

Life Is An Onion

by Ulrik Remy

There's no doubt about it: Life is an onion.

The man goes out into the woods and cuts down a tree. The tree floats downstream to the sawmill, where it is cut into planks. The planks are loaded on a truck that takes them to the lumber yard. The carpenter gets them from the lumber yard and cuts them into boards. Hones them, shapes them, bends them, drills holes in them. Builds a bed from them. An apprentice in the furniture factory varnishes and primes the bed, the journeyman finishes it. Your Dad buys it, puts your Mom in it, and there you are. And they all drink beer along the way.

If only it was that simple.

Had my ex-girlfriend told this story (she didn't, we split before she could), it would go like this:

"You know, you remind me of my great-great-grandfather. He must have been such a handsome man! (Which reads: You must have been a handsome man, too – sorry, didn't mean to interrupt) And he just loved the outdoors, just loved'em, plain and simple. He used to go out into the woods and find the most magnificent trees to cut down, he had this special thing for trees, you know, probably inherited from his ancestors who came all the way from Norway – some people say they were from the tribe of Eric the Red, or Leif Eriksson, who discovered Quebec and taught the natives to speak French – whatever, but, anyway."

"So he's out there in the woods, somewhere, right? Grizzly bears, rattle snakes, mountain lions, and the Rockies – ah, they are so beautiful! Do you know, do you really know how beautiful the Rocky Mountains are, when the sun goes down, and a fire is burning in the fireplace, and your girlfriend tells a story about her great-great-grandfather heading out into the woods (sorry, I must have dozed away and dreamed this...)."

"Are you still with me? Now, here comes the interesting part. He finds, I mean, he literally stumbles into this one perfect, I mean, purrrrfect tree. And it was big, I'm telling you, ho-ho-ho, it was bboooooeeiiiggghhh! And perfectly straight up, right into the sky, like a – like a flag pole. But thicker. Like a – now, how do I put this – like a – well, you know what I mean. Like a utility pole, without the wires and the transformers and much, much bigger, like – well, huge, I mean: Huge!"

"Now, he has this axe, and he starts cutting that tree down. Can you imagine? Just with his bare hands, and the axe that his father gave him when he was – I don't know, maybe five, six years old, and he taught him how to use it, because, you know, lumberjacking runs in my family for the last, Gosh, four, five hundred years, and he was a strong man, my great-great-grandfather was, and so handsome, just like you. Well, to cut a long story short, he finally makes it, he gets that big sucker to the ground, and he drags it all the way to the river, that comes out of that lake, I forgot the name of that lake, what was it? Well, you know, the lake that feeds that river, Gosh, if I only remembered the name – and there's this rock right there at the mouth of that river, and it's covered in moss – well, anyway, where was I?"

"Yes, so, now, a little ways down the river, maybe five, six miles, my family owned this sawmill, actually, my family didn't own it, it was the family of my granduncle's bride – my grandmother's brother's bride – but they never married, because he was caught messing around with what later would become my grand-aunt Maude, but at that time, everything still looked, as if it all would come together nicely, and so – anyway. And that magnificent tree swam right up to that sawmill, just like saying 'please cut me into planks', and so they did. And they had a son, and he happened to be Maude's brother – you know, my grand-aunt Maude - Jeffrey was his name, a very talented kid, from what I hear, very talented, really. And he moved away as soon as he was eighteen, he moved to Milwaukee moved he and became the brew master of this famous brewery, and they made the beer that the journeyman drank while he was finishing the bed you were made in ... now, isn't that the funniest thing - ?"

And I was waiting for the interesting part. You know, where the condom broke because the quality inspector had a bad day as his wife had kicked him out after an argument about the Christmas lights that he had bought at the Dollar Store where he had this crush on the cash register operator without even thinking that you buy cheap and you get cheap – well, anyway.

Life is an onion, I am telling you.