

All Drunks Go To Heaven

From where I sit now I must have looked pretty ridiculous when the EMT's showed up. Curled around that toilet, puke in my hair, on my shirt. Blood pooled around my mouth. I must have smelled awful. Of course I don't know how I smelled. I can make guesses. The last thing I remembered was the bottom of another forty ounce bottle, that last faint touch on my tongue as it rolled down my throat. Sweet like candy. Better than candy. That is to say, candy doesn't fuck you up. No matter how many snickers bars or gummy worms or pixy stix you eat I can assure you it will never be as fulfilling as a raging pull from a plastic bottle of whiskey. Never. They tried to change my mind about that when I got here. They're still trying I guess but it's really neither here nor there. I'll never take it back. I'll never pretend to admit anything. I am what I am, and that's what got me landed here I suppose.

So I've been told at least.

So the paramedics show up and check my breathing and clearly I'm not, because I've been there almost forty-five minutes. Bastards didn't even try chest compressions. I must have been cold. Don't ask me why but I do remember one other thing, just before everything went watery as I was lying there. It was this empty shampoo bottle I had knocked on the ground when I stumbled or crawled in. It was just lying there, just like me, on that filthy linoleum. I remember laughing inside when I saw it. Which makes me wonder if I was smiling when the paramedics walked in. I like to think I was. I like to imagine myself really creeping those paramedics out. Haunting their nightmares, you know, keeping them up at night, the whole shebang. So there you have it. That's a short history of me and how I ended up here.

Here?

I'm not really sure where that is either to be totally frank. I guess if I hadn't been an atheist I would have called it heaven. If I'd have been a quivering pussy I'd have called it nirvana. But I don't. So I'm not sure what to call it. The other side, I guess. That which hath always been and which is, and shall always be, o ye adulterous swine! Some garbage like that. Everybody's always talking like that here. Like all biblical and whatnot. At least biblical would probably be the right word, if I believed in the bible.

But I don't. And don't you fucking forget it.

I am who I am and who I am is an atheist. And a drunk. And no matter what they show me I refuse to pretend that isn't true.

The first thing they show you, when you show up, that is, after having died a pitiful filthy death as a sinner and an addict and all that garbage, that is, is all the booze of which thou hath partaken. I guess it's supposed to make you feel gluttonous or some stupid bullshit like that. It just made me feel thirsty. And believe me, I was a heavyweight. When they showed me my "net abuse" as they call it, which consists of every drop of alcohol ever to pass the threshold of your throat and into your body, I wasn't disgusted. I was proud. This was no mere bathtub's worth of light beer, you see. What sat before me was a goddamn pond. It had WAVES in it, that's how big it was. And in that pond was every single alcoholic beverage I'd ever had the privilege to french kiss. Whiskey, vodka, rum, malt liquor, wine, cider, beer of all colors, and of course every shitty mixed drink I ever had at a high school party, all mixing together into one gigantic homogenous bowl of jungle juice. If I still had lips, you'd better bet I would have licked them.

So if you're wondering, yes, drunks go to "heaven," if that's what you want to call it. And so does booze. Every last drop that isn't spilled goes to heaven with you.

The next thing they show you, after the big punch bowl of your iniquities, is god. At least they call him god. I'd probably call him god too, if I believed in god. But I don't. He's big, sure. With immaculate white robes all flowy in the wind and a big white beard and a booming voice and all that. Yeah, that's right. Every renaissance painter was spot on. And he greets you with his big booming voice and says your name even though you haven't told it to him and he says some stuff about your life like it proves he's god or something. I for one wasn't impressed. This one time I was in Vegas and I saw Chris Angel pull a tarantula out of his rectum. Way I see it, that qualifies him to be god just about as much as it does the guy with the robes. That or it qualifies them both to be jackoff magicians. That is, I'd call them magicians if I believed in magic. But I don't.

And don't you fucking forget it.

After you meet god or whoever, they take you to your cell. I mean, they don't call it a cell or anything but it's definitely a cell. Which isn't to say that I've ever been in a prison cell, I'm not saying that, but you sure as hell can't get out any time you want to. From the second you die you're put on a very strict schedule. It's funny, how all those people who have killed themselves were seeking freedom from their earthly prisons got nothing but more people telling them what to do, where to be, what to be. Of course, I've never been to where the suicides go. I'm in the "heaven" for drunks. But I imagine it must not be a whole lot better than this. So you're sitting in your cell, after having seen the pond of your iniquities and met your maker and all that, and they lock the door and tell you you'll be back for you later.

They?

Yeah, I figured you might ask. But again, I don't really know who "they" is. Some people would probably call them "angels," but you can probably guess why I don't. They don't have

wings or nothing, that's for sure. More like button up shirts and sweatervests. Like your high school english teacher, only it's all white. Every stitch of every piece of clothing up here is all white. That is, every stitch of clothing on everybody who has clothes. My body was confiscated because I 'misused' it or whatever, so I can't wear any clothes. Big whoop, so what. One less thing to worry about, right?

Anyway, they lock the door and leave you in this little cell and once the door's shut you realize this is what most people think of when they talk about death. First off, there's nothing in them. No furniture, no windows, no toilet, no mirror. It's just a... void, I guess. Kind of just a space. And once the door closes you can't even see that. So everywhere you look is just white. Like a white infinity. It's kind of freaky for the first couple of minutes, but then you realize that you've got nothing better to do so you just decide to wait for them. And you wait and wait and wait and finally you realize they're going to take their damn sweet time to make you think about your sins or whatever. Everything in heaven's a setup, I swear. Every single thing they do from the moment you get here is all about teaching you a lesson or something. It's so obnoxious. So like an eternity goes by and finally these sweatervests show back up and open the door and say "come with us o thou iniquitous swine lest we should forsake thee here another eternity!". What a joke. Honestly, if they just addressed us like real people up here we probably wouldn't have such a hard time doing what they ask. So they take you out of your cell to this other room and this is when it gets good. One of the sweatervests gets up in front of this whole group of people, all of whom I would assume are here for the same reason, and says "it is time to begin the twelve steps to banish thine iniquities, o thou swine!"

So there you have it. I'm in another twelve step program in the afterlife. What, these idiots think I haven't been to AA before? Not to brag or anything, but I was on *Intervention*

once. I even completed the twelve steps. But I started to hate myself so bad I just decided sobriety wasn't worth it.

And believe me, it's not.

So I'm in this other room with all these other lost souls listening to this sweatervest chide on about how we have spit on god's creation, which is us, of course, by vandalizing it with drugs and alcohol and how we must repent to be welcomed back into the herd. And no, I do not have any idea what he could have meant by "the herd". So he sets us up in groups and we sit in a circle and start to talk about why we do what we do and I of course am sitting there pretending to listen to what any of these schmucks has to say about how they got abused as kids or whatever. If you ask me, it's none of my business. I mean it's a bummer if you've got to deal with that but what has that got to do with me? Nothing, that's what. So eventually they get around the circle and I say something about my sister committing suicide, which is probably a lie, I don't really remember a whole lot about when I had a body any more, and they just continue right along. Prime example of why I'm an atheist, right here, if god really were watching, wouldn't he have stopped me from telling such an outright lie to his sweatervested orderlies? But he doesn't and he isn't.

Anyway we keep going around and we're working through the steps and time's passing like drops of bourbon from a spilt bottle and soon enough we get to step twelve and the sweatervest says "thou hast performed thine redemption with great initiative thus far. But now it is time we must advance to the final step and graduate ye iniquitors from thine sins." and he goes on to tell us about how the last step is we have to watch each of our iniquities in front of all the people we just spent about half an eternity getting to know and trust or whatever. If I had a body I would have started sweating. It's none of their business what my iniquities were, you know? I

don't even want to watch my life over by myself, let alone with all these other jackoffs watching too.

To be totally frank with you, I'm glad to be dead. My life wasn't that great and I spent a large chunk of my time trying to end it with alcohol and cigarettes. When I finally did, I definitely didn't panic. I was glad to be done. Life's a joke, you know? That is, life was a joke. You're probably still dealing with some stupid shit like your relationship or your job or like money or whatever. Well I can promise you that after you're dead you don't have to worry about it any more. That's the whole point, you know? It's over now. Anything you did or said, yeah, maybe it's still down there but what do you care? Nobody that can see the products of your life can say shit to you about it. You're safe from yourself. That is, you are, until these jackass sweatervests tell you you've got to relive it to teach you a lesson or something. Again, there's that agenda of theirs. They're always trying to teach you something about how you're wrong or bad and how you should feel guilty or something. It's garbage. I mean the only person I should have to answer to is myself, right? And if I'm happy with how I am then why should I need to get better or apologize to anybody?

Like I said, it's garbage.

So the sweatervest orderly angel guy picks somebody from our group to start us off and we watch his thirty-three years for thirty-three years and we see everything he ever did on earth, from his first drink to the first time he ever pressured somebody into sex with alcohol until he got behind the wheel and killed a whole family with his truck. Needless to say, he had been drunk, that is, he had been about a whole point over the limit. And get this, the guy was going to get more booze at the liquor store. Did I mention it was Christmas Eve, too? This scumbag killed a whole family on Christmas Eve because he couldn't handle being alone that night. See what I'm

saying? I didn't think anything of this guy beforehand, but now that I've seen his whole life all I can do is judge him. What could that possibly help? Nothing, that's what it could help. Not a thing.

But then something really weird started to happen. As the credits start to roll (ha-ha) and this guy's life is done flashing before our eyes, I start to hear something. Like crying, you know? And I look over and I can *see* this guy. Like he's got his body back and big old tears are running down his big dumb fuckugly mug. What a sap. And the orderly sweatervest angel guy says something about how he has seen the full gravity of his sins, and now he is free. So this guy like gets up and walks off, you know? Like on *his own fucking legs*. And suddenly I get real excited, that is, because if I were to get a body again I could get back to what I really want to do, which is drink. So I form this plan in my head where I grit my not-teeth and bear down and watch my whole life and then all I'll have to do is conjure up some tears and then I can get my body back and go find that lake of booze that followed me up here. If I had had a mouth, it would have been grinning the most devilish grin you've ever seen.

So we go around the circle for what adds up to like a hundred and fifteen years and one after another, these saps all do the exact same thing. They bawl their newly-gotten eyes out and the sweatervest tells them they can go and then they do. And our little cadre is dwindling, one at a time, until we get to me. And the sweatervest says "the turn is now thine, young man." What a jackoff. And I would have said something to warn the other people still in here about not to judge me or I'll fucking kill them or something but I don't have a mouth or vocal chords or lungs or a tongue so it doesn't work. Also they're already dead so that threat would be pointless. And then the sweatervest raises his arms and lowers his head.

At first, all I can see is black. Right off the bat, I can tell that it's different watching your own life than watching somebody else's. First of all, it's warm, which is something I haven't felt in about three eternities by now. And then there's this red light that slowly gets more and more yellow and suddenly it's overwhelmingly white and I can feel my body but it feels weak and I can hear somebody screaming, like a baby, you know? And then I feel myself get picked up and washed off and put in a blanket and I realize that I just watched my own birth. More than that, though, it's like I just reenacted my own birth. And I see my mom lying there all exhausted and half her hair's sticking to her face and my dad's holding me and I look up at him and everybody's smiling all like twinkly, you know? And I look over and there's my sister, probably like six years old or something and she's jumping up and down up and down up and down up and down cheering about how I'm here and she's so excited and I hear the crying stop. My crying. And then I just sit there and listen to her for a while. I've got to tell you, it feels pretty good being just born again.

And then I'm eight and I'm behind my house in that grove of aspen trees with my sister and she must be fourteen or fifteen by now and we're looking at something curled up in the dead leaves on the ground and it's a little frog it's this dead little frog and I can feel the hot tears on my face and she's running her fingers across my back like kind of tickling it but not really. More just comforting, you know? And I can hear her telling me about how everything has to die and how that's part of life. And I look up and I ask her even me? And she says yes even you. And I look back down at the frog and I don't understand fully yet and I say even you? And I look back up and she's smiling but she's sad I can tell she's sad even though she's smiling and she says yes even me.

And then I'm sixteen and I'm looking at my hands and I can feel the hardwood under my hands and knees and I look back up and I see her feet dangling there. She must have been twenty-two or so. And again I can feel the tears and they're hot running down my face and falling on the floor and my hands and I'm there for hours no days no weeks it feels like and the paramedics show up and my parents are there and they're crying too and my mom has her hand on my back and she's tickling it just like my sister used to when I was sad or when I asked that girl to that dance and she laughed at me and like when she was alive and suddenly I get mad I get really mad and I push her off me and I put on my coat and I walk out the door and I just start walking as fast as I can.

And I walk for a long time.

And then it's four months later and I'm at my friend's house and he says want to drink some vodka and I say hell yes I do and we sit and drink this terrible drink out of this old plastic bottle and for once the pain isn't there the memories are still there but the pain goes away for a little while and I say do you have any more? But he's throwing up and he doesn't hear me.

And then I'm nineteen years old and I'm smoking a cigarette and I smell really bad and there's a bag in my pocket and I pull it out and there's a bottle inside and I drink it I drink it all and I sit on the sidewalk and beg people for change and everybody says no except if a mom passes and she has kids and realizes how young I am and gives me a dollar. When that happens they walk away and I say thank you and I wave and laugh to myself dumb bitch doesn't she know what I'm going to use this for.

And then I'm twenty two I'm the same age as my sister when she killed herself and I still don't know why she died nobody knows why she did what she did and I look down at my hands and they're bloody because I just punched somebody really hard and it's another guy outside this

bar and I'm raging drunk again and he says why would you do that and I spit in his face and say fuck you you fucking pussy bitch get out of my face and I push him away and I walk away.

And I walk for a long time.

And then I'm twenty three and I'm at another party because some high school kid asked if I could buy him booze and I laughed and said only if I get to fuck your mom
hah
and then I stick around to drink some of their booze but they run out so I go get forties from the liquor store and bring them back and everybody's glad and then it's later and everybody's leaving but me I'm just sitting on the couch drinking still and the kid who invited me says you can sleep here and he goes to bed.

And once the door closes I say fuck you to that kid who was so nice to me he gave me a place to stay even though I was so mean I was so mean I hurt my best friends and ran away from home I was so mean.

And I light up a cigarette in his house because fuck him I don't care about him and his house and his family and I finish my forty and I drink another right after really really really fast and then the floor hits my face.

And then I'm looking at this empty shampoo bottle and it's looking at me and I know that in a minute I'm going to be just as inanimate and just as empty and we're just the same me and that bottle and I wipe some of the blood off my chin and I smile.

And then everything fades out. It gets watery first, blurry, and then it all goes white. And for just a second I can see my parents, who I pushed away and forced to bury both their kids and they're gathered around my grave and they're crying so hard they're crying so hard and I wish I

could just go back and tell them how much I love them and that I didn't mean to be so hurtful I was just so hurt and I couldn't handle it and I'm sorry I'm sorry I'm sorry.

"I'm sorry"

And I'm crying. I'm bawling. And I realize this has nothing to do with whether or not I believe in god. It has nothing to do with that at all. God doesn't care if you believe in him, see. He's got more important things to do. But they do have this like "No Soul Left Behind" program up here so he gives you a second chance. And then it really fully hits me that I'm crying. Real tears, and they're pouring down my face. And that I just heard my own voice for the first time in millennia and I say it again.

"I'm sorry"

I'm crying so hard with everything I am I'm crying. And I see the whole spectrum of everything. This isn't about converting me. God doesn't care if you're an atheist. This is about showing me the consequences of my actions. And through the tears I can just start to see my legs and my hands and my nose and the sweatervest guy tells me I can go. So I get up and walk out and I walk through the door and there she is.

My sister. In the flesh. And my mom, and my dad. Turns out I've been up here quite a long time. About three eternities, I'd bet. And they smile so big because they know that I know and they know I'm sorry and they've already forgiven me. And I realize I can finally find out why my sister did it. I can finally learn to heal. So I walk up to them and I hug them with my body and they hug back with theirs.

Thank god, all drunks go to heaven.