

I jumped over to a car that was driving towards the airport, and I jumped from person to person till I was in a queue for a flight to New York. I got into the plane with a group of people, and most of the flight I stayed with them. At some point I went out of the plane to witness the air rushing past the fuselage, the blinking lights on the wings, but then I went back inside. I could have flown on to America on my own, alongside the airplane, or higher up or lower down (even skimming above the ocean-waves if that's what I had wanted), or faster or slower, but somehow I was scared of getting lost (even though I would have had all the time in the world to find my way again), so I stayed with the plane, had a look in the cockpit and in other hidden places where passengers can't normally go...

After landing in New York I joined the traffic going west. It took a while till I got onto a highway that seemed promising, but then I just stayed in a car with some people and relaxed. When that became too boring, I jumped out of that car and hopped from car to car along the highway. When that became too boring too, I just flew above the highway at my own speed.

I spent many hours like that.

Then, at some point I decided the landscape looked suitable enough (I sort of wanted it to look like the setting for a Western-film, you see). There were rolling hills in the distance, a pleasant river merging into a small lake, some farm-houses with old cars and other miscellaneous equipment rusting in their backyards...

It was perfect!

I left the highway, flew around a bit till I found a big boulder which must have rested in this very same position for ages and sat myself onto it. Then I started going backwards in time, faster and faster and faster. The days flicking past gave an unpleasant, stroboscopic effect, but as I accelerated further the light started smoothing out to some kind of uniform grey. For a while I couldn't tell anymore how fast I was going, but then I began to sense the differences in temperature as the seasons flew past. I even felt the snow cover up the boulder (and thus me) at quick intervals, like a gentle pat.

Snow-cover was perhaps not the most reliable sign of winter, but the lower temperature was. I chose a speed at which I could clearly feel the regular temperature-fluctuations of the passing years, and I started counting the peaks of cold.

I counted till hundred-fifty. It took a while, because I didn't dare to go so fast that the temperature-fluctuations would become blurred. But it didn't take so terribly long either. Anybody can count till hundred-fifty – it's really not that much! This just shows you that the wild, wild West really isn't all that terribly far away.

I slowed down the time-travel and finally stopped one early morning at some point in the middle of the nineteenth century...

It was perfect! Where I had seen the farm-houses there was a whole little town, a Western town! Many small buildings with disproportionate fronts showing towards the one street (nothing more than a dirt-strip, actually) going through the town.

Wooden porches, pegs to tie the horses, and there was even a saloon with those typical swing-doors you see in all the westerns!

This was my dream-place! It was still early in the morning, and the place seemed very quiet and peaceful. There was some smoke rising from the chimney of one or two houses, and I could hear a cow mooing somewhere, quite insistently, to be milked, I guess. Else there was nobody about.

I started checking out the houses, seeing what kind of people were living here, and some vague suspicion started dawning in me – what if nothing exciting was ever

going to happen in this place? All these people were just doing their best to put bread on the table and raise their kids if they had any. That's all I could see. Maybe the Wild West wasn't the exciting place it was made out to be in the films, after all?

The top-cat in town, the gun-smith, seemed to have more ambitions – he was rich and planning to get even richer. He had a handsome son with burning dark eyes (a gun-slinger to be, maybe?) and a lovely daughter. Promising? Who knows...

At the other extreme of the social scale of this town there were a sheep-farmer and his wife with just one son. There was lots of bitterness here, and as far as I could tell the boy was mostly at the receiving end of all this bitterness.

Some intuition told me that this might be what I was looking for – a young boy, gradually turning into a man, with a lot of frustrations to deal with, piled onto him by his parents. There were signs already that he was rather introverted, a bit of a dreamer, not especially popular with his school-mates. He might end up a drinker, looking old and worn before his time. Or he might one day rebel against his destiny and become a fighter!

Having a spirit like me to look after him might make all the difference!

So I nestled myself in his forehead and started looking at the world how he saw it.