The Day I Fell Awake.

I have seen the light, yes brothers and sisters, I have been saved. Last year I had an epiphany, an experience that has changed my life. I know this sounds dramatic, maybe even churchy, but have no fear, I won’t be passing the collection plate. It isn’t some 12-step program or self help book. It wasn’t complicated, or time consuming, or expensive, and no, I wasn’t snatched by little green men from outer space and mind probed until I reached nirvana. It was simple and unexpected and it happened like this….

It had been a long day, heck it had been a long week. It was late Friday afternoon and I was on my way home. Finally, the week was over; what a rotten week it has been. It was nothing but problems, screw-ups, and working late to get caught up. Just this afternoon, I was working on a leak in a waterline in the basement of a 100 year old farm house and the pipe burst and soaked me to the skin, not only that, but it soaked the carpet and a bunch of books the homeowner had left sitting in the corner. Do you think the guy cut me any slack? I mean it was a 60-year-old pipe that had burst. Nope. No slack at all. He yelled at me, then he called my boss and yelled at him, then my boss called me and yelled at me. Boy, what a rotten day.

I was going east on Highway 20 headed out of Sweet Home towards Cascadia. I was just passing the Waterhole Tavern, home of loggers, hillbillies, and tweekers. The place is known for its cheap beer, toothless women, and the greasiest chicken you ever saw. I couldn’t wait to get home, kick back, put my feet up and just forget about the bullshit I’d been dealing with all week. Then all of a sudden – BAM – something let loose under the hood. Great clouds of dirty white steam came billowing out from under the hood. SHIT, GODDAMN IT, PIECE OF SHIT!
Finally, I got my truck eased over to the side of the road just opposite Foster Lake. I damn near wrecked my truck before I got pulled over; I couldn’t see anything through all the steam. I popped the hood and got out. When I got the hood open and the steam cleared away, I saw the problem. My upper radiator hose had burst. I went back to my toolbox to look for some duct tape or bailing wire or even some bubblegum – something- anything to rig this thing up so I wouldn’t have to end this already crappy week hitchhiking the rest of the way home. I found a roll of electrical tape and proceeded to do the most masterful job of taping up a radiator hose you ever saw. Now, all I needed was to fill this piece of junk up with water and I’d be in business. I searched around behind my seat under the fast food wrappers and empty soda cans. I came up with an ancient, dented, half smashed Big Gulp cup. As long as it would hold water, I’d be on my way to an over-stuffed easy chair and a tall cold drink in no time. I set off across the highway for the lake, intent on getting water and getting home. I got across the highway without getting run-over, hopped over the guardrail and didn’t even fall on my face. Amazing, maybe my luck was changing. No, not yet. It was going to be a steep climb over big slick slimy rocks to get down to the lake. Sure, why not, the way my day was going. I set off down the rocks. I was about ¾ of the way down when, whoosh, whap, and slam – I was flat on my ass. I just sat there for a while swearing and yelling and cursing my rotten luck, then I looked up.

That’s when it hit me. The lake was flat and smooth as glass. I could see the reflection of the hills surrounding the lake, the beautiful dark green of the Doug Firs, the startling white of the snow covered mountains off in the distance. There was a sharp tangy smell of early winter in the air. I stopped and took in the panoramic image surrounding me. There were fluffy white whisps of fog hanging here and there in the tree tops, I could smell the deep green scent of the forest behind me; I realized I hadn’t heard a car go by in quite some time. It was so quiet and peaceful
that I could hear the melody that the wind played as it whispered through the trees. **WOW!** The light of the setting sun was bathing the snow-covered mountains of the Santiam Pass in a beautiful golden glow. Just then a giant bright silver rainbow trout leapt skyward looking for his dinner; he fell back with a mighty splash and a whippoorwill trilled out its song somewhere off in the distance.

**WOW,** I thought for about the thirtieth time in the last three minutes, this is what it’s all about. I just sat there sucking it all in like some cosmic sponge. I felt all my stress and anger, the tensions, worries and cares of the whole week, leaching out of me as if Mother Nature herself was giving my sprit a whole body massage. All of a sudden getting home wasn’t so important after all. This slimy rock I had landed on felt more comfortable than my overstuffed easy chair at home. The nature I was drinking in tasted better than the cold drink that had been my highest priority only moments before. In the book Walden Pond, by Henry David Thoreau he wrote **“To be awake is to be alive.”** I think I finally understand what he meant. I drive this road forty times a week and today was the first time that I was truly **“awake”** to this panoramic vision, this giant dose of God’s own stress relief tonic, that was stretched out before me in all its wonder and glory.

“Yaall need any hep?” came crashing into my peaceful little space. I looked up behind me on the highway and there was an old geezer in an even older pickup truck. **“No thanks”** I hollered. **“I’m doing just fine!”** Somewhere along the line I had decided that I wasn’t going anywhere soon, and that in the future this would definitely be one of my regular stops.