

“Surviving an Afternoon With Jack”

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Chapter 1 “Jack”

It was the summer of 2001. I was trying to kill a few months before heading off to college in the fall. I had just graduated High School and was not planning on wasting the next few years running the streets of Saint Paul, Minnesota with my old friends. There was no possible positive outcome from that scenario.

I got a job at a gas station to earn a little drinking money before I moved to Wisconsin to attend school. It was pretty mindless work but it paid okay, and I could sell 3.2 beer to my friends since we weren't old enough to purchase alcohol legally. Sure it took a few more to cop a buzz, but it did the job for an 18 year old.

All of my co workers that were near my age had all been fired for stealing beer, so I made sure that I always paid for it and at least pretended to check the ID's of my underage friends before they purchased enough to supply our parties.

Since everyone underage kid kept getting canned for stealing beer and cigarettes, I was stuck working with an older crowd. The first time I was assigned a night shift, I ended up closing with Jack. He was a 40 year old character from Milwaukee that sounded like he was right off the set from Fargo for some reason. He called everyone “guy” and as you would expect, he wasn't going to set any Wonderlick records, even by middle-aged convenience store employee standards.

Jack was about 6'7” with a beak that you could probably ski down, but he drove a Mazda 323 hatchback that would inspire the cast of SNL to do a “tall guy in a little car sketch.” He used to pull up to work, and park in the handicap space, while not so inconspicuously polishing off a can of Budweiser.

On our first close together he told me he had to go stock the cooler, but if anyone came in for a delivery, I should buzz him right away. Ten minutes later the dairy supplier came in with a fresh milk delivery. He was on his way to the walk-in cooler when I buzzed Jack. He came running out all glossy eyed, and I had a pretty good idea what stocking the cooler was all about. A couple hours later I went back there to top off the drinks, and there was a sack off weed behind the water bottles, that was about two or three customers away from sliding to the front of the cooler. I pinched a couple nuggs out of the sack and brought it back to him.

Jack called me a life-saver and told me he would “show me the ropes” as gratitude for having his back. After we locked the doors he told me to follow him to

the cooler where he cracked two Mickey's 40's and handed me one. I said, "Don't they inventory this shit?"

"Not close enough," he replied. "I have 1-2 of these every night. All you have to do is this." He tipped the 40 back and slammed about $\frac{3}{4}$'s of the bottle before dropping it to the ground, shattering it in the process. He said "whoops," and then swept up the remains and tossed them into a box labeled "waste." I guess nobody ever questioned why every night Jack stocked the cooler there was a bottle or two of Mickey's on the waste sheet. He wasn't even bright enough to switch it up every once in a while and grab an Olde English or Colt 45.

The next week my education continued as I learned endless stereotypes and other shit that I don't even want to talk about from Jack. One day a thirty something Native American walked in with a butch haircut. Jack proceeded to ask her, "How can I help you today Sir?"

She looked extremely pissed off as she told him, "I'm a woman!"

It was okay though; Jack seemed to smooth things over "not a damn bit" when he replied, "Oh sorry, I couldn't tell."

A few hours later he offended a Black guy by asking if he forgot to buy some Newports.

Chapter 2 "Jacob"

There was a ghetto-fied liquor store in the strip mall located next to my place of employment that was owned by this older Russian guy. I'm pretty sure he was mobbed up or used to be a Pimp back when he still lived in Russia. Even the hardest OG's on the Eastside were scared shitless of him.

His name was Jacob, and he used to stand in front of the store with his arms crossed making cat-calls at the girls that walked by. Every once in a while some dumb ass kid would be stupid enough to try and lift a bottle from his store. That's when the Police would have to show up and explain to him the difference between loss prevention and beating someone half to death over an \$8 pint of E&J.

He kept an umbrella behind the counter, and one day he showed me how the handle unscrewed and pulled out into a sword. He would come over every once in a while when he was bored and bring a couple shots of Vodka for us to take. One day he told me that, "There are two things that I like in the morning; Voooodka and Blow Job. Today I've had both." That was a few hours after I saw something resembling a

crack whore walk out of his store with a bag full of booze before he was open for the day.

Occasionally he would come over and ask me to watch the register while he took some some ratchet ho in the back room for a quick suck 'en fuck. I walked back to his office one day and caught him watching retro porn on his computer (you know the kind where the bitches muffs looked like Don King's head.) He didn't even bother to close the video out as he showed me pictures of various knives and other weapons before showing me videos of Boxing KO's, all the while the vintage porn, hairy muff and all, was playing in the background. At least I got a free shot of Vodka out of the deal and another story to tell. Thank god I knocked quick before I walked in, because his hands shot up in the air like it was his sections turn to do the wave.

Jacob worked at the liquor store with a crazy Russian woman who barely spoke any English and a kid named Miles who was fresh out of lock up. Miles brother Matt was the local great white hope in the boxing ring, and Miles looked like he could knock a motherfucker out without much effort himself. I got along fine with this crazy cast of characters, but I would never want to be on the wrong side of their wrath.

Chapter 3 "Afternoon With Jack"

One day after finishing off a day shift with Jack, he suggested that we buy some beer and drive around and get fucked up. Jack was driving, so I figured, might as well, what's the worst that can happen?

We pulled up to Jacob's and I gave Jack some cash to go get some beer with. Jacob would sell to me even though I was underage, but I knew he preferred to do it at night when there weren't so many people around. Seeing as it was 3PM and Jack was 40 years old it seemed like the better way about things. Even though I knew that Jacob couldn't stand Jack, it's not like he was going to turn down his business.

Jack came out with a case of Mickey's Grenades and a pint of E&J Brandy and climbed back into the "Benny Mobile." That's what Jack called his hatchback because he purchased it from our homosexual co-worker Wayne and his boyfriend Benny. Benny was starting to bald but was hanging on to the last bit of hair he had which he always kept died platinum blonde. Jack claimed that when he first got the car he had to vacuum out an assload of short white hairs from the back seat.

"Wayne musta been tuggin' on Benny's hair back 'der, if you know what I mean guy?" Jack philosophized.

Jack headed down University slugging down the Mickey's and tossing them out the window in broad daylight, making them live up to their nickname as

“Grenades.” A group that almost got hit at the bus stop chased us down the crowded street, but Jack ran the light and we escaped in the Benny Mobile. After we made our way through the East Side, Frog Town, and Midway, Jack took a left onto Dale and headed toward the Summit Neighborhood where F. Scott Fitzgerald grew up and where John Dillinger, and the Barker Gang used to hide out in the early 1900’s.

It was a neighborhood full of old brick apartment buildings and giant mansions with the occasional trendy salon, antique or boutique store, and hipster bars serving local craft beers. In short, the Benny Mobile complete with flying projectiles in the form of glass bottles of malt liquor stood out like Van Gogh’s Starry Night after splitting an eighth of Shroomz.

Jack somehow managed to drunkenly navigate his way down Grand Ave while dodging the many shoppers and escaping with only a missing passenger side mirror. He weaved down Lexington and onto Randolph until he hit West 7th and hooked a wide left hand turn. “Oh shit!” I thought, he’s heading for downtown.

I couldn’t take it any longer. I took a big swig off the pint of Brandy, which was almost empty at this point, and downed my Mickey’s before closing my eyes. I didn’t open them up again until I heard Jack say “check this out guy!”

I opened my eyes and realized we were back on the east side. Jack was speeding down a winding freeway ramp when he lost control and went over the median. I heard both of the tires on his passenger side pop.

That’s when Jack started chastising himself in the third person. “Way to go Jack, showing off for da young guy,” he kept repeating. Despite the seriousness of our predicament, I couldn’t stop laughing at him, which pissed him off even more.

“Listen you little asshole,” he yelled. “This shit isn’t funny.” Fuck it hand me another beer.”

I reached into the empty case and told him we had drained them all. He headed towards Jacob’s and parked in the back. By the time we got there we were driving on the rims, and it was still broad daylight. As soon as Jack entered through the back door, I decided to make my get away. I tried to casually stroll away from the broken down hatchback until I got to a fence I figured I could scale and disappear into the giant apartment complex behind the strip mall.

I was half way up the fence when I heard the door swing open and turned to see Jack running out of the store with an 18 pack of High Life and a fifth of something. Jacob was close behind with the umbrella/sword I knew he kept close by. I slipped down the fence at the sight of Jacob’s short Russian ass chasing a 6’7” Jack back towards the Benny Mobile. Jacob almost caught him too before Jack pulled out with sparks shooting up from his rims.

Miles came following Jake out of the back door and spotted me trying to scale up the fence again. I just barely pulled myself over when he got to the fence and instead of fleeing, I quickly tried to state my case as an innocent bystander, all the while being careful to keep away from the reach of Jacob's umbrella sword.

They seemed to buy my story and were more interested in finding Jack. I told them I would help find him and they let me go without a chase over the chain link fence.

Chapter 4 "The Aftermath"

I fled the scene quickly and disappeared into the Apartment Complex behind the liquor store. I knew a few people that lived there and one of them let me in. I slept off my hangover and found out the next day that Jack had gotten pulled over shortly after making his escape just up the street near Ruth trying to get back on the freeway. Jacob pressed charges and Jack ended up doing almost a full 9 months for his various misdemeanors as well as his fifth DWI. I'm not so sure that it was much fun for him, especially seeing as Miles had a lot of friends waiting for him in County.

Thankfully Jack kept my name out of his statement, and I went off to college less than a month later. I didn't find much success at UW Oshkosh, but I did have one hell of a story to tell my roommate.

The End