

Birthday Boy

by Kevin Myrick

Will didn't like to celebrate his birthday. His dream birthday is a relaxing day at home alone with his thoughts and his trusted dog. A steak thrown on hot coals in the evening after spending the majority of the day as it marinated in Jack Daniels and Moore's. The cook took a shot for himself.

He loved the aroma and the sizzle of the slices of bacon wrapped around the beef as they seared under the heat of the grill. He drank a beer while it cooked and snacked on a homemade blooming onion. From time to time Will dropped pieces of fried onion on the ground where Roscoe waited at his feet. He inhaled the morsels faster than a vacuum cleaner.

Will tugged at Roscoe's floppy ears and rubbed his head. "You don't have to worry about getting older, do you boy? Do you?"

Roscoe didn't understand; after all he was four going on 40 in dog years.

Will thought it was strange to be 35. The sound of it wasn't right in his head yet. When he said it aloud he didn't really believe it. "I don't feel 35 yet. Maybe I'm still 25 and dreaming all of my life away in a coma. Maybe this is all a big conspiracy to get me to believe I'm older. It could be anything boy."

Roscoe gave him the same blank look his friends and family gave him when he announced to people, one by one, that he wasn't celebrating this year and why.

"I also share a birthday with Albert Einstein, but it doesn't make me any smarter."

His friend Marcus didn't find that amusing. Told him he was nuts for not celebrating. "It's not like you're getting any younger."

Will told Marcus there would be no celebrations of any kind. "At least come out and have a beer with me," he said.

"I'm going home to cook."

Later when the postal carrier arrived, Will wasn't upset when he received no cards from friends and family. He wanted no party where he would be forced to smile as loved ones sang "Happy Birthday" in forced montones and watched him blow out a solitary candle in the middle of a store bought cake. He saw no point to making a big to-do about getting older.

There was no pageantry for him on this day, no silly songs and hats and screaming children. The peace and solitude with Roscoe lounging around him was good enough. Just the steak, a movie and another shot of Tennessee Whiskey for his celebration. Will thought there could be nothing finer in life; It was a happy birthday in the end as he patted his full belly and drifted off to sleep.

