

Western Video Rental

Boys a bit nervous for a change. Usually this doesn't occur, although we're always running late, on this tight schedule, just making it somehow. Today's a little different though, the other guy called already, our charge's is ready to be picked up, it says. The laid back attitude's to be put on old, otherwise untouchable. Truck won't start, it's not the first time, it's the first time we're about to be moving it. It's just sitting there most other times, eventually rotting away, much more of a truck than a pickup really. Gotta jump start it with the help of the van, even then it takes a couple of full hearted attempts. Once started, it runs on a pretty solid Ford diesel, it's just that the windows won't be turned back up. There's no rear view mirrors either, but who's to look back after all, what is there to be seen after all.

Fifteen miles and fifteen hundred feet down the hill, right back up on the other side of town. Phone to ring again, he's not good at waiting, it seems, and that we're running out of time. He's a mennonite man, selling chicken feed, they're quite numerous out here in the West, it says. We've all heard of them, but nobody actually knows what it means really. Kinda like the Amish People, they say, something in that way of all things. Only not using that much technology, or was it more, it's hard to say. They're holding on to some old stuff, things and rules, that much is safe to say.

He's got a sign on his house, saying this is not my home, I'm just a passer through. Now that's something I could believe in rightaway. His place is a lot bigger than ours and looks fairly better organized. Including a nice collection of heavy machinery and agricultural technology on big wheels. So much for not using that. Edwin's coming right along, all properly dressed and well disciplined, sticking to the facts and easy going all the same. There's not even the faintest hint of him being restless or allegedly nervous. The front of his baseball hat reads *WESTERN VIDEO RENTAL* and the visor's well worn in and bent the way you'd expect it to be. Edwin stretches out his hand for a friendly welcome without much further ado. His beard is trimmed in the old fashion, mostly growing from the chin on downwards and out, his hands are comfortably tugged into jeans dungarees. Just in the exact right way to be talking shop for a while now. My eyes start wandering across the valley, it's wide man, much too wide to be bound by pages and words and letters and such things. October's a young month still and its noon-time sunlight makes everything look peaceful and prosperous.

Once a week, Edwin's going to Nevada in a big truck of his, some ten hours one way. He's taking US 50, lonliest highway of the American west, and the most beautiful, if you ask him. A hundred miles and more in straight line, with only jackrabbits to meet, or avoid hitting, there's tons of them, big and quick and dumb. Edwin's buying bean meal for some 125.000 birds, organic chicken feed to turn into organic free-range eggs, to be sold at all the Front Range Wholefoods and Alfalfas. There's 15.000 birds in his warehouse alone, with the remaining 110 spread all over the Mesa and Edwin knowing all their exact numbers and farmers by name. Nobody really knows what's all so organic about 15.000 birds in a barn, once they're fed the Nevada organic bean meal. You won't know such things without asking too many questions that just don't belong here and now. And of course nobody really knows why it is Edwin, who has to go Nevada every week, in person, drive right into this temple of vice, with nothing but gambling and drugs and prostitution. But once and again, who am I to judge in my jaded dirty mind.

Whatsoever, it's much clearer now, why American hippie boys turned so strangely nervous all out of the sudden. There's worlds colliding in a transient place like this, the dreadlocks and the ritually trimmed beards. After all, everybody ends up feeling weighed or even judged. Never before had they talked this much, boys are ready to confirm on our way home. Which might well be due to me and my German heritage, the old common ground for many a conversation.

There's lots of German heritage in the mennonite population, Edwin's family came over from Switzerland, so where else to settle down if not the western Rocky Mountains. Their church service is held in Pennsylvania Dutch, he says, which must be some odd kind of ancient lingo or transatlantic hybrid that I never even heard a word of. Outdated old fads, information that used to be used and just won't go away still. Next thing coming is the slow train

however. Edwin's all about some rail in he's trying to put together, some monthly freight which to haul in the organic bean meal for all the tens of thousands out here in Bird Central, Colorado. We're talking millions of dollars worth of chicken feed, Edwin got the numbers all figured out, the railroad itself is not an issue, it's all laid out and well kept. All it really takes now is the proper facility and the machinery to get it down from the train in due time. Matter of fact, there is one downtown, in the hands of Big B, the apple cider guy. Edwin's baseball hat says it all, we're right back at it in this new Wild West of yore.

He's never heard of that Chinese rail up until today, just to be sure, but he's an adept and patient man to listen to me. There's a weekly freight full of consumer electronics, going all the way from China to the inland port of Duisburg, Germany, much cheaper than air cargo, much quicker than the old shipping route and much safer without a doubt. All things considered, it's nothing unheard of, it's been going on and on, on all the farms in his world or mine, talking shop and trading lore, be it in Pennsylvania Dutch or post digital molecular slang.

Eventually, once we're feeling up to date again, our bean meal is hieved upon the old F-250 Lariat. To Edwin it's not a big thing, not with all this up to date technology he's got at his simple command. There's an old piece of wood we're tossing on top of the sack, for the feed not to be blown all across the valley on our way back. Steady and moderate sounds from the Ford diesel engine, as we're rolling out and Edwin's strolling back to his house which will be his home in the long run or can. He's just a passer through, none of this is written in stone.

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