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"Stirring Our Brew-A Halloween Fairytale."

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After a month of planning and anticipation, the happy campers were about to embark on an evening they would not soon forget. Coolers, backpacks, and sleeping bags were jumbled in the trunks of five cars and would be transferred to the backs and arms of the adventurers. Hoping they would reach their destination before dark, they left campus in mid-afternoon.

At this point, I'll drop the use of third person and admit that, yes, I was one of these Halloween campers. I, along with four other members of my Supernatural Folklore class had arranged this trip. Our "Grand Pooba", Brian Dowell had previously visited our destination, a deserted farmhouse in McCrackin County owned by his grandparents and prepared for our visit. After a two-hour trip, a few pitstops to purchase last minute hotdogs, and the continuous playing of Brian's country music station(WHIC, seriously), I was anxious to near McCrackin County. Brian took us on a tour of the town close to his grandparent's home. It was one of those "Don't blink or you'll miss it" towns, where one wouldn't be surprised to see "Little House on the Prairie" look-a-likes wandering the streets. Finally we were there, or at least we thought we were there. We still had a long hike ahead of us. As Brian's grandparents(definite "Hee-Haw" extras) watched with glowing cheeks, the crew loaded up with various camping necessities. Yes, we did have liquor, but that's a whole other story. So, we were off.

We had barely begun our hike when Brian surprised us with a large stretch of thick deep mud that, in my eyes, strongly resembled a Vietnam rice patty, land mine field. By the time I yanked, pulled, groaned, grunted, and yelled my way across, I could feel my eyes beginning to slant and I almost cursed in Vietnamese. I made a few appropriate comments to Brian as he pulled me up the bank and I felt that he would probably owe me for the rest of his natural born days. By this time the sky was black and we marched on into oblivion. The creatures of the night were surely offended by the foul statements that were blurted into the wilderness as many campers met with the slick

inviting floor of the woods. With only two flashlights lighting our path, and one of those was a pumpkin head, we trekked on. Two ghost busters in uniform made up the caboose and administered beers to needy females. Sigma Phi Epsilon pledge Kurt Swagger seemed to be the only one who managed to continue without being mared or even sweating. With his red down vest, hiking boots, and flannel shirt all intact, he was dubbed the "E.L. Bean Poster Child" of the month. After what seemed like an eternity of hiking through woods, fields, mountains, hills, valleys, creeks, rivers, lakes, marshes, bristles, briars, unknown creatures, and many more things of that nature, we had arrived.

I speak for the group insaying the attitude at this point was "No matter what happens tonight it won't be worth it. Brian, will you please gather some wood, we're going to roast you on the campfire." Instead of acting on our impulses, we threw our loads down in the shell of a house that would be our home for the next twelve hours. "I think we've separated the men from the boys," I speculated. Several candles were lit to guide our way up the ancient steps that lead to the second floor. Brian informed us of the "do's and dont's" when maneuvering about the house. After everyone was semi-collapsed Brian began to tell us the story of the four walls that would attempt to shelter us that evening.

His great, great, great aunt and uncle had lived there over fifty years ago. She was one of those 'back to nature' types and did not want any modern conveniences in her house. This failed to surprise me considering that this place was so far away from civilization, but then so is Mcracken County. To make a long story short, Brian's aunt came home one day and found her husband dead in the bed. She ran hysterically out of the house and never returned. Thus, the house had been burgularized and deserted for fifty years. What a fun place! I'm sure at this point everyone was questioning his/her sanity.

In the spirit of Halloween we carved a pumpkin and sat it in the window which was actually a hole in the wall. Once the camp fire was roaring most of the group migrated out to it and proceeded to roast hotdogs and marshmallows. Bentley Tittle, a lively member of my folklore class, and his roommate, Bill Fariss, entertained the crowd by roasting a chicken dog until

it reached monumental proportions. Much to our amazement it was only six o'clock. The darkness of the night and our total fatigue made us feel that it was much, much later.

As some of us went back into the house to explore, Brian bestowed even more information upon us. During his preparatory visit a week before, he had found a large knife in the barn. Some sadistic facet of Brian's personality compelled him to stick it in the front door of the farm house just for fun. Well, surprise, Brian! The knife was gone. The tension was building as Christopher Columbus, alias Bill Fariss, explored the extra bedroom, combing through the debris strewn about on the floor. Amazingly enough, he did find several letters of interest. We all sat in a circle as Brian flattened out the worn yellow paper and read one of the letters by candle light. It was from a soldier to his love and its verse flowed like a poem. I seem to recall a few sentences like, "As the lillies bloom by the river bank, I will hear you crying because, my love, I will be dying." An eerie tension filled the room as everyone stared into nowhere. Moments later, about ten of the bravest troopers, actually just the ones who were still awake, headed off to one of the two surrounding graveyards.

Ten minutes later we crawled up a slippery bank and found ourselves surrounded by tall thin tombstones, not one of them dated after the 19th Century. There was an opening in the trees above the plots that revealed a stormy sky. We wandered about, reading the tombstones and looking over our shoulders. "Brian, come here," I yelled as torn bushes revealed a tombstone with my last name on it, lucky me. Ron, another member of my class, in his exhaustion leaned on the tallest tombstone and to everyone's horror it fell. Not only did it fall but it broke in half across the death date. "Ron, you're dead, man," several of us mumbled as we picked our chins up off the ground. With Ron's encouragement we soon headed back for the homestead. Upon our return, fellow camper Nancy Hickey was gracious to see our faces as everyone else was asleep. She swore that a humongous spider had threatened her life. Unable to move because she had sprung her ankle on the "killer" steps, she cried out for help and was not answered. What a

traumatic experience!

The witching hour was approaching as we gathered up all of the campers to call up a spirit in the other graveyard closest to the house. Even Nancy hobbled there. But, alas, Ron chose to begin his slumber and stay "safely" in the house. The night was clear despite the 100% chance of rain. We assembled around the two largest tombstones in a huge circle. Facial expressions were varied as we tightly held hands and Brian explained the steps to our calling. I, for one, could sense some non-believers in the ring. The wind was silent but as Brian began to tell the story of how the two men had died, it picked up and whipped leaves around our feet. The younger of the men had died by evil means, which made him a restless spirit eager to be free. Sweat appeared on my palms as Brian made the final call. As his voice ceased, so did the wind. All was silent. Moments later a single leaf fell at Brian's feet and a branch above his head began to twitch sporadically. Only a few saw it and after about ten minutes we dropped hands. We meandered back to the house in varied groups feeling a bit forlorn.

Everything seemed to die down after that, so to speak. As I tried to fall asleep on the second floor, strange noises kept attracting my attention. There was a chorus line on the roof and Ron kept growling and groaning in agony. I was sure a spirit (non-alcoholic that is) had invaded his body. Creatures howled outside probably on a quest for chicken dogs, and it finally rained. Somewhere in the midst of this confusion, sleep found me.

I was awakened at 6:00 a.m. by a distant voice yelling, "Frankfurter alert." A black hot dog soared through the window, Bentley, of course. In thirty minutes, twenty disoriented campers were back on the trail. Nancy had to be carted all the way back, forcing me to contemplate falling. The journey was a great deal easier in the daylight and a majority of the campers switched into fifth gear and left us far behind. After an hour or so we reached, da-da-da-dum, the dreaded rice pattie field. In disgust I began to cross with Bentley by my side and rain falling on my head. Half way across, one of my boots stuck in the mud without my foot inside. After struggling to free it, my other boot did the same. Unable to cope any longer, I screamed in frustration and with Bentley's

drunken assistance pulled both my socks off and ~~slushed~~ slushed downward. As the rain continued to pour down on us and the rest of the caboose directed their laughter toward my antics, Bentley stood in bewilderment at my feat of bravery and ignorance. He picked up one of my boots that was now the size of a watermelon and vigorously struggled to free the other one from the knee-deep slush. It was, he soon found out, physically impossible. It looked like the Dowell's would be growing hiking boots next spring. Feeling that I had inspired him, Bentley then took a running belly-flop into the field. Now, convinced that we were like minded hikers, Bentley and I frolicked on and were the last campers to walk up into the yard. "Sorry for getting your grass dirty," I commented as I walked past Brian's grandparents. After a little break we were on the road again. "Don't even think your coming along next week," I joked to Nancy as I stared down at her atrociously obese ankle. ~~Once we~~

Once we reached Druthers in Hardinsburg, where we had planned to meet, breakfast seemed like the perfect answer to the many things that ailed us. Although we all looked like we'd been through Hell and back, except for Kurt that is, we walked on in and dared the management to throw us out. As we sat down to eat many of the customers chuckled and gawked at our varied appearances. "Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green," we all proclaimed when asked where we were from. "We're some of the more tame collegiant types," Bill said retaining a serious expression. Before we had made it to the door, a small ancient little farmer, chewing tobacco in place, yanked on Brian's shirt. With his arms up in a mimicking fashion he said with a scruffy voice, "Are you all ridin' motorcycles?"

The rest of the way back the convoy thinned out as classes were waiting for us. I took a moment to reflect back on the evening. I thought cows would start flying before I admitted that the trip was worth it, but it was. It frightens me to think that I would actually do it again. Well, atleast Ron made it out alive, although I'm sure he'll never get near a graveyard again. I was thankful to atleast still have my clothes but as I gazed down at myself, I feared that I had left a large portion of my sanity back with my boots in that flat, wet, slushy, gushy, muddy,... well...you know the place.