

The cold rain finally abated after what seemed like weeks of overcast cloudy rain-soaked days. The clouds parted and the sun shone through like someone looking through the curtains in a window out at the dawn of a new morning. We anticipate the arrival of spring each year. With springtime comes hope and all things anew.

Our spirits are washed in the vibrant feelings as the sap runs from the roots to the limbs of trees bringing forth new life to what seemed once lifeless branches where in the woods and forests, neath the leaves that have fallen from the previous autumn, lie the secretive and elusive Morel. They lie in wait for some unknown signal to generate their rapid spore-laden growth, so quickly that they appear virtually overnight.

We hunters of morels are the envy of all those who have ever waited for anything of importance or value to transpire in due time. Ours is the wait of expectance of all things good and tasty. Tis no wonder that when a Tron has a child, that the wait is not necessarily as trying as it might be with a lesser person. Why, we have grown to know the yearly vigil that encompasses our patronage to our friendly little mushroom. In the fleeting couple of weeks they annually occur, we forage through hill and dale in search of their camouflaged heads popping through the leafy tundra, in some hopes of finding the "Holy Grail" of all morels. The one that would go down in history as the "Big One". The one that would become legendary and make the discoverer a name in the annals of time.

I know, for I was once there.

A long time ago, when the smell of coal fire drifted over the old wood frame house on the edge of town, we gathered for our yearly pilgrimage into the woods in search of morels. The event itself was always as much fun in comradery as it was in the actual find of the treat. We would gather the family about Grandma's old kitchen table and share tales of previous hunts, recanting those past monsters.

Some would tell of new sightings or recent prospectus finds and where they had been. All this would build the excitement to a crescendo. Us kids could barely wait to get to the woods, but then Grandma would always remind us of the snakes. A softly spoken statement from her would spread fear and dread into our very core.

Then as if on cue, the snake stories would commence. Now, one thing was for sure, Tron's had a fear of snakes only matched by their hunger for morels. Why else would they tramp out into the heart of snake infested woods at a time of year when they were surely to be seen. So, by the time we loaded into the trucks to get started, you would feel like you were about to bust with excitement but that you may not return from the hunt after being eaten by a deadly venomous serpent. However, the danger was worth it since you could become the next great Morel hunter of your time.

So, we jumped into any available vehicle with our bread sacks in one hand and our walking sticks in the other. Soon we were off and on our way.

Now, talking about morels and finding morels are two very different things. It can be quite amazing how a little mushroom can become so well hidden in the mass of leaves and forest debris, but they can. After getting started on our hunt, its not long before you realize what made this hunting of morels such a challenge. Not only that, but while scouring inch upon inch of forest floor for these little rascals you had to keep watch for that inevitable snake, the one that would appear when you least expected it.

The day was overcast and cool, yet we had heard of possible morels in this area. We had been walking for some time, constantly keeping the snake watch going to the point we were getting so tired that we almost didn't care if we saw a snake or not. It was on this particular hunt that David Paul and myself found ourselves drifting farther and farther away from the rest of the clan. Now, Deepee (which is what we actually called him since I could remember) had always seemed to have a knack of either getting us into trouble, or busting open a new find of one sort or another, which was part of my reasoning for sticking so close to him. Plus, he had been around these neck of the woods a few more times than I had, so his experience in terrain was another.

We seemed to be finding and occasional small one or two as the afternoon drifted on and on and on. There was a yell for us to come on coming from a holler or two away from where we were. We felt as if in a dream: weary legs not responding to your demands to keep going, the thick carpet of leaves slowing your forward progress, the constant scanning for morels, dispersed amongst watches for serpents. Wearily we started to go , but then.....we saw a giant dead Hickory tree lying on its side a few yards away from where we stood.

We were somehow drawn to that tree.

I don't know how.

I don't know why.

All I can say is that we were drawn by some force that can only be explained as that same feeling you get when you witch a well,pulled.

We trounced through the leaves closer and closer. As we drew near, you could see the once mighty hardwood had fallen over possibly from sheer massiveness. The root ball had seemingly disintegrated into a pile of reddish humus. As we got closer we could see something growing out of that humus.

Something large,

something reddish white,

something that compelled us to start running.

I knew, as did Deepee, that we had discovered what everyone had always talked about,

Something that would forever change our lives,

.....The Mammoth Red Morel.

We started yelling and hollering that day as if we had found a treasure chest of gold. We couldn't contain our overwhelming enthusiasm. There in front of us was the "Big One" and a whole assortment of lesser morels that would dwarf anything we had seen to date. We just stared at hit and amazed in its size, almost as unnatural as it was big. We were afraid to take our eyes off of it for fear that we would awake from the dream. I recall asking Deepee if he was awake or dreaming, which he said,"Awake dummy".

I don't remember much after that, all the screaming, whooping and hollering followed by a calm that one finds when admiring a thing of beauty and massiveness. We couldn't get it into our bread sacks it was so large. In fact, we almost had to carry it back together.

Lets just say a wheelbarrow would have been ideal.

We got back to Grandma's and the word quickly spread. Now DeePee and myself had achieved a landmark find. We had somehow stepped out of the realm of childhood into manhood that day. Yes sir, we felt a little older, a little bigger, and maybe a little more proud of ourselves that day. After all, we had gone to the mountain and returned victorious so what could we do to ever top that?

We'll maybe next year,

Hey, I heard they found some pretty large white morels over at the Smith Farm.

Hey, did you know that when you find them there one year, that their offspring the next year are bigger.....

Today a red tail hawk flew by and dropped a little red morel on my front porch.

Do you feel the pull?