Penny and the Rabbit Foot

by Daniel Brockman

Tuesday, January 20, 2026

"I knew every raindrop by its name."

—Denis Johnson, Jesus' Son

Bobby Lee is a comedian who has built his entire career on confession. He came up through MADtv in the early 2000s, a sketch show that required versatility but not vulnerability, and then spent the next two decades on podcasts—first TigerBelly with his then-girlfriend Khalyla, later Bad Friends with Andrew Santino—where

the format demanded something else entirely. Podcasts are hungry. They eat hours every week and the only fuel is disclosure. Bobby fed them everything: the sex addiction, the gambling, the drugs, the lying, the childhood abuse, the rehab, the relapses, the relationships destroyed and rebuilt and destroyed again. He turned his pathology into content with such consistency that it became impossible to tell where the performance ended and the person began. This is his art form. He is the archivist of his own degeneracy, curating and presenting his worst moments with a showman's timing and a documentarian's eye for detail.

His brother Steve—Steebee Weebee on YouTube—operates in Bobby's orbit, making content that often features Bobby but maintains its own lower-key energy. Steve is younger, less famous, less pathological. He functions in these videos as a witness, someone who knows Bobby well enough to see through the performance but loves him enough to stay in the room. When Steve films Bobby playing Stardew Valley, he's not just making content. He's documenting something he finds genuinely alarming in his brother, and the videos capture his alarm in real time.

Stardew Valley is a farming simulation game created by one person, Eric Barone, who released it in 2016. The

premise is pastoral and gentle: you inherit a small plot of land, you grow crops, you raise animals, you befriend the townspeople, you fish, you mine, you eventually maybe get married and have children. The graphics are deliberately retro, pixelated in the style of Super Nintendo games from the early 1990s. The pace is slow. There is no fail state. You cannot die permanently. The seasons cycle, the years pass, and the game continues as long as you want it to. It was designed as an antidote to stress, a place to retreat from the demands of real life into a world where progress is guaranteed and conflict is minimal.

Bobby Lee has played Stardew Valley for twelve hours a day, every day, for extended periods. He has started twelve separate farms. He has accumulated hundreds of millions of gold pieces through systematized wine production, industrial truffle harvesting, and optimized ancient fruit cultivation. He has memorized the gift preferences of every villager, the schedule of every merchant, the drop rates of every mine level. He has taken a game designed for relaxation and made it into a relentless engine of accumulation. When he finally met Eric Barone in an interview and showed him his save file—$181 million in earnings, rows of statues worth $50 million—the creator of the game was visibly baffled.

Bobby had taken the cozy farming simulator and turned it into a second job, except the job never ends and the paycheck is imaginary.

※

The two videos Steve filmed with Bobby are titled simply: "Bobby Lee on Stardew Valley (gameplay)" and "Do's and Don'ts of Stardew Valley with Bobby Lee." The framing is instructional, as if Bobby is going to teach his brother how to play. But what actually happens is something closer to an intervention conducted in reverse, where the addict forces the concerned family member to sit through a demonstration of exactly how deep the addiction goes, mistaking horror for admiration, interpreting every expression of concern as a failure to appreciate the craft.

The first video opens with Steve's question: "What's so good about this game, why do you like it so much? You've been playing this for years now."

The phrasing matters. Steve doesn't say "a long time" or "a lot." He says years. This isn't new. Steve has been watching Bobby play Stardew Valley for years and has finally decided to document it, to get the explanation on

camera, to make Bobby articulate what he's doing and why.

Bobby's response is immediate and stuttering: "Because years they give you okay so they give you yeah they give no—" "explain yourself—" "they give you nothing okay they just give you a plot of land and 500—"

He's trying to translate the obsession into language, trying to find the pedagogical entry point for a non-player. But before he can finish, Steve interrupts by pointing at the screen: "Well you don't have nothing there, what's all this stuff?"

Because the screen is full. Crops, buildings, barrels, machinery, pathways, ponds, animals. Bobby has just said the game gives you nothing, but Steve is looking at a developed empire. The contradiction is immediate and Bobby has to resolve it: "That's nothing, I built all this."

To Bobby, the starting state is the true state. The game gives you nothing. Everything on screen is his labor made visible. When he says "that's nothing," he means it isn't relevant to his point about the game's premise—but the word choice reveals something else. To someone this deep inside a system, the accumulated wealth doesn't register as wealth. It's just what happens

when you play correctly. The abundance is invisible to him because it's expected.

Steve tries to process: "So you planted all this, all this, designed it— every single plant?"

Bobby confirms: "Yeah I had to plant every single one."

Steve, in disbelief: "No."

Bobby, insistent: "Every single one, yeah yeah yeah yeah, every single one."

The repetition functions as emphasis but also as something stranger—Bobby is trying to convey the labor theory of value operating here. This isn't luck. This isn't a cheat code. He planted each one individually. The pride is in the granularity. When Steve asks how long it takes, Bobby deflects to showing more features, because the time question is dangerous. The time question leads to answers he doesn't want to give.

Steve keeps pointing at things on screen, trying to get his bearings: "What's that, the snowman? What is that?" Bobby explains it's a scarecrow. "What are these, barrels?" Bobby corrects him: tappers. Steve is lost in the visual density of what Bobby has created. Every object on screen has a function, a purpose, a place in Bobby's system, but to Steve it's just clutter. He doesn't have the mental map.

When Bobby says he needs to drop items off because his inventory is full, Steve observes: "So there's a lot of items in this game."

Bobby's response is evangelical: "Millions, dude. What are you talking about? This is the greatest game ever."

And then Steve, mocking slightly: "There's like lollipops and eggs there."

This is the aesthetic objection in miniature. Steve looks at the inventory and sees cartoon lollipops and eggs. Bobby looks at the same inventory and sees millions of items, systems interlocking, possibilities branching. They are looking at the same screen and seeing different things. Bobby's defensive response—"That's why it's great"—doesn't address the mockery because Bobby doesn't fully hear it as mockery. He's too deep inside to see the game from outside.

※

The first major confrontation comes when Bobby tells Steve: "You don't have the mental ability to do it."

Steve is offended: "Oh my God, you are being so offensive."

Bobby doesn't back down: "I'm not being offensive, you don't have the— this game takes mental ability, it takes precision, dude."

Steve protests: "You don't think I could learn this game?"

Bobby repeats: "You don't have the mental ability to do it."

This is fascinating because Bobby genuinely believes it. He's not just insulting his brother for comedic effect. He's made a cognitive assessment and delivered it as fact. Stardew Valley, in Bobby's framing, is not a casual game for casual people. It's a test of intelligence and discipline. The twelve hours a day aren't a symptom of addiction—they're evidence of capability. Only someone with the mental ability to handle the game's complexity could put in that kind of time productively. Bobby has constructed a hierarchy where his obsessive engagement is actually proof of superior capacity, and Steve is simply ranked below him.

Steve eventually concedes, sort of: "I know, you don't— how long did it take you to get that?" He's looking at Bobby's farm and admitting it's impressive even as he's troubled by it. Bobby answers: "Like probably three weeks."

Three weeks to build this. At twelve hours a day, that's 252 hours of play. More than ten full days of continuous consciousness poured into a pixel farm. Bobby delivers this number without embarrassment, as a point of pride.

Later, Bobby shows Steve his house in the game. "This is my girlfriend," he says, pointing to a blonde pixel character named Haley.

"Who the fuck— that's your girlfriend?"

Steve's confusion is genuine. Bobby is in a committed relationship with a video game character. He hasn't married her yet because he needs one more heart, which he'll get by giving her gifts she likes—coconuts, specifically. He knows her preferences. He's working the system.

"How do you even achieve the hearts?" Steve asks.

"You got to give them gifts every week, every single person in the game."

"So it's like real life?"

"Yeah, all the time."

Steve's response: "Jesus."

Bobby has just described a social obligation more demanding than most real-world relationships. Every week, he gives gifts to every person in Pelican Town, tracking their individual preferences, building relation-

ship meters one increment at a time. When Steve says "Jesus," he's recognizing the scale of it. This is not a game Bobby plays. This is a world Bobby maintains.

※

The time question finally lands directly when Steve asks: "What's the longest you've played this game?"

Bobby: "Twelve hours a day."

Steve: "Every day?"

Bobby: "Twelve hours a day, every day."

Steve: "Every day?"

Bobby: "Twelve— twelve hours a day, every day."

Steve: "Every day?"

Bobby: "Every day."

The repetition here isn't Bobby emphasizing his point. It's Steve asking the same question multiple times because he can't process the answer. Every day? Yes. But every day? Yes. The back-and-forth has the rhythm of someone trying to wake from a dream. Steve keeps asking as if a different answer might eventually come, but Bobby just keeps confirming. Twelve hours. Every day.

Bobby immediately deflects by showing his sword: "But you, if you like, if you see, if you look at my—

like right here, I have the Galaxy sword, but I have the Crusader thing on it, and I built it up to 104, dude, this is like grinding, I've been grinding."

He doesn't want to sit with "twelve hours every day." He wants to show the results that justify it. The sword is the evidence. The grinding is the process. The time disappears into the product.

Steve tries to make the aesthetic objection again: "You look at the graphic, it's not good."

Bobby counters: "But it's really complicated, it's so intricate and complicated."

They're having two different conversations. Steve sees a game that looks like it was made in 1992. Bobby sees a system of infinite depth that happens to be rendered in pixels. The gap between them is the gap between someone outside an obsession and someone inside it.

Then Bobby needs Steve's help. There's a Simon Says puzzle in a cave that he can't beat. "I can do the first three or four but the last one is hard," he admits. He asks Steve to help him remember the color sequences.

This is the man who just said Steve doesn't have the mental ability to play the game, now recruiting Steve to help him with a memory minigame. The irony is completely lost on Bobby. He's struggled with this puzzle

for days—"I've been working on this," he'll say later—but his confidence in his own superiority remains unshaken. The puzzle is hard. Steve's inability to play the game at Bobby's level is a separate fact. These two things coexist in Bobby's mind without contradiction.

They try the puzzle together and fail. Steve observes: "That wasn't even the last one, man, oh my God." They didn't even get to the hard part. Steve's "oh my God" is exasperation at being recruited into this, but something else is happening too: he's experiencing the game's difficulty firsthand. He's being pulled in.

After another attempt fails, Steve says something surprising: "It is, it is advanced."

He's conceding. The game is harder than it looks. Bobby's evangelism is working. The Simon Says puzzle has demonstrated something that Bobby's descriptions couldn't. Steve is starting to see from inside.

※

Later, Steve makes the most penetrating observation of the entire video: "You know what's crazy is, when we were in your closet you were complaining about the time, but when you talk about this, you're not even concerned. Time just— is not a concern for you."

Bobby has different relationships to time depending on context. When Steve was filming Bobby in his closet, talking about real-life logistics, Bobby was anxious about time, impatient, complaining. But here, with Stardew Valley, time has no weight. They've been filming for an hour and Bobby hasn't noticed. He could go for twelve hours without noticing.

Steve points this out explicitly: "Check this out, right, cuz we're going on an hour just watching you do this."

Bobby's response: "No, check this out, now check this out, check this out, check this out, okay now look at this."

He doesn't register the observation. He just continues the tour. Steve's time-awareness bounces off Bobby's time-blindness in real time. The conversation about time is interrupted by more demonstration, because the demonstration cannot be interrupted.

The first video builds toward a confrontation that never quite erupts. Steve tells Bobby he needs help. He threatens to tell their mother. Bobby briefly flares—"Get out of my house"—but immediately pivots back to showing the aquarium. Then Bobby says something that changes the register: "You're hurting my feelings right now, dude."

This is vulnerability. Bobby is showing Steve something precious, something he's proud of, something he's poured thousands of hours into, and Steve is calling it pathology. Bobby can hear the concern but he experiences it as rejection. The hurt is real. He's not just performing defensiveness. He genuinely doesn't understand why Steve can't see what he sees.

※

The second video, "Do's and Don'ts of Stardew Valley," frames itself as instructional, but the teaching keeps collapsing into exhibition. Bobby tries to explain the game to Steve—watch the cooking show on Sundays, give gifts on birthdays, don't sell fiber—but every explanation leads to another demonstration of his own achievements, and every demonstration deepens Steve's alarm.

Bobby explains his wine operation. He has rooms full of kegs. He grows ancient fruit, ferments it into wine, ages the wine, sells it for massive profit. "This is how you make money," he says, showing Steve the industrial scale of it. When Steve laughs, Bobby is defensive: "Shut up, what are you laughing at?"

He's not joking. The wine operation is serious. This is his system, refined over multiple farms, optimized for

maximum gold per day. Steve's laughter registers as disrespect.

Then comes the OCD moment. Bobby needs to reload all his kegs with new fruit so they'll finish brewing at the same time. Steve asks if he can do it later. Bobby can't articulate why he can't: "I have to do it all at one time so they— they— you know what I mean?"

Steve names it: "It's your OCD."

Bobby starts to push back—"It's— OCD— I—"—but he can't actually defend against the label, so he pivots to justification. This is what you need to do. The kegs have to be synchronized. He can't explain why beyond "you know what I mean," and remarkably, Steve does eventually get it: "Oh, cuz they brew at the same time."

Steve has entered the logic. He understands why Bobby needs the kegs synchronized even if he also understands that the need itself is symptomatic. These two understandings coexist in him now.

Bobby mentions, almost in passing, that he has a single keg outside the main production facility. "I have one out here to let me know when they're ready." A sentinel barrel. An indicator for the whole batch. This is genuine systems thinking applied to a farming game. Bobby has invented a monitoring solution so he doesn't have to check all the kegs individually. He's proud of

this. It's clever. It's also the kind of optimization that only matters if you're treating a cozy farming simulator like a logistics operation.

Steve makes the observation explicit: "A woman would not tolerate this behavior."

Bobby doesn't respond. He just continues loading kegs. The non-response is total. Steve has drawn a direct line between Bobby's gaming and his relationship status, and Bobby doesn't engage with it at all. The game continues.

The second video escalates in a way the first one didn't. Steve's comments get sharper. He tells Bobby he needs help, that what he needs is not normal, that he's going way too far, that he's making Steve real mad right now. And Bobby's responses remain fixed: "Check this out though, watch." "I swear to God, no I'm— no no, check this out." The compulsion to demonstrate overrides every social signal. Steve is visibly upset and Bobby cannot stop showing him things. The tour is compulsory. Bobby literally cannot stop demonstrating the game even when it's damaging the interaction.

※

The videos end with Bobby challenging Steve to play: "You're not going to play the game."

Steve insists: "I am going to play."

Bobby is skeptical: "You don't have the discipline."

Steve: "I do have the discipline. I'll show you, I'll show you how it's done."

Bobby: "I want to see your form, Stevie."

After two videos of being told he's insane, that he needs help, that their mother needs to know, that no woman would tolerate this—Bobby's final move is to issue a challenge. Bring your form. Let's see if you can do what I do. Show me your farm in three weeks and we'll compare.

The confidence is unshaken. Bobby has heard every criticism and none of it has landed. He remains convinced that what he's doing is not addiction but mastery, not pathology but discipline, not a waste of time but an achievement that Steve lacks the mental ability to replicate. The intervention has failed because Bobby doesn't experience it as an intervention. He experiences it as a tour that his brother didn't appreciate, conducted for an audience that didn't understand.

And yet something else is present in these videos, something that complicates the reading. Bobby says, near the end of the first video: "You're hurting my feel-

ings right now, dude." He's genuinely wounded. When he shows Steve his aquarium, his fish, his carefully designed rooms, he's sharing something that brings him joy. The joy is real even if the scale is concerning. When he says "this is the stuff that brings you joy, this brings your joy in life," he means it literally. Stardew Valley brings him joy in a life that has contained a great deal of suffering.

Bobby Lee has talked publicly about childhood abuse, addiction, depression, failed relationships, the grinding difficulty of staying sober, the loneliness that drives him toward compulsion. The podcasts where he confesses these things are the same podcasts where he demonstrates his inability to stop confessing, his need to turn every wound into content, his compulsion to archive his own degeneracy. Stardew Valley fits this pattern perfectly. It's a game about building something peaceful, tending to it daily, watching it grow. It's a simulation of stability for someone whose actual life has been chaotically unstable. Bobby can't control his addictions, but he can control his farm. He can't maintain real relationships without eventually destroying them, but he can get Haley to ten hearts if he just keeps bringing her coconuts.

※

The twelve hours a day aren't only pathological. They're also a refuge. The game gives him something that reality often doesn't: a system that rewards effort reliably, a world that responds to his inputs predictably, a space where grinding produces results and nothing is permanently broken. When Steve threatens to tell their mother, Bobby's response—"What is she got to do with this?"—might be defensive avoidance, but it might also be genuine confusion. What does his mother have to do with the one place where Bobby feels competent and in control?

Steve sees his brother playing a video game twelve hours a day and correctly identifies this as concerning. Bobby sees himself maintaining a complex system that brings him peace and can't understand why anyone would object. They're both right. The tragedy is that being right doesn't resolve anything. Steve can't force Bobby to stop, and Bobby can't make Steve understand why stopping isn't simple.

There's a moment in the first video where Bobby is trying to help Steve understand the gift-giving system. He explains that everyone in Pelican Town has specific preferences—Gus likes oranges, Emily likes cotton—

but there's an exception: "Everyone loves the rabbit foot."

Steve asks why.

"Cuz it's good luck. Yeah, they just have it in the game where everyone loves rabbit foot."

Bobby has found the universal solvent. Instead of memorizing thirty different gift preferences, he can farm rabbits, harvest their feet, and satisfy almost everyone with a single commodity. This is pure optimization thinking. Why engage with the complexity of individual preferences when you can engineer around it?

But then Bobby adds a detail: "If I have rabbits, and I love them, and they give me iridium rabbit foot— everyone except one girl, Penny."

Penny doesn't like the rabbit foot. There's one exception to the universal solution. And Bobby knows this. He's mapped the entire system closely enough to know where the optimization fails.

This is what Steve is seeing when he says Bobby needs help. It's not only the twelve hours that alarms him. It's the depth of the mapping. Bobby hasn't just played a lot. He's internalized a model of Pelican Town that includes every villager's preferences, every exception to the patterns, every edge case in the systems. The game has been installed in him as completely as his

knowledge of comedy or his memories of childhood. It's become part of how he thinks.

※

Later, when Bobby shows Steve the kitchen where he cooks in the game, he rattles off recipes with their ingredients, special perks, the optimal foods for different situations. Crab cakes make you go fast and restore energy. You learn the recipe from the cooking show in fall of your second year. He knows the scheduling of a TV show in a video game. When he shows the mines, he explains the level tiers: zero through forty is copper, forty through eighty is silver, eighty and above is gold. He describes enemy behavior: mummies can't be killed with swords, you have to bomb them, unless your sword has the Crusader perk, which kills them automatically. He's playing an action game inside the farming game, and he's optimized that too.

"This game takes mental ability," Bobby said earlier, and in a certain sense he's not wrong. The game doesn't require this level of engagement, but it permits it. The systems are deep enough that someone with Bobby's disposition can sink into them indefinitely, finding new optimizations, new efficiencies, new things to master.

The game was designed as a place to relax, but it contains enough complexity to become a place of obsessive focus. Bobby found the obsessive focus and made it his home.

The clip where Bobby shows his farm to Eric Barone, the creator of Stardew Valley, is only a minute long, but it distills everything the longer videos elaborate. Bobby is mid-demonstration when he asks Barone: "Am I boring you?"

Barone says no.

Bobby continues, showing his rows of Statues of Endless Fortune. Barone does the math out loud: "That's like fifty million gold worth of stuff right there."

Bobby, casual: "Yeah."

Barone, genuinely confused: "How many hours have you put into this?"

Bobby: "I don't know. Not much."

This is the lie. Bobby knows exactly how much time he's invested. He's told Steve it's twelve hours a day, every day. But standing in front of the man who made the game, he can't say that. "Not much" is the defense, delivered quickly, brushed past. And then he shows Barone his total earnings: $181 million.

Barone designed Stardew Valley as a pastoral escape, a gentle alternative to the stressful grind of modern life.

Bobby used it to grind harder than he's ever ground at anything. The creator looking at the save file is looking at a use case he never intended and probably never imagined. The game was supposed to be about slowing down. Bobby made it about speeding up.

The meeting is recursive in a way that feels significant. Bobby, who has built his career on confession, showing his compulsion to the one person who made the compulsion possible. Barone, who made a game about peaceful farming, confronted with evidence of what his systems can become in certain hands. Neither of them can quite process the encounter. Bobby deflects with "not much." Barone marvels at the numbers. They're both inside something they don't fully understand.

※

Steve's final line in the second video, after all the challenges and counter-challenges about discipline and form, is: "I'll show you how it's done."

But of course he won't. Steve isn't going to play Stardew Valley twelve hours a day for three weeks. He isn't going to build an ancient fruit wine operation or synchronize his kegs or learn that Penny is the one vil-

lager who doesn't like rabbit feet. He's going to play casually, if he plays at all, and Bobby will look at his farm and shake his head. You don't have the mental ability. You don't have the discipline.

Bobby will keep playing. The game will continue receiving updates—Barone is famously dedicated to expanding it—and Bobby will learn the new systems, optimize the new features, start new farms to test new strategies. The hours will accumulate. The gold will accumulate. The skills will accumulate. And none of it will be transferable to anything outside the game. The mastery is real but the mastery is contained, sealed inside a world of pixels, redeemable only there.

Maybe that's the final thing the videos reveal: Bobby Lee knows what he's doing. He's not in denial about the addiction, just in disagreement about whether it matters. When Steve says "a woman would not tolerate this behavior," Bobby doesn't argue because there's nothing to argue. Steve is right. Bobby knows he's right. But Bobby also knows that he's been trying to tolerate his own behavior for fifty years and this is one of the few things that works. The game gives him something. It doesn't fix him—nothing fixes him—but it gives him something, and that's more than a lot of things can say.

"This is the stuff that brings you joy," he tells Steve. "This brings your joy in life."

Steve doesn't respond to that. There's nothing to say. Bobby has found his joy in a pixelated farming simulator, and his brother has found his brother, and they're both standing there looking at an aquarium full of virtual fish, and the video ends, and the game continues, and the gold keeps accumulating, and the hours keep passing, and Bobby Lee keeps planting every single seed himself, one at a time, waiting for something to grow.