

The Second Time I Woke Up That Day...

The first time I woke up that day, my eyes were treated to a soft blue glow.

The air was crisp but not cold.

Everything was soft and warm.

Clean.

I could faintly hear leaves lightly rustling in the breeze, but not much else. It was quiet. It was peaceful.

With a little shuffling, a little tugging, and a tad bit of wiggling, I was able to push my head from the cotton comforter in which I was otherwise completely enclosed. My first exhaled breath exploded into a misty cloud. The outside air had a chill to it.

"Good morning." I was greeted from my left. I turned my head, glancing past the railing of the front porch I awoke upon and over to the porch of the house next door.

There I saw an attractive college aged young woman drinking her morning coffee. Loyal dog attentively sitting at her side. She smiled warmly, possibly amused by my non-traditional sleeping location.

"Morning," came my reply.

The gesture of well wishing acknowledged, her focus returned forward into the rising sun. Both of her hands cradled the steaming mug, while she brought her knees to her chest to retain more warmth. I partially followed suit and also turned to catch the rays of the new morning's sun full on my face.

I smiled. I realized was still a bit drunk, and perfectly happy.

Why I awoke on that porch, I couldn't tell you. The logic from the night before had long since departed, but it was there once. That was all that mattered.

In that brisk air and on that creaky porch I had seldom been more content just being who and where I was.

I watched the sun finally escape the mountains that enclosed the old mining town in front of me. Frost that aptly fit the town's name quickly lost hold and changed to dew.

Dewburg? No, it would never have worked.

Eventually, I knew I would have to get up. Water was quickly becoming a must, but everything seemed so right at that point. So perfect. I reasoned it would be a real waste

to pass by what was sure to be one of the last warm autumn mornings of the season. So I stayed in my chair.

I was in the mountains for a twice-a-year excuse to camp and build really large fires.

A lost holiday from pre-history being upheld?

No.

Bourbon and Burn is only coincidentally held at the end of winter and for the fall harvest. No pagan rite here, though from a distance I'm sure we are indistinguishable from the men who once wore bear suits and circled towering flames of their own in celebration and awe. Drinking and fire, historically they just go together.

Piss poor planning will screw you every time. We left late that year. Too late to set up camp and still have a good time Friday night, so it was decided to stop at Matt's. He would have a party. The fire, as always, would be constructed Saturday and then it would burn on Saturday night.

We arrived a little past 11:30. I shed six years in a heartbeat as I stood outside the house and gazed in through the doorway. College life, why did I ever graduate?

Matt's hastily put together function was performing well as it gathered people and speed. Participants were drunk but still active. Merriment abounded. Behold the power of booze!

10 paces through the door and there was a blue Solo cup in my hand and a more stiff drink on the way. Like riding a bike, I knew how to embrace the mood and the scene. No hesitation, these kids could smell an old man a mile away. I needed to blend in, and not just to blend in. Soon, I was at the kitchen table playing drinking games, later wrestling with people larger than I am, and eventually developing the rational and grand theories needed for sleeping on the front porch.

It was a good night.

As the sun rose higher, people eventually woke and began to stir and move about. Stories were recounted from the night before (that's why my leg hurts!).

Food was the first real course of action suggested, and it received my complete approval. I'm not sure what others ate; our ensemble splintered into factions, each went their own separate way.

McDonalds. McDonalds would kill the color of the trip, it wasn't for me.

My breakfast consisted of Lion's chicken (which I wouldn't exactly understand where it came from until a full year later) and a glass of Bourbon.

The roasted and herbed chicken, unbeknownst to me was prepared by a wizened society of men, and sold for charity. It was fantastic and very cheap. 1/2 a bird for \$3.50, what a deal!

The Maker's Mark before 9:00 ante meridian was to maintain the morning buzz, a carryover from the night before.

"No sense getting rid of something good." I always believed.

My brother delivered the drink as I sat in his front yard, enjoying the sun. Smirk on his face showing the subtle pride he had knowing I approved of "the good stuff" which he seldom bought for his own consumption. College rotgut was the norm for booze in his house. The gesture wasn't lost on me.

"Jesus Matt, I said float two cubes." I exclaimed as I received a drink that was not in the expected low-ball glass and not with the expected amount of American Whiskey.

"I did," he replied. "They ARE floating."

"Yeah, about two and a half inches from the bottom of the pint glass."

Though the spirit of the request was lost, he WAS technically correct. It was more whiskey than I wanted, but I drank it. After all it WAS Bourbon and Burn, and it WAS the weekend. Funny how things work out like that.

The morning progressed and became afternoon. Time flowed and I followed in a warm state of bliss. No sane man could ask for better weather on an autumn day. We shopped for dead cow, guitar strings and a single can of mixed vegetables. We packed the cars with chainsaws, gas and beer. We headed down the road and jammed to Led Zeppelin.

"Chunk, chadda chunk, chadda chunk!"

Our destination was a sizable plot of land on the side of a Mountain. The state "road" that provides access to the property is about a mile long. Once you make your way over the rocks, and crevices and bumps to arrive at the end, the only civilization detectable is the train you can hear twice a day rumbling from the bottom of the mountain. Nature reigns there.

The second time I woke up that day was a lot like the first. I was at peace, warm, and everything was perfect. My eyes opened to a sky that ranged in color from creamsicle

orange to a deep indigo. Nothing to break up the gradient, no clouds or trees in my view. Only a few stars were visible. The sky was framed by the sharp swaying walls of three-foot tall field grass exactly in the shape of a horizontal man. There was the distant scent of wood smoke and the far off sound of laughter.

The grass was soft and provided just enough cover from the breeze.

I smiled. I realized I was still a bit drunk, and I was perfectly happy.

Eventually, I knew I would have to get up. Water was quickly becoming a must, but everything seemed so right at that point. So perfect. I reasoned it would be a real waste to pass by what was sure to be one of the last warm autumn evenings of the season. So I stayed in the grass.

The sky deepened, the orange became blue, the blue purple, the purple black. Stars filled the sky. I wished I had taken the time to learn more names of constellations. The Milky Way was visible even before the last light from the setting sun vanished.

With the heavens above, and nature all around me, for the second time that day I was truly content, just being who and where I was.

A drunk in a field.

As sad as it is, all things end and time again moved on. Everyman has responsibilities. There were jokes to tell, beer and bourbon to drink, beef to roast, and the big ass fire to burn. By standing up I left my own world and returned to one we share with others.

I wandered my way back to camp.

"Where the fuck did you go?"

"Over there."

Why I woke in the grass? That I can tell you, not all rational is lost to the alcohol haze.

Once past the property markers and the ancient family plots, the trucks were unloaded. Tents were erected. Mixed vegetables were stolen. Camp fires made. Beers drank.

Things were put into order.

A good start was made collecting wood for the big fire.

The early wake up, physical labor and the firewater all took its toll on me.

Searching for the perfect log for the pyre, I waded 50 feet or so through the chest high grass into the field. Then I had a seat. It seemed like a logical thing to do, and so it was.

I took a swig from my flask, then leaned back and watched a lone white cloud morph before me. Eventually I closed my eyes and dreamed of cabbages and kings.