

My Night of Death Drinking in the South
by Justin McGonigle

I had been living in the South for about half a year, with my twin sister, when I got an idea in my head about getting plastered one night.

I drank a pint of schnapps and peddled to the restaurant/bar where I worked as a dishwasher on the bmx bike I traveled around on. I still didn't have my driver's license. I never thought I needed it. Most of the places I lived in had public transportation or I could walk or ride a bike from place to place.

Tonight was hot and I was buzzing pretty hard already when I got to the restaurant 3 miles away. I stashed my bike and flew through the doors and headed straight for the pool table where I thought I'd mingle for a little while and then mosey on over to the bar.

My time at the pool table was brief. I didn't know anybody. I headed over to the bar, where I knew the bar keep, and consumed 4 Tequila Sunrises while I chewed the fat and pontificated about God knows what.

About 90 minutes later, someone offered me a ride home. I got up from my seat, after saying my goodbyes, opened the door to the outside, stepped out into the warm air and immediately didn't feel well. I was plastered and the hot air shot through me like a canon ball.

We loaded up my bike into his truck and we started towards my apartment on the other side of town. I began to feel sick and I threw up out of his truck's window while we were still moving. He asked if I could wait until I got home to get sick. I said OK.

We arrived at my place and he helped me with my bike and with me (I could barely walk) get into the apartment. He got me in and said farewell.

For the next 2 hours I was wrapped around the toilet seat fading in and out of consciousness. Most of it was dry heaves and I felt like I was dying. I must have had alcohol poisoning. I was weak and couldn't move. All I thought of was how foolish I'd been.

My sister found me on the bathroom floor. She brought me next door to our friend's apartment where she said I could sleep it off. I remember how safe and sound I felt, lying there in the soft bed, no longer sick from the previous night and glad that I didn't die.

I lived down South for nearly a year. I worked mostly as a dishwasher and made lots of paintings on cardboard and canvas paper. I'd spend all night sometimes making art listening to Led Zeppelin on my portable cassette player. I sold my first painting while I lived there for \$32.

My sister and I eventually drove back up North together, she had her license, back to our big city home. We both said our goodbyes to the South.

What I didn't know at the time, was that soon, what I had done my entire life, making art, would be what I did full time. A whole new world would open up for me and for the first time in a long time, I would feel complete.