

In a Flash

It's a warm summer evening in 1962 high up in the Mexican mountains. It's dark and quiet when out in the distance there's a bright orange light that streaks in the sky. Down on the ground, two kids are roasting marshmallows.

"Careful Eddie! Don't burn mine too much."

"Relax Charlie, I know what I'm doing.", replied Eddie.

"Ohh, like when you got us lost on the way to this spot?...three times!", snapped Charlie.

"Ah, ever heard three times a charm?"

"Swear to god Eddie, you're lucky Ace has your back." Charlie kneels next to Ace and begins to rub his belly.

Ace is Eddie's dog and has been by his side for the last 4-years. A small Jack Russell terrier who enjoys spending time with Eddie and his friends. His full attention is fixated on the burning marshmallows.

"Damn it, Eddie! Give me that stick before I cook your ass on that open flame!" demands Charlie as he swiftly snatches the branch from Eddie.

Eddie makes a sarcastic face that instantly cracks into laughter as he tosses pieces of a toasted tortilla to Ace.

"So, did you hear about the violent gang that was spotted near the pueblo?"

"The one whose leader is the Chupacabra??" replies Eddie in a scoffing tone.

"NO! I'm being serious. My brother works at the police station and told my mom about them and the stuff they've been doing around the pueblo. Messed up stuff. I'm lucky she agreed to let me camp after realizing we were going in a group."

The two boys take a bite from their dessert and feel a bit of comfort from the sweet taste.

"You know Char, I-"

Eddie is quickly interrupted by a thunderous boom that is felt by the trio. The boys turn their heads in silence facing each other. Direct eye contact to confirm that what they experienced was real.

Turning their heads back to the origin of the sound, there is a sharp bright white flash that turns night into day for a second. The star-soaked midnight sky turns into a crystal blue and the dark shadows of vegetation evaporate to show the different shades of green.

“What the hell was that?!” asks Charlie in a trembling voice.

“I don’t know!” exclaims Eddie.

The bewildered boys miss the sounds of Ace whining and barking only until the last second.

Eddie looked down only to see Ace take off in the direction of the flash.

“ACE!” shouts Eddie.

“We need to go tell the others, Eddie!”

“Go, I’m going after Ace!” Eddie bolted after Ace.

“Eddie! Be careful!” cried Charlie.

Eddie tackled his way through the shrubs and trees. Panting, his heart racing from all the excitement. His eyes scanned in all directions for any signs of Ace. In the distance, he sees a bright fading orange glow. He suddenly catches a glimpse of his dog around a strange being. He hides behind a tree and carefully observes. The stranger was dressed in a matte white space-looking suit with a familiar on the left arm. Eddie had seen the flag logo before, it was on the files carried by English teachers who visited his pueblo. It was the American flag; only the colors were grayscale. The stranger removed his sleek helmet with the front shield a strange shiny color that Eddie had never seen before. Ace does not get along with just anyone. It took him months to get used to Charlie and the friends from school. He seemed to be enjoying the presence of this American spaceman.

“Ace! Ven aquí!” shouted Eddie.

The strange man turned to Eddie with a surprised look on his face.

“¿Quién eres? Deja a mi perro!”, demanded Eddie.

“Easy kid...I mean no harm. See? Ace knows it”

The spaceman caressed Ace’s floppy ears. Eddie reached for the closest stick and carefully stepped forward aiming the decayed piece of a branch at the man.

“DEJALO!” shouted Eddie.

“Esta bien, con calma,” said the man in a collected voice.

Eddie was shocked. He’d never heard an American speak Spanish fluently.

“Y-you know Spanish?”

“I do. I’m Mexican American.”

The strange man looked around at the surroundings and his face grew serious indicating he knew where he was.

“Listen, we need to get you and Ace back to the camp. It’s dangerous out here.”

Ace galloped to Eddie's side hoping for head scratches.

“Uh no thanks, I don’t even know you! For all I know you could be an evil alien American from outer space sent here to invade!”

The stranger let out a heavy sigh.

“I am not from outer space. I’m from Earth just like you.”

“Oh yeah, where’d you come from?”

“I am from Earth, 1989 to be exact, the flash that you may have seen must have been caused by the clashing of ions caused by the displacement of time when I arrived, maybe, but not from space.”

The stranger looked down at Ace and a soft smile emerged. Eddie looked with suspicion. The stranger squatted down to give the pup a gentle belly rub.

“He’s a loyal pup, aren’t you boy? Look, Eddie...” said the spaceman.

Eddie Froze up, “How do you know my name?”

The stranger paused, “Because I’m you. Fifty years from now.”

Eddie's eyes widened, and his jaw dropped like it was made of lead. That explained why Ace was so affectionate towards him, why he knew his name, and why he seemed to be familiar with the mountains.

“Did you mean to land at this time, here?” questioned present Eddie.

“Not exactly. We were experimenting with time travel. It was theorized that maneuverability may be consciously based rather than just a simple destination point. I only think that’s true because the more powerful the emotion is the more precise the time jump to that historical event becomes.”

Present Eddie looked confused. He had no idea what the spaceman was talking about. Future Eddie began to lead Eddie and Ace back to camp.

“So, you’re a real time-traveler?” asked present Eddie

“Technically, an experimental one.”

“Do you know what I’m going to say next?”

“No.”

“Lame, then you’re not a time traveler if you can’t even tell the future.”

“You’re thinking of a psychic and besides this technically counts as a new timeline. Eddie, when I was last here, some bad people did something...”

“To me?” asked present Eddie.

Future Eddie shook his head. “I don’t know if this is fate or divine intervention or whatever, all I know is that I have an opportunity to prevent that from ever happening.”

Future Eddie closed his eyes and remembered. He remembers tonight, 7 years old in the mountains looking for Ace. He ran through the thick forest and finally caught up to Ace who was trying his hardest to catch a rabbit that ran into a hole.

“Charlie, I found Ace!”

Suddenly three strangers dressed in old worn-out clothes emerged from the darkness. Eddie’s face grew grim. He can still hear the sound of Ace barking and the sound of the gun going off.

“If I could’ve protected Ace and ran away...” Whispers future Eddie. You and Ace are not going through that, I promise you.”

Present Eddie could feel the gravity of the time traveler’s conviction. He looked forward as they marched on. Approaching the river, the duo heard adults arguing. Future Eddie knew exactly who they were.

“I’m surrounded by IDIOTS! You had to leave witnesses and now...and now we’re stuck hiding out in the mountains like bums!” Said one of the voices, a man wearing a gold chain necklace. He looked the part of a leader with dark hair and a huge beard. They reeked of alcohol and were aggressive to one another.

“Think of it this way, it’s like a vacation. We just lay low, enjoy the stars, and wait to strike again only this time we take out those witnesses.” Retorted the second thug.

“Eddie, find a spot for you and Ace to hide. And whatever you do, do not let go of him.”

Present Eddie did just that and held onto Ace tighter than ever.

One of the thugs was standing next to a thick tree with low-hanging branches. Out of nowhere, a swift swing from a tree branch to the side of the head had him discombobulated and out cold. Future Eddie connected a textbook uppercut on a second thug and tossed him into the river where he also lied unconsciously. One thug left and he was not spared from the full force of an elbow to the sternum with cracking sounds under the pressure of the strike. The thug scrambled to create space between himself and future Eddie while holding his chest and catching his breath. Managing a feeble amount of strength, the thug pulled out his gun and aimed it at future Eddie. Clink! The gun jammed. The thug looks at the gun and back to where the future man would be lying dead only to see nobody. The gunman turns his head to see future Eddie at his side. Eddie grips the gun and folds it out of the gunman’s hand slowly, breaking and dislocating the trigger finger. The thug screams in pain holding his injured hand.

“This one’s for Ace.”

He threw the thug headfirst against the closest tree which left the man bloodied and knocked out instantly.

“Eddie? You and Ace okay?”

“Yeah, we’re okay... What was...?”

“Let’s go.”

It looked to present Eddie as if a bear went on a rampage, unconscious and mangled bodies were laid out in very uncomfortable positions. They crossed the river and hiked halfway up the mountain. This would be the end of their journey together.

“This is where we split.” said future Eddie.

“What? No way! We just met!

“I’m sorry Eddie, but I need to get back to my timeline. Take care of Ace and always love him. Time goes faster than you think, don’t waste it.”

“What’s going to happen to you?”

“The experiment has a fail-safe that only lasts for 30 minutes. When the time is up it snaps me back to my timeline like a yo-yo.”

“How much time do you have left here?”

“7 mins and then I’ll be making my way back home. I’ll leave you with a secret though. Those alien comics you read, believe them, the universe is vast with billions of galaxies and life outside of Earth, not everything you read is fiction...”

Present Eddie’s eyes lit up. This revelation was thrilling and exciting.

“Alright, time for you and Ace to join your friends, and please stay out of trouble.”

Present Eddie and Ace raced up to the top of the mountain. Future Eddie watched until they were out of sight. He then hiked to another point on the mountain and reached a clear area to begin his travel back home. He stopped for a second to say a quick prayer to his once-loving pet Ace. Immediately after, future Eddie’s body levitated off the ground as his suit began to glow a bright white, brighter and brighter until it disappeared, creating a sonic boom echoing through the mountains. Charlie and Eddie hear the boom.

“What was that?!” asks Charlie.

“The future,” smirked Eddie.