

One Week By Car

by

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DAY ONE: (AUG. 11)

SHROOM (V.O.)

So there I was... In the college town of my dreams... My hometown... My friends and family... The life I had known for the last two decades? One week by car.

FADE IN:

Begin gameplay. Player controls SHROOM. Player must complete the Wake Up minigame, the Homework minigame, and then interact with the bed.

FADE OUT:

SHROOM (V.O.)

My mom had signed me onto the cheapest place she could find. Made sense to me. Our first TV was smaller than our microwave. Who was I to complain... she had my rent, I only needed to pay my bills.

(ellipsis beat)

It took me a week or two to find work. I wanted to focus all on school, but those bills had just come in for the first time, and they really bit at my savings. I couldn't live off of them like I wanted to. The place I found, well, they were certainly... a company. But my mom would tell me, I wasn't supposed to love it, it just had to be tolerable. For the money... yeah, it was okay.

DAY TWO: (AUG. 23)

FADE IN:

Continue gameplay. Player must complete the Wake Up minigame, the Work minigame, and then interact with the bed.

FADE OUT:

SHROOM (V.O.)

My coworkers largely paid me no mind. Neither did management. But that, I guess, is more of a virtue. Should I have asked for a raise? Yeah. But was it worth introducing myself to them?

(ellipsis beat)

I was always able to skate by in school without too much effort. It was good, because I didn't have to do much to get good grades. But I never learned how to study, or really, how to learn. I didn't take a gap year, and yet, when the same material was taught to me the first semester after high school, I sputtered, like a sick, old car...

(ellipsis beat)

Car... God, I wish I had a car.

DAY THREE: (SEP. 2)

FADE IN:

Continue gameplay. Player must complete the Wake Up minigame, the Work minigame OR the Homework minigame, and then interact with the bed.

FADE OUT:

SHROOM (V.O.)

Thanks to the seriousness of the ongoing virus at the time, I didn't have to worry about actually going to classes— they were all online. Half of them didn't meet, either. I just needed to read the material and do the work. I was thankful back then for the most asinine reason. No in-person classes meant I didn't have to meet people, because I didn't have time for a social life. I had a track record of letting crushes sink my grades in high school. And were any of those guys worth it? Well, let me put it this way... half of them weren't even nice to me... the other half didn't know my name.

(MORE)

SHROOM (V.O.) (CONT'D)

(ellipsis beat)

A few more weeks had gone by. College courses get tough fast, huh? I never wanted to work on the same days I had designated for school, but I guess it wasn't up to me, it was up to my bills... and those things wouldn't shut up and get off my case.

DAY FOUR: (SEP. 16)

FADE IN:

Continue gameplay. Player must complete the Wake Up minigame, the Work minigame OR the Homework minigame, and then interact with the bed.

FADE OUT:

SHROOM (V.O.)

What a dreaded combination, having work and classes on the same day. Not having a single hour of my own damn day to myself felt like I was a prisoner in my own life. And it was like that for well over two weeks. But it didn't matter. I was the one that begged to come out here, I was the one that chose to be far away, I needed a solid future more than any free time in my early twenties. And besides, what would that say about me, if I gave up and went home? They'd never let me live it down, they'd never let me forget, and I'd be paying them back all that rent money and tuition and destroying my likelihood of ever moving out again... and if my siblings ever wanted to move away for school? They'd lift me by the back of my shirt and say...

'what, and turn out like him?'

(ellipsis beat)

My bills were starting to come around again. I needed \$100 by the 21st of September. Which meant yeah, no matter how much that job started to dig into my ribs, I couldn't quit.

DAY FIVE: (SEP. 21)

FADE IN:

Continue gameplay. Player must complete the Wake Up minigame, the Work minigame OR the Homework minigame, and then interact with the bed.

FADE OUT:

SHROOM (V.O.)

The days started to feel longer and longer, like my brain wouldn't let me shift into those states of focus that make the time fly by. Almost like I was aware of every passing minute of every day. And yet, despite it, I couldn't remember a single thing. They melted together, like candle wax, indistinguishable, only recognized by the fact that they wouldn't stop happening. Every day was the same. And just like how wind carves rocks... it was making holes in me. I dreaded finals season.

(ellipsis beat)

I let just one of my grades slip below a B once. When my mom called to hear about them, she ignored what I had done well to tell me that a C was unacceptable. I guess so. A C was passing. But it wasn't passable. Which meant I needed to study harder and dedicate as much time as I could to getting better grades.

DAY SIX: (OCT. 3)

FADE IN:

Continue gameplay. Player must complete the Wake Up minigame, the Work minigame OR the Homework minigame, and then interact with the bed.

FADE OUT:

SHROOM (V.O.)

I remember very well that Fall break had been canceled to deter people from traveling home and spreading the virus. Good on them,

(MORE)

SHROOM (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I thought at the time, without a break, I won't remember what it's like to have a life.

(ellipsis beat)

Every bone in my body would ache when I laid down for bed at night... my nose would sing to me, too. Clean laundry wouldn't help my grades get better, and doing the dishes wouldn't give me a raise at work. And the mail? Forget about it. The only words I knew how to read were the ones my professors made me read.

(ellipsis beat)

I hadn't spoken to anybody but customers in months. The world was quiet, despite the traffic outside and the stomping upstairs. For the first time in my life, I felt my few passions slip out of my fingers and fall away into the wind. Was that the point of it all? Did I lose the permission to be happy, too? Not like I had even known it was there for a while... And I remember, distinctly, letting myself cry... letting myself weep, and shake, and shiver, as the cold wind blew in from my busted windows, I held myself tight. My brain, well, that thing must've been mad at me, it had me curled on the floor, hitting me with a broom, shouting, 'You better suffer! You better! You're not falling asleep tonight either, I'm gonna make you hurt in all the ways you hurt me!' So, I laid there, exhausted but conscious. Has that ever happened to you? Have you ever been in so much pain that, despite how tired you were, you couldn't fall asleep?

(ellipsis beat)

The brain is a proponent of tough love. And just as it had kept me up sobbing, it let me sleep and spend nine hours taking deep, controlled breaths in my warm, cotton sheets. That morning, I slept through my alarm for the first time ever.

DAY SEVEN: (OCT. 20)

FADE IN:

Continue gameplay. The player will fail the Wake Up minigame.

Shroom gets out of bed.

SHROOM

(yawn)

What time is it...? ...Shit! I'm late for work! They called me like, 20 times and... left me a text...? Hm... 'don't bother coming in today, we will be removing your name from the schedule. You can reapply in 6 months.'

(ellipsis beat)

I guess... I... should get on my homework then

Continue gameplay. The player will fail the Homework minigame.

SHROOM

No... No, I... I can't... I can't focus, I can't... do this right now...

Continue gameplay. The player must interact with the door.

SHROOM

But... But I just got fired... Why... Why do I want to go outside... It's not like I have anywhere to go... I guess... a little fresh air might be good for me, maybe.

Shroom exits his apartment and out into the parking lot. He walks down the parking lot to the sidewalk. He looks around, pauses, and then takes out his phone to call his mom.

MOM

Hello?

SHROOM

Uh, hey, mom?

MOM

Yes?

SHROOM

Uh... do you think... you could come visit me? Or maybe... bring me home?

MOM

What?

SHROOM

I... I just...

Shroom quivers.

SHROOM

I... I can't do this anymore...

MOM

Don't cry, take a deep breath. I can come get you, but it'll take me a while to get out there.

SHROOM

I know... that's okay...

MOM

I'll be there soon. Hang in there for me. It's still one week by car.

FADE OUT:

SHROOM (V.O.)

I did end up graduating from college. It certainly wasn't the experience I expected it to be, or wanted it to be. But it did happen. I guess my biggest fear is people hearing this story and thinking that because everything ended up okay, my time spent suffering was justified... not to rag on me, of course... but as reason to push themselves...

(ellipsis beat)

Nobody should have to suffer for success... and, people who do shouldn't use their stories to shame people... it's a matter of respect, I guess. And, maybe someday, we won't all be expected to drive ourselves insane just for a shot at something mediocre...

END.