

First day. Walking again through the wall into a world of magic. That big, beautiful, wooden wall. I had no idea what was to happen this year. Every year in Sherwood's summer camp was absolutely unique, and I remember every moment since year one. This year, my focus was blacksmithing. I was only staying for two weeks, and I hadn't signed up for an apprenticeship for the first week. Damn, I had to work fast. I approached Master Shadowhawk (the blacksmithing master in previous years) about an apprenticeship, but he said that it was too late to apply for the first week. I had one other option, though. This year, the camp introduced something new. Two instructors for every activity, which meant new blacksmiths as well. I had never heard of them before, Rae, the master, with a cutting wit of diamond, and Bessimir, champion of the North, alpha of the arctic wolf pack, bastard son of Thor. I had to speak with them.

On Monday, the first day of classes, I participated in blacksmithing with Rae and Bessimir for the first time. Their shop was set up under the structure used as the horn shop during faire season. I was skeptical of their skills at first, I admit, but as time progressed that day, I came to realize how overly capable they were. In the first week, I smithed as much as I could. I worked on nametags made from copper I helped with a knife being made for King Richard. I attended during free time, pool time, and any other time I could afford. Finally, towards the middle of the week, I approached the camp director, Teach, and pleaded for the opportunity of an apprenticeship for the second week of camp. "It's up to them," he responded, setting off a chain of events that has changed my life.

From then on, the next three days were filled with almost exclusively blacksmithing with Rae and Bessimir. I donned my garb, grabbed a hammer, and pounded into existence a unique bond with the two. I worked hard, and improved upon my skills. Finally, on Friday morning, I asked the two if they would consider taking me on as an apprentice. With excessive thought, I received my answer on Saturday. They told me to come to class bright and early on Monday. It wasn't an official apprenticeship, due to contract issues, so I had to eat and check in with my clan periodically, but I was ecstatic. The entire week following, I lost a lot of contact with my friends, but still retained strong friendships, and even stronger blacksmithing skills. I learned new twists, ways to hammer, terminology, metal types, etc.. All I could learn.

For the duration of the third week, I was not at camp. I had left for California the previous Saturday. Even as I was over a thousand miles away, all I could think about was Sherwood. I was still giddy with joy pertaining to my experience. I have never, and most likely will never, have a better time than I have had at the camp for the past four years. It really has changed my life. It has changed my perspective on situations that I'm presented with. It brought me in contact with the love of my life, Savannah. Some of my closest friends and I originally met at Sherwood. George, Brian, everyone who made this camp and faire possible, thank you. Thank you so much for allowing me to attend, and thank you for hosting such a wonderful place, where people truly can escape to a different world.

