



Just Like That

Les Edgerton

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Les Edgerton's buddy novel, **JUST LIKE THAT**, is based on an actual trip he took with an ex-prison cellmate under similar circumstances as protagonist Jake Mayes does in this narrative. The scenes in Pendleton are also based on true experiences he had while incarcerated. Approximately 85% of the novel is taken from real life.

Jake and his pal Bud's journey begins six months after he is released on parole and is occasioned when his girlfriend Donna dumps him and aborts their child. After an aborted suicide attempt where the Norelco shaver cord he used to hang himself broke, on an impulse—the source of the title; everything in Jake's life happens “just like that”—he calls up Bud, who lives by the same credo, and the two take off with no particular destination in mind. They're just going “south”—somewhere where it's warm. An hour before they leave, Jake on another impulse, holds up a convenience store to get some traveling money.

Ultimately, they end up in New Orleans and then Lake Charles, Louisiana and from there, back to Indiana.

Along the way are many “watercooler” moments, such as when an inmate sinks a meat cleaver into another inmate's blue-clad stomach, a physical encounter with two rednecks in Kentucky where Bud shoots one of the men, the bullet bouncing harmlessly off the man's thick skull, Jake's ongoing romance with Donna, the funeral of Jake's father which he attends with a whore, multiple burglaries, armed robberies, a brief affair with a black woman, and an adventure with a drunk Santa Claus. Near the end Jake takes another fall when he is caught burglarizing a bar back in Ft. Wayne, Indiana and gets shot in the leg and is returned to Pendleton where he kills the inmate he'd had a nasty encounter during his first stay in prison. In the process, Jake's philosophy of life undergoes a sea change and he comes up with this:

Portions of **JUST LIKE THAT** have previously appeared as short stories in the literary magazines *High Plains Literary Review*, *Murdaland*, and *Flatmancrooked*. The story that appeared in *High Plains* was nominated for a Pushcart Prize and was selected for inclusion in Houghton-Mifflin's “Best American Mystery Stories, 2001.”

As a note of possible interest, Cathy Johns, the P.R. Director and Assistant Warden of The Farm (the infamous Louisiana state prison at Angola) read this novel and told Edgerton that he'd captured the true spirit of the criminal mind better than anything she'd ever read.

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