowl shadowing his face. Head bent, teeth clenched, a chuckle emanates from the organs dripping in its chest cavity.

Johnny pulls back the hammer and fires almost simultaneously. The bullet ricochets off a lamppost and enters the bear's skull through the back of the head. The sick expression turns from one of malice to one of horror. The bear claws at the air, staring at the gun in Johnny's hand. The warm breeze pulls over the scent of its burnt hair, leaving it wafting under Johnny's chin. With a curse, the bear falls dead.

Johnny looks down at Bezos and offers him a hand up. Bezos twitches, but takes the hand.

"I've never seen anything like that. You come to the library anytime you like. It's obviously not the gun, you're more than enough to take care of yourself."

"Thanks."

"If you ever need anything, let me know."

Johnny fingers the revolver, noting the extra scratch on the grip. "Yeah, a pair of slacks."