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TRAVELING BACK TO THE OLD WEST

A TIMELESS CROSSING

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TRAVELING BACK TO THE OLD WEST: A TIMELESS CROSSING

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Synopsis

This is a story about two Wild West history buffs, Emmett, a paramedic who lives in New York City and Jasper, a postal worker in New Jersey. They are also cousins on their mother's side. They've decided to charter a private train that will take them to 4 historic towns reminiscent of the Old West. They want to get a flavor of this period in US history so they can create their own Wild West Reenactment Production Company. They have also been pursuing a novel on the Wild West. Since their book requires authentic accounts of what life was like back then, they decided on a unique train excursion.

Cast of Characters

EMMETT	Main character, age 38. He's a Wild West history buff who is co-authoring a book on the subject.
JASPER	Main character, age 34 who is Emmett's best friend and co-author.
CLERK	An elderly man who has been working at the train depot for decades checking passenger tickets.
CONDUCTOR 1	Train conductor from 2021 who directs people to their appropriate rail car.
CONDUCTOR 2	Train conductor dressed in attire reminiscent from 1850's. His personality is a bit on the austere side. He gives instructions to Emmett and Jasper regarding preparations for their excursion.
BARTENDER 1	A simple town bartender dressed in clothing that depicts the 1850's. He sports a handlebar mustache and his hair is parted down the middle. Very friendly personality.
BELLE	A stereotypical saloon gal in her 40's who strikes up friendly conversation with Emmett and Jasper.
SARAH	A 20 year old saloon gal who works under the wing of Belle. Friendly and outgoing personality but naive.
MERCHANT	A 50 year old gun merchant with a nervous temperament considering he sells revolvers. Nervously deferential to customers.
POSTAL CLERK	An elderly man that merely sells stamps. He's straightforward with customers. Not a personality that cares for chit-chat.
CODY	This is the iconic Buffalo Bill. He is friendly and outgoing but has an intimidating presence.

AMELIA	A very pretty actress in her mid-twenties. Formal and appropriate by nature. A picture of social grace.
BARTENDER 2	Typical bartender back in the days of Tombstone. Respectful of all saloon customers, good, bad, or indifferent .
WYATT EARP	Nothing more than the larger than life, legendary marshal of Tombstone. Charismatic but intimidating personality.
DOC HOLIDAY	None other than the legendary man himself. A gunslinger with intelligence that could outwit anyone. A loyal friend of Wyatt Earp.
TICKET AGENT	The stereotypical airline ticket agent. Trim and proper.
NARRATOR	The narrator is a robust and articulate speaker with a dramatic flair. He has a personality that can captivate an audience.
OUTLAW	A bearded man with a slovenly appearance, bullish, drunk and disorderly. He can barely stand on his own two feet in his confrontation with Wyatt Earp.

ACT I

Scene 1

Setting: Mid-October 2021, late afternoon. Emmett's cramped and cluttered office at home in New York City. Unfinished scripts are piled up everywhere in the room. His office has wood paneling installed everywhere about two decades ago. His desk is situated in front of a large picture window that provides a nice view of a sprawling lawn lined with pine trees. The air outside is a bit chilled due to an early cold front.

At Rise: EMMETT is calling JASPER with good news. JASPER answers his phone.

JASPER

Hello!

EMMETT

Hey, Jasper. It's me, Emmett.

JASPER

What's up?

EMMETT

I wanted to let you know that our agent found a publishing company who's interested in our manuscript.

JASPER

You're kidding!

EMMETT

They want a polished copy in 6 weeks. We'll have to put our idea of a Wild West re-enactment production company on a back burner. Now, our heart and soul can be spent on this book deal. I just never expected anything like this.

JASPER

To tell you the truth, the idea of our own production company seems too complicated to realize. We barely have enough time maintaining a steady job. Now, we have a book to complete.

EMMETT

Granted, but maybe we're fooling ourselves. A production company is just not doable. You have to admit though, it would be fun.

JASPER

This book deal is still hard to believe. I wonder what appealed to the editor.

EMMETT

Jim Agent would know. I'll ask him. American Press! Can you believe it? Am I dreaming?

JASPER

I think we're about to enter one.

EMMETT

I guess we better move quickly and reserve this Wild West train charter we've been talking about for so long. It should give us a realistic perspective of what life was like in 1850.

JASPER

No time to waste now...we have a book to finish.

EMMETT

Our adventure is about to begin. Talk to you tomorrow.

(The following day, EMMETT calls JASPER about chartering the excursion.)

EMMETT

Hi Jasper. Today, I'm gonna book the train we agreed to charter.

JASPER

Great!

EMMETT

Oh, I did talk with Jim and he said that the editors felt that bringing tales of the Wild West to the foreground capitalizes on the country's clamor for roughshod politics. In other words, the tough guy image that marked the Old West is making a comeback in today's America. It's like a call to the wild... even the notorious, politically speaking. Whether we agree or not with such a view, it has given our book momentum.

JASPER

Timing is everything! There are enough books published on the untamed West but a new one such as ours will take precedence over those sitting on dusty shelves in bookstores and warehouses. Timing, timing, timing!

EMMETT

Yep! This charter will take us back to the real deal, figuratively speaking. We'll travel to reconstructed versions of former frontier boomtowns that give you a feel for the historic past of gunslinging cowboys, dastardly outlaws, swinging saloon doors, one-room jailhouses, and liquor fueled shootouts.

JASPER

So, it's an excursion into the mid-19th century.

EMMETT

Yep! I just texted you photos of our train.

JASPER

Got it! Perfect! A passenger car and caboose. Any pics of the interior?

EMMETT

I just sent a pic of our quarters in the caboose and the passenger car.

JASPER

Looks like we'll have all the comforts for a 10-day train ride. By the way, how much?

EMMETT

As you know, the original quote was $21,000. However, since we decided to cut costs by using a caboose for traveling quarters, the total came to $15,750. A larger passenger car with all the space and luxury options would cost an additional $12,000.

JASPER

I like the deal you cut. We don't need luxury, just the basics. The caboose package is fine.

EMMETT

The train includes an authentic passenger car that we can ride in. There are plenty of windows for panoramic views. The best part is that our $20,000 advance from American Press covers all our costs.

JASPER

This is a dream come true! Send me all the information.

EMMETT

I will. Oh, before I forget, contact the rail company and give them your clothing and shoe size. We're supposed to dress exactly as they did in 1850. This is to be an "immersive" experience! For the duration of our travels, we will be cowboys. The ride back to Rapid City from Tombstone will take 3 days. The entire trip is a total of 10 days. Then we fly back to New York.

JASPER

Since we were kids, it has been our dream to become cowboys.

EMMETT

Well, let’s have fun polishing our manuscript as we travel “back in time.”

Scene 2

Setting: Same setting as Scene 1.

At Rise: The Wild West adventure begins: JASPER pays EMMETT a visit so they can finalize details before their train excursion.

EMMETT

Glad you could make it over today, Jasper. Let's go over the train route. Take a look at this map. We'll fly out to Rapid City, South Dakota and catch our train there. Our first stop will be Deadwood which is about an hour's ride. The company indicated that the train route may deviate slightly from this map since our stops will be in the vicinity but at remote locations where they have reconstructed versions of these historic towns. The sequence of visits are : 1) Deadwood, South Dakota, 2) Cody, Wyoming 3) Dodge City, Kansas, and 4) Tombstone, Arizona. As I said, these are not the actual towns but rather replicas of what they were like back in the day. They were built off the beaten track away from signs of modern civilization.

JASPER

This experience will surely fuel our manuscript. When do we fly out to Rapid City?

EMMETT

Next Saturday. It's a 4 1/2-hour flight from LaGuardia to Rapid City. Don't forget the 1850's clothes the company sent you. We'll change into our western duds after we board the train. This Wild West Rail company insists that we look the part.

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ACT II

Scene 1 - The "Wormhole"

Setting: the caboose

At Rise: EMMETT and JASPER have settled comfortably in their caboose. The "clickety-clack" sound of the train has a relaxing effect as they begin to enjoy gazing out the windows taking in the countryside.

JASPER

Emmett, we're coming up to the tunnel! This may be the transition point from what the conductor was explaining.

EMMETT

Transition point? What are you talking about? It's a show.

JASPER

I don't know. It's just that the conductor made a point to mention a tunnel.

EMMETT

...and with all that mysterious overlay of flashing lights... "stardust" as you so aptly stated.

JASPER

Exactly! Just a tad of intrigue, I guess. There's the tunnel!

EMMETT

Ha! This will be fun.

JASPER

Whoo-hoo! Here we go!

(After a mile, the train exits the tunnel and all seems normal.)

JASPER

Wow! What a light show!

EMMETT

Beautiful! Those lights in the tunnel must have been triggered upon entry. Clever idea for effect. It certainly marks the start of our adventure.

JASPER

Emmett, look to your left... a cowboy sitting on his horse! He sure looks authentic! I now realize this is not only a train excursion to historic towns of the Old West but a full reenactment of that period. What a clever idea to incorporate a time travel overlay. Brilliant!

EMMETT

Call the conductor and let him know we enjoyed the light show.

JASPER

Ok.

(ringing)

CONDUCTOR 2

Greetings gentlemen. Can I help you?

EMMETT

You're not the conductor we saw prior to our departure. You look older plus your uniform looks dusty and tattered.

CONDUCTOR 2

Oh, that conductor is from 2021. I'm the conductor from 1850.

EMMETT

I know this is all a re-enactment for entertainment purposes, but do you really expect us to believe what you're saying?

CONDUCTOR 2

Just take a peek inside the passenger car.

EMMETT

What?

CONDUCTOR 2

Take a look.

(EMMETT glances over the CONDUCTOR's shoulder and sees what appears to be a passenger car filled with people from 1850.)

EMMETT

Great holographic photography! Jasper, come here and take a look at a clever 3-D photographic backdrop.

JASPER

What? I just see an empty passenger car.

EMMETT

I guess they shut off the projection device. Cute!

CONDUCTOR 2

Anything else gentlemen?

JASPER

Thank you, sir.

(turning to EMMETT)

Emmett, go with the flow. It's all for show just like we were planning to do with our own production company.

EMMETT

I've not seen such an ambitious replay of 1850 right down to the vintage appearances of these actors, holographic backdrops, and absolutely convincing characterization.

EMMETT (CONT)

Jasper, look out the window. We're approaching Deadwood. This is not any modern-day version of Deadwood. This town sure looks like the real deal. I have a hunch that ever since this train entered that "wormhole" of a tunnel, the intention was for us to believe that we crossed into another time dimension. Remember, the second conductor said he was from 1850.

JASPER

Kinda like the movie, "Back to the Future."

EMMETT

Exactly! This experience is based on the same premise.

Scene 2 - Exploring the Town of Deadwood

Setting: the town of Deadwood

At Rise: EMMETT and JASPER are walking into town.

EMMETT

Now, Jasper, keep your wits about you and don't appear like some 21st century, bug-eyed tourist. We're dressed to blend.

JASPER

Agreed.

EMMETT

Let's just experience Deadwood as it was in the 1850's. Remember, the intent is for us to really feel like we're back in time. Let's check out the saloon.

BARTENDER 1

Greetings! Just come in on the train did y'a?

JASPER

Yep! Dusty ride...need a beer.

BARTENDER 1

How about your friend?

EMMETT

Sure could drain a beer after that ride.

BARTENDER 1

That'll be 4 bits.

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Scene 5

Setting: the town of Tombstone

At Rise: EMMETT and JASPER reach the final leg of their excursion: Tombstone.

EMMETT

Here we are...the most notorious town of the the Old West. Back in the day, when mining silver was supposedly a big drawin tombstone, outlaws wanted a piece of the action but at gun point!

JASPER

From our research, we should be experiencing history as it was in 1879. That's when Wyatt Earp moved from Dodge to Tombstone. So, we might see the entire clan.

EMMETT

You're right. The Earps clashed with a group of outlaws known as the "Cowboys". Wyatt, Virgil, and younger brother Morgan held various law-enforcement positions which put them in conflict with Tom McLaury, Frank McLaury, Ike Clanton, and Billy Clanton who threatened to kill the Earps on several occasions.

JASPER

Yep! I wonder if any of these reckless bandits are gonna cause trouble. Given this production, the stage may very well be set for a rumble.

(The two men head into town.)

JASPER

Check out the stagecoach!

EMMETT

I wonder who's on it. Looks like they could be traveling entertainers. They're parked in front of the famous Birdcage Theatre. Let's go inside. It never ceases to amaze me just how much attention was spent on detail in the reconstruction of these historic towns. I'm even more baffled how they created functioning communities. My guess is that most of the people we've encountered actually live and work in these towns.

JASPER

Especially since these towns or settlements are situated in such remote areas.

EMMETT

...and how they all stay in character. I must say, these actors have given me a realistic perspective.

JASPER

Definitely! Let's keep checking out the town. Hey, see those two cowboys hanging out in front of the saloon? The guy on the left looks like a gunslinger. Let's head over to the saloon and have a couple of beers.

(talking to BARTENDER 2)

It's getting a little rowdy in here.

BARTENDER 2

It always is.

EMMETT

By the way, who are those four cowboys outside in the street?

BARTENDER 2

That's Wyatt Earp and his brothers. The fella on the left is Doc Holiday. They always come here around this time and make sure all these hombres check in their pistols. That cowboy and his two friends are looking for trouble. They're wearing their guns. Wyatt will take care of them in short order. Just watch.

(WYATT EARP walks into the saloon with a no-nonsense look on his face.)

WYATT EARP

Hey mister! We have a law in this town requiring all pistol carrying cowboys to surrender their firearms.

OUTLAW

So, marshal, what if I don't!

WYATT EARP

Then I guess I'll have to handcuff you and have my deputy drag you to jail.

OUTLAW

Tough talk Marshall, but I don't think I'll let you arrest me tonight.

WYATT EARP

(walking slowly up to the OUTLAW)

Now, either you hand over your weapon or you may be very close to drawing your last breath.

OUTLAW

In that case, take a deep breath marshal.

(At that point, the OUTLAW goes for his gun. Faster on the draw, WYATT presses his 12-inch barrel Colt Buntline against the OUTLAW's forehead. Wyatt's DEPUTY escorts the OUTLAW to jail.)

WYATT EARP

Doc, escort this man to jail!

BARTENDER 2

See what I mean.

EMMETT

Wow! Wyatt Earp and Doc Holiday in action. Jasper, this has truly been an amazing experience. Let's head back to the train. We have an early departure tomorrow and finally homeward bound.

JASPER

Yeah, from these four historic towns, I think we really got as close to a realistic feel for the Old West that we'll ever find. That "feel" will make the difference between an ordinary story versus one that "breathes" what life was really like during this time in American history.

After 3 days on this train, I'm looking forward to getting back home and resuming our usual routine. Oh, I hope you have our round trip tickets because I don't. We should be at the airport in an hour.

Scene 6

Setting: the airport in Rapid City

At Rise: After a 3-day train ride, EMMET and JASPER make it back to the airport in Rapid City the following day.

JASPER

We finally made it to the airport! There's the US Domestic Airlines terminal but I don't see our flight number for New York. None of the flights bound for New York correspond to our tickets. Let's check with the ticket agent.

JASPER

I hope it wasn't cancelled.

EMMETT

(talking to the TICKET AGENT)

Excuse me but I can't find our flight number anywhere.

TICKET AGENT

Let me see your ticket. That's odd, you can't find your flight because it left Rapid City 13 years ago!

EMMETT

What? Nonsense! Look at the return flight date... November 5th, 2021.

TICKET AGENT

I see that, sir. However, today is November 5th, 2033!!

NARRATOR

Apparently, after the chartered mystery train passed though the tunnel, Emmett and Jasper fell into a time warp centered in the Old West. At that point, every historic town and the people who actually lived there, reappeared as it was back

NARRATOR (CONT)

in 1850 or thereabouts. Could it be that 13.3 earth years had passed during their 10-day excursion into a distant time dimension? The underlying assumption is: If they did travel through the tunnel (wormhole), at a rate of 99.9999999999% the speed of light, one year and four months would have elapsed on earth (commonly called time dilation). Is it plausible that Emmett and Jasper were transported into a timeless dimension unbeknownst to them? If so, theoretical physics would have it that the entire trip cost them a 13.3 year earth lag or latency period. Consequently, Emmett and Jasper's return home could never ever be in the year 2021 but only in 2033 at its earliest. Moreover, per spacetime geometry, no amount of earth lag can ever be recovered. So I ask, have you any other ideas about what may have transpired phenomenologically...or is it just this writer's way of tickling the reader's imagination?

(END)



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