

Long Walk Alone

It's night, I don't know what time. There's music blaring everywhere, there are clubs everywhere. My forehead feels hot, my skin feels dry. People walk past me, as I try not to stumble, they laugh and cavort, not yet drunk, but eager to become so, for who knows what reason. How will being drunk make them happier; what absurd behavior do they seek to excuse with drunkenness? What do they want to escape, what do they want to prove to their friends, what social nicety of drunken gaiety do they seek to fulfill to prove they're free from everyone but themselves. What they want to try to prove? What showboating drunk nonsense will they perform to gain affirmation from their peers: drunken spectacles, chugging beers, drinking games, truth or dare, running half-miles? What will they do as trained little monkeys of society to prove to their friends and comrades that they can party, but more importantly that they don't give a fuck, but only when it's cool not to. In quiet moments, as they puke their guts into disease-ridden toilets in piss-stained stalls, they may remember that they're only playing the part for their own sake; they're their one and only audience, because everyone else is playing the same game. They're not having fun, they're not happy, they're putting on a show and the only one paying the cost of attendance is them. They will never be so lost and alone as they will be at a party, with friends, having a good time. I know why I drink, and it isn't to have a good time.

I had started the evening with a couple of Old Fashioned's down at Wright's. I always begin with something that tastes good with mid-range liquor, never top-shelf because no matter how drunk I get I'm still cheap; after several decent cocktails I work my way down to the cheapest shit I can find. Wright's is a pretty nice place, borderline classy so you don't tend to get meat-heads yelling at TV screens. I always want to tell them "the players on the TV can't hear you, but I can, so please shut up," but I'd rather not get my ass kicked. Nor do you get the girl's night out crowd in too tight, unflattering dresses and clacking heel's, taking selfies and ordering shots. People come to Wright's for a quiet drink. It's a nice place to take a date. That's where Camille and I went on our first date. Unique cocktails, good food, friendly staff, décor is an interesting mix of urban and rustic; that's the best way I can describe it anyway, nice environment overall.

The bartender knows me by sight but not by name. Well, she probably knows my name, I usually pay with a credit card after all. I used to order different things. Now I only order Old Fashioneds. All their drinks are good, but that's what I stick to these days. She doesn't even ask me what I want anymore. She sees me come in and has my drink ready almost as soon as my ass hits the bar stool. We have a good rapport, neither of us are talkative, and I think she likes that about me. Lots of people get way too chatty in bars. I guess it's a common place to go meet people. I can always tell when Jackie, the bartender, is annoyed with a talkative customer; but she's trapped, a captive audience, listening to some idiot too drunk or full of himself to pick up on social queues. Connoisseurs like to talk too, particularly beer snobs. Notes of this and hints of that, just a weak attempt to look cultured. Jackie, any bartender really, has got to humor them all.

She's listening to some guy prattle on about who knows what. I'm looking up at the vast assortment of alcohol on the wall, wondering how much of it actually gets used. Suddenly the talking man decides to try and rope me into the conversation. I have no idea what he's talking about, but he's looking at me expectantly, so I ask "I'm sorry, what?" He shrugs it off, turning back to Jackie, "yeah, he

knows, trust me." I'm not sure what I know exactly, and Jackie doesn't care either way. I'm just glad he didn't push it further.

After Wright's I walk down the street to the Green Lady, an Irish pub, and order a stout and a shot. The Green Lady's a little rowdier than Wright's, but I'm already two drinks in, and the alcohol takes the edge off the crowd, or rather my dislike of the crowd. Evidently there are some ghost stories associated with the name of the pub, and the pub itself is supposedly haunted. The owner says it's named for the nickname his mother had been given when she worked a bar. He assumed it was because she was Irish, Emerald Isle and all that. Or maybe it was her green eyes. Dutiful as he was, her picture was hung over the bar. She was frozen in joyful laughter; someone had apparently just told an hilarious joke. Her hair was pulled up in a messy bun. Her neck was long and bare. You could just barely make out a tattoo of a four leaf clover on her upper chest just below her clavicle. She was beautiful, but I never told the owner because I knew he wouldn't like it.

The owner and I chat occasionally. He's big into rugby and I like hearing him talk about it. It works out well for us. He loves discussing the finer points of the sport, telling the same stories, and I always end up too drunk to remember any of it; every time he tells me, it's new to me. He talks a lot about his ex-wife, his second one that is. The first divorce must've gone a lot smoother than the second, as he never mentions his first wife. I have no idea what his second wife's name is, he typically refers to her as his "leeching whore" or "moneygrubbing soul-sapping bitch" or some variation thereof. His penchant for the profane is pretty remarkable actually. He should've been a TV personality.

My own divorce was pretty amicable. Part of me thinks the only reason we got married was that it seemed better than being alone. It wasn't really better or worse. It felt the same. So when Camille took a job across the country, we said our goodbyes. A year after we split she came back to town on business and asked if she could stay with me, which seemed kind of strange, but I said yes. We went out to Wright's, not really out of sentimentality, but because we *thought* we should feel sentimental about it. When we got back to my house I think we were both wondering if we should sleep together. There was a vague feeling of expectation. I made us a couple of drinks, we played Hearts and listened to some music, then I ended up passing out on the couch and she went to bed. She made me breakfast. I hadn't changed anything in the kitchen so she knew where everything was. She concluded her business and went home.

Camille and I were always better friends than lovers. Sometimes it seems friendship gets confused with love. Or we just assume we should be in love with someone, so we try to convince ourselves. I don't think I've ever really been in love. Which I think some people would find very sad. Sometimes I agree with them, but when I listen to the owner of the Green Lady, I have no regrets.

I finish my stout and my shot, and order another round. I'm told a story while he pours. I can't remember what it was, but I laughed until I had a coughing fit. It must've been good whatever it was. I hear the door open behind me and somebody makes some whooping sound as they walk in, drunk already I guess, or just an asshole. Only assholes seek attention. I always wonder what they're compensating for. They're always chased by a realization, desperately trying to keep one step ahead of it, trying to maintain the illusion; but one day it will catch up to them, and they'll finally understand that none of the so-called fun, the attention-whoring, or living life to the fullest, will ever change the fact that nothing they've ever done has mattered, and they'll be just as forgotten as someone as boring as I am. The bastards are out in earnest now. It's time to speed things up. Finish drinking the day away.

There's a fine mist in the air when I leave the Green Lady. Somehow it's 10:15 already. I guess I got to Wright's later than normal. The goal is to get drunk before the rest of the savages roll in. Get drunk and drive home. Leave before everyone else gets there. An anti-social pub crawl.

A limo slowly drives past. The lights are on inside and I can see a bachelorette party on wheels. Two women stand in the space of the open sunroof, attempting to dance. They shift their shoulders up and down to the sound of the bass emanating from beneath them. Straightened hair and strapless dresses. They sip cocktails through straws. Someone honks and shouts something unintelligible at them, they responds with cheers and high pitched "whoos." A car pulls up behind their limo's blasting music so loud you can feel the vibration.

Everything around me is cast in flashing multi-colored neon lights, emanating from signs and street-lights. A raining mist starts to fall. Scooters whiz past me on the sidewalk, through traffic, into solid objects. I smell weed, then tobacco, then piss. There's a bum half-asleep in a doorway holding out a cup. There's a street-walker that could very easily be a man. There's a lost couple consulting their phones, and trying not to look like tourists.

I think about that whooping yahoo back in the Green Lady. I don't understand how a person can have the nerve to force himself into someone else's world. His pretense of fun isn't infectious, it doesn't bring joy to anyone else, it's just rude. I don't understand people. I need to go back to drinking alone at home, but nothing I make ever tastes as good as the drinks at the bar.

I'm making my way to my last stop. I'm already stumbling a bit so I decided to skip one of my usual haunts. I'm heading to White Oak.

White Oak is a dingy little bar at the end of the street, before everything goes industrial. Geographically, my apartment is on the other side of the industrial zone, past all the factories and warehouses, whatever they are. It'd probably be a much shorter distance to go through them, off hours of course, than getting back on the highway. But it's also probably a lot more dangerous. At any rate, White Oak is cheap, so that's where all the college kids go. There's a nice patio out back where you can smoke and drink the two dollar PBR's. Camille loved White Oak, it's where she went when she was in Grad school. One of the bartenders there makes a surprisingly good mojito, Camille's favorite.

The mojito bartender is apparently not working tonight, so I skip straight to PBR. That's OK though, for whatever reason the drinks I've already had are hitting me harder than normal. I take my beer and step out onto the patio, searching for someone to bum a cigarette off of. I'm a classy guy so I always offer to buy it off them, knowing that most of them will refuse the proferred dollar, but if they do take it, it's just a buck.

Groups of college kids hover around tables, talking about things they think are important, current events, philosophical inclinations, relationships, the dynamics between men and women. I eavesdrop where I can. Topics change, but the conversations of college kids remains as shallow and vapid as ever. I remember passionate discussions with old friends who have long since moved on. Everything seemed so important, so urgent, requiring immediate action to save us from some doom we were spoon-fed by "experts." Fifteen years later I finally realized that nothing I cared about really mattered. Time rolls on, rendering all concerns moot, all worries pointless, all people forgotten. Time murders all.

I find myself in a memory loop, a bad memory of course. The alcohol has fixated my mind on one thing, and all the negative feelings associated with it. I remember trying a stupid pickup line on a pretty girl, she told me she had a boyfriend. For some reason her friends found me to be the king of creeps. One of them cracked a joke and everybody laughed. Then came the boyfriend, way bigger than me of course, and completely fine with being a dick about everything. He yelled at me for bothering his girl and threw in a shove, which caused me to spill my drink on myself, which caused more laughter, and thus caught the attention of everyone around me. For some reason everyone seemed to side with him. It's hard to say but the looks they turned to me didn't seem particularly sympathetic. People pretend they don't like bullies, but really it just depends on who's getting bullied.

I break free from that memory just to fall into another equally bad. Project leader at work being a sanctimonious bastard as per usual. That's every day. I do frequently fantasize about throwing him to the floor and stomping on his head until his skull cracks and his useless brain leaks out of its useless body. But I'm stuck in the memory of his mistreating us this morning. I'm stuck in that. And the more violent thoughts offer no solace, because everyone will think I'm the monster, paying no attention to the daily soul-rape he's subjected us to since he came into our sad little lives.

A fight breaks out in the corner of the patio, giving me the distraction I need to break out of the loop. A few decent people tell them to stop. Everyone else starts filming with their phones. I have a pretty good angle from where I'm at, who knows it could go viral. I search my pocket for my phone and find it isn't there. Panic takes over until a vague memory of absent-mindedly putting it in the car-door compartment thing after responding to a text bubbles to the surface. It's OK, the phones in the car, but I don't know how it hadn't occurred to me to go back for it already. The fight gets broken up pretty quickly anyway. Not long after the same two dudes fighting are hugging each other saying "I love you man" and other bro shit.

I drink three PBR's. With each drink the world around me morphs into a reflection in a fun-house mirror. I prefer it that way. When drunk the world appears as it truly is, mad. There's no pretension. Everyone else acts all normal, but I can see through it, I can see through the lies to the reality they struggle so hard to keep hidden. They're all the same as me, except for one very important thing, the most important thing: I'm honest, and they're not. I pay my bill and walk out into the rain.

The rain is more than a mist now, it's a sprinkle interspersed with a few drops that mean business. Not a big deal either way. I walk down the street, passing a group of college girls heading to White Oak. As I walk up the street the girls slowly shift from girls wanting to hang out to girls wanting to be seen in a club. You know what kind of bar you're in by the girls who frequent it. Pairs go to cheap bars or to "clubs," all dressed up and made up to attract attention. Pairs and small groups go out for cocktails. The smaller the group of girls, the classier the bars. Except for girl's night out or bachelorette parties, those are always wild cards.

I walk past the Green Lady, past Wright's and towards the lot I usually park in. I'm way more drunk than I usually am, which I don't quite understand. I don't think I've had any more than I usually do. I walk, in a stumbling sort of gait, through the lot, clicking my car unlock button, or whatever you call it. I don't hear it beep, but that doesn't mean anything, so I make another round. Second run I still don't hear anything, and I start to feel a little concerned. I should've heard something. I always park in that lot, always. I don't remember parking my car that night, but that's because I always go to the same place. My car must have been stolen. I'd been robbed.

Naturally, I thought about calling the police. Then I remembered I had left my phone in the car, at which point the loss of my phone was much worse than the loss of my POS car. It occurred to me that even if I had my phone I was definitely drunk, so it probably wasn't a good idea to advertise to the police my intention to drive. They would've been way more interested in that, not that I had been robbed; but the fact that if I had hypothetically not been robbed, I would've driven home a drunken, but still capable, I must insist on that, driver.

The only thing to do was catch a cab or a ride-share and report the theft tomorrow. I would tell them I never would have considered driving home in the state I was, and that's why I hadn't noticed the theft until the morning after. So you see officer, what a good person, and more importantly, citizen that I am.

I'd have to use the phone in one of the bars. I was in a state and didn't want Jackie to see me like that. Not sure why really. I'm always sober when I see her. I imagined she appreciated a man who could hold his liquor, because the ones who couldn't were always a problem for her, and any other bartender I imagine. I have no illusions about who and what I am, but sometimes it's nice when others do, even if I only imagine that they do. Wright's was out of the picture.

By this time the Green Lady would be way to packed. It'd take forever to talk to the bartender. And all the while I'd be surrounded by yahoos, cretins, and all their tag-along sluts. I don't know what it is about Irish pubs, it doesn't matter where they are, or how shitty they are, they are always packed wall to wall with people, or at least it always seems that way. Green Lady wasn't an option either.

I thought about the Blues Garden, one of my usual haunts, the one place I hadn't been yet tonight. Tim would be there though. Tim's a talker. You can't be sober around him, you can't be drunk around him, you have to be in that mid-range buzz state, where you're on the far side of relaxed, just a little uncoordinated, but you haven't had enough for paranoia to set in. Once you reach a certain point, everything bad you were trying to escape takes hold again; all the anger, all the despair, it grips you tighter than it ever could without the drink; your guard is down and you can't process the emotions in a sensible manner. I've spent hours staring at myself in the mirror, yelling at bosses, former and current; yelling at public figures I hate, yelling at people who annoy me, unable to really process the pain. I come up with so many brilliant things to say, staring at myself in the mirror, perfecting all my faces: my scowling faces, my cold, calculating faces, my murderous rage faces. Most people put on a show in public, for their own benefit. I know nobody's watching but me, so I choose the mirror. That's where I should be, venting to my reflection. I've got a whole new work-day's worth of material. I had to get home soon, I had a routine. The Blues Garden wasn't gonna work out. Fuckin' Tim.

I made my way back to White Oak. Traffic was bumper to bumper. Every street-crossing was a gauntlet with life and death stakes. Every lot full of circling headlights, trying to find the perfect parking spot. Every open bar door blasted its own music out into the night air forming a cacophony of noise. The closer you got to the bar door the more distinct the music became, emerging from the noise of people, the streets, and all the other clubs vying for your attention. The music is a siren song, powered by a live performance behind it, and very expensive speakers. You might know it, a cover perhaps, but a definite song that fades back into the general noise as you keep walking into all the other sights, sounds, songs, and smells of the sidewalk ahead, until the next song ropes you into its orbit. Each open bar door becomes a guiding point, like stars for sailors, leading you from one place to another: Dickie's plays old

country and rockabilly, Ben-Jammin plays hip-hop, Little Red Corner played indie music, and occasionally the Russian Red Choir. All points led back to White Oak, the best place to make a phone call.

I don't know what the hell was happening at White Oak but there was a police car and an ambulance parked out front. People always say that if you drink when you're alone that's alcoholism. In the end I'll take that over drinking with strangers any day. Strangers are dangerous. When you drink alone the only person you can hurt is yourself. Those two idiots from before probably got back into it. Whatever happened I'm not walking into a potential crime scene, so I keep moving until I come to the end of the street. Once again I'm looking out at a poorly kept highway and the industrial zone beyond it. I see smoke stacks, and those weird conveyer belt things that travel up into some needlessly tall building. Why do they need a conveyer belt to carry something up that high? Can't they just work on it on the ground? I don't know how industry works. There are a bunch of barely lit warehouses. An enormous jumble of buildings and factory looking structures, I don't know what any of them are called. It looks like a power plant and a massive oil refinery had a love child, and then turned off all the lights. Amidst all of this I see one long road, cutting straight to the middle, connecting this shitty little highway in front of me to the shitty little highway my apartment complex sits on the corner of. I was definitely not ready for a new experience, but I was also very ready to be home. So I started walking.

I checked both ways before crossing the highway. Mother would've been proud. That street was always empty at night for whatever reason. It was easy access to all the clubs, but for some reason everyone preferred to come in from the interstate side, so the White Oak area was always less crowded, which was probably why I always ended there, it was the safest place to be, though I still had to walk back to my car.

I remember arguing with Camille one night. We were at White Oak having a whisper fight, trying not to make a scene, arguing over something beyond unimportant, there aren't really any important things to fight about anyway. I paid the tab and we walked out in angry silence. She told me she was walking home, and I told her that was ridiculous, it was too far, and she said no it wasn't. Then she started towards the industrial park, and I was immediately afraid. I called her back, I told her it wasn't safe, that she should just come back with me, we didn't have to talk, we didn't have to interact at all, I'd just take her from one point to another. As a punishment to me, she turned away and started into the industrial jungle. I imagined all sorts of gangs, drug-crazed bums, serial killers, just waiting to descend upon her, and still I didn't follow her. I watched her walk into the dark. I turned around, walked to my car, and drove home. She arrived fifteen minutes after I did. We didn't speak to each other the rest of the evening, and when we finally made up we never talked about her long walk alone.

Fifteen minutes plus my ten minute drive. About a half hour walk. I could make it. Better than waiting for a cab. A walk of shame is better than sharing an awkward silence with a cab driver who knows you can't hold your liquor.

Aluminum siding-fencing shit, I don't know what else to call it, rose up on either side of the street, the tops of which were jagged random shapes, like they were defective unfinished by-products of whatever company produced aluminum-looking sheet-wall fencing shit. There were bare offices with glass walls overlooking on each side. Single desks and single chairs overlooked the road in empty offices. I imagined 80's era managers in sweaty short sleeve dress shirt and tie looking out and screaming silenced disapproval at the peons below who could never quite make their quota. Damn unions! I laughed to myself at that last thought.

What in the hell was I doing? This exact same stupid shortcut walk is the start of almost every horror movie. Whenever it's a dude who's walking and he hears something behind him he turns around and starts yelling at whatever is making the noise, trying to be tough, because that's all men care about. Then when whatever "it" is steps out of the shadows only then does he do the sensible thing and run. If I hear any movement behind me I'm not stupid enough to stop and talk to it, I'm running. Every noise I hear causes a mini heart-attack. They're not loud enough to make me sprint, just enough to unnerve me.

The aluminum siding fence ends and a chain link one begins. Through the links I can see machinery I could never begin to name. They rise up out of the darkness like creatures out of a 1950's monster flick. I hear movement from among them and a very loud, very intentional bang, like someone hitting metal with a wrench. I don't stop to try and figure out what it was. I can't imagine a scenario where it would be someone or something I wanted to run into that time of night in an industrial park.

I glance up at one of the offices and see a shadow moving. I stop and do a double take. Nothing there of course. I'm not going to allow my mind to project ghosts and goblins out into the world. The only thing to fear is other people.

Either my imagination or the alcohol or maybe both starts turning every shadow into a person. Somehow the effect of the drink gets stronger every step I take. I hear footsteps behind me and turn. Nothing there. It's just the paranoia.

I look up at the night sky, not a star in sight. I feel myself falling upward into it. I become unsteady, dizzy, nausea takes hold and I look back at the ground, leaning over, gripping my knees waiting for the dizziness to subside. There's an open and empty condom wrapper on the ground in front of me. Just one more reason why public places are dangerous. My stomach evens out and the spinning world slows enough for me to feel comfortable walking again.

Off in the distance I hear sirens. I hear a heavy wind. I hear thunder. The sprinkling abruptly turns into a torrential downpour. Against my better judgment I find a break in the fence and run into an open warehouse door. Presumably to wait it out, though I can't help but think it'd be better just to keep going and get soaked, the rain might hydrate me a little anyway.

Shadow of machinery spreads out in front of me, backlit by a weirdly bright exit sign on the other side of the room. I wonder what they make in here. I turn my back to it all and sit down cross-legged, facing the open door, looking out at a solid sheet of falling rain lit up by a nearby streetlight.

When Camille made the walk it had started to snow. We hardly ever got snow, once every three years or so. When she came home she was freezing. I ran her a hot bath and put the kettle on. I have no idea who was really in the wrong, that's something you only find out in hindsight anyway; whatever happened, she forgave me.

I feel myself dozing off. I may be an alcoholic but I'm not a drunk, I don't fall asleep in public places. I stand on unsteady feet, feel myself start to fall, reach out, and catch myself on the door frame. There's a noise behind me, I turn and see someone standing beneath the exit sign.

"What are you doing here?"

I reply, "leaving."

Security guard, has to be. I step back out into the rain, which is surprisingly cold for this time of year. Better to get soaked than pass out in a strange place. I glance over my shoulder and see a shadow lurking in the door I had just vacated. The guard was probably more scared of me than I was of him.

Camille must have been terrified walking through here. Maybe not, she was probably too pissed to be afraid. She probably hoped that she would be raped and killed, that would serve me right. Sometimes I think women put themselves in dangerous positions to punish the people who love them. I did love her in a way. I don't think we ever needed each other though.

This road feels unnaturally long. I can't see the end of it. Just darkness stretching out in front of me and factories and warehouses on either side. I trip on nothing, my feet I guess, do a hop and a skip and manage to avoid falling out right. When I look back up I'm standing at the edge of the industrial park, looking out at White Oak. I'm confused to say the least. I got turned around when I left the warehouse. I covered a lot of distance really fast. I wonder if I should go back and see if I can find the car. At this point, even I can tell I'm too far gone to drive. I'm not walking too well. I could at least pass out in it, if I can find it, if it's there at all. I'd have to stumble clearly drunk through a crowd of people, running from bar to bar in the rain, all of them watching me, making a complete fool of myself, being that idiot that they would tell all their friends about, all their punishing eyes turned on me, picking me apart piece by piece, indulging in my breakdown, finding entertainment in it, enjoying it. There's nothing people love more than another person destroying themselves, losing it, breaking down. I turn back to the industrial park. Off in the distance I swear I see the lights of my apartment complex. I start walking.

My body is starting to ache. It really wants to shut down. I've put it through too much. It's just my paranoia but I swear my liver is physically hurting, of course I don't know where it is. There's a vague pain somewhere in my abdomen, so I assume that's it. It's not even really what I had tonight, it's everything I've had every night of my drinking life.

I look up at the same glass offices, imagine the same douche boss staring out. I hear the same damn noise by the machines. Pass that same condom wrapper. The shadow's still standing in the warehouse door, watching me. I try to ignore it. Just another asshole rubbernecker.

I swear the apartment gets farther away every step I take towards it. I don't know what's wrong with me, I don't usually get this bad. Jackie must've made those drinks stronger, I don't know. It's fucking embarrassing. My mind suddenly becomes fixated on that douche at work, my blood pressure rises until I can feel my pulse in my forehead. My body saves me somehow and pulls up memories of a beautiful fall brunch with Camille. No act of willpower would've drawn that up, something in me shouted mayday, pushed the douche out, and pulled Camille in.

I'm farther than I got before but the apartment doesn't seem any closer. I'm shivering at this point. I don't even think it's that cold outside. Every step hurts in a weird way I can't describe. I'm soul-weary and physically tired, every movement is an effort. I hear a noise behind me, I see nothing. I think I'm lost, which is ridiculous, it's a straight road, no curves, no bends, but I'm not getting anywhere. Camille made this walk on a snowy night all alone, but I can't manage it in mid-September in the rain. One more thing to be ashamed of. I think about that whooping bastard in the Green Lady, so brazen and stupid to think that he was there to have a good time, so blind to the emptiness. I've never enjoyed it, all it does is paint the prison walls a different color. I know why I drink. Every sip is punishment.

Something in me decides I can't go on. It's not my decision. It pushes me in a direction and I follow it. There's an awning in front of an office of some kind. I sit down, my back to the door. I see shadows moving in the dark, I don't care if they're there or not. I don't care if they mug me, steal my wallet, kill me for a cheap thrill. I can't move anymore. I'm completely spent. I close my eyes and I see Camille walking past in the snow. Arms pulled in tightly. Her head unprotected. Steam pouring from her mouth at every breath. She turns to me just for a moment. And then keeps walking. I play this on repeat, listening to the rain.

I wake up in the hospital, confused, a complete memory block as to how I got there; another part of my life missing in drink. One of the shadows in the warehouse found me apparently, called it in. A hospital was completely unnecessary, my own bed would've worked just fine. My dad's there staring down at me. All concern. I feel humiliated. Sister's there too. Their affection is painful. They asked me what happened. I couldn't find my car etc. Apparently it was there, I was just too drunk to find it. Do I drink and drive a lot? No, I lied. Is this about Camille? No, it isn't, why would it be, that's in the past. Should we call her? No, I'm fine, just a bad day and a lot bad decisions. Some crying. Shit, just please leave me alone. You need help. Why? Help to do what? I'm just trying to die a little faster. I don't say that, I mumble something about it just being a rough day and I had too much. Their concern bores a hole in me. I'm uncomfortable. I don't want to talk. I don't want to see them. I'm completely and utterly fucking humiliated. Sister eventually leaves. Dad stays for a while longer. I'm discharged. Dad hugs me. Tells me to call him if I need anything. I tell him I will. Immediately I start planning a new strategy. Drinks at Wright's, a stout at the Green Lady, a PBR at White Oak, then I finish off at home. I won't embarrass myself, and it will still get the job done.