



Happy  
Birthday

## Questions from Deep in the Heart of Texas

**Q** Dear Boots,  
My birthday is on St. Patrick's Day but I'm not Irish, and to be perfectly honest, I'm not very lucky either. Do I just have to suck it up and suck down a green beer like everybody expects me to?

— From, Bday Boy

**A** Dear Bday Boy,  
All of us are going to get together now and sing you a birthday song. You ready? 100 BOTTLES OF BEER ON THE WALL, 100 BOTTLES OF BEER. TAKE ONE DOWN, PASS IT AROUND, 100 BOTTLES OF BEER ... Wait, Bday

Boy, where did you go? Everybody stop singing and look around — does anybody see Bday Boy? No? Well, shoot. Okay well, let's keep singing. All together now, 100 BOTTLES OF BEER ON THE WALL ...

There's a reason for this singing today, my Boy, and here it is: People who try to force you into doing things like drink unnaturally colored beverages and sing raucous songs usually aren't in it for you — they're in it for the party. And they'll probably find a way to party whether you raise your glass or not.

You are so sure that it's a mark of unluckiness for you to have been born on St. Patrick's Day. But something I've noticed about us human beings is that once we decide

we're on a streak of bad luck, it becomes impossible to change our minds. The lottery could look like bad luck because "Of course I bought my Powerball ticket on the day it reset and was only worth two million."

So I'd like to step in and try to divert your train of thought by suggesting that perhaps this odd, green cross that's yours to bear is actually the best luck you could have been born into. Other people could spend lifetimes rolling through birthdays, but yours is on such a distinct, special day that you are forced to clarify. To dig deep and ask, "What actually would feel celebratory for me?" And when you do the work of arriving at that answer, you can go through the world

and find the people who really want to be with you for that journey.

Not to spoil how it will go, but my best guess is that the masses aren't going to jump in when you decide to go your own way. But what fun would that be anyway? I've held my own proverbial mugs of green beer in pursuit of a promised end or experience. Every time it's led to an empty glass and a general knowing that I shouldn't have trusted so thoroughly in how other people say the world works.

So to heck with how folks expect you to spend your birthday. Even "to heck" with what I'm advising here, if you choose. Put an ear to what would make that day sing for you, then go to whatever lengths necessary to make that happen. Some might say you are being a party pooper, but I would call it something different: making a bit of your own luck.

— *Love, Boots*

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**Q Dear Boots,**  
**My wife says it's time for us to get new sofas — just when I thought they were getting comfortable.** How does a person know if it's time to throw out the old and bring in the new?

— *From, Turning on to New Road*

**A Dear New Road,**  
**I've got a joke for you.** Man walks into a crowded diner that boasts a "Seat Yourself" sign. When he spots a couple standing up to leave a booth, he hustles over to slide into the pleather seat before anyone else can nab it. Immediately he realizes it's a doubly great situation. Not only has he gotten a seat, but the butt grooves of the person before him have already worn a comfy place into the seat *and*

those grooves are still warm. Here's the punchline: You are that man in the diner!

There's nothing wrong with being that man, but tiptoe out on a limb with me here because I'm going to explain something. There are other people in the world who do not feel as you do about butt grooves. I don't even have to be hanging out on that limb to say you share a house and a lifetime vow with one of these people.

For the non-groovy people, of whom I also count myself, part of the joy of sitting down is that the seat feels fresh. The firmness says we can settle in as we choose, not as dictated by those who came before. When grooves are detected in a home couch it does not speak "comfortable" as much as "trouble" bordering on "emergency." To take it back to the language of the diner: We want couches like we want our coffee — a cup that gives a little push, never lets us sink.

If you've read this column before, you know I don't usually lunge for the new. I see value in assigning meaning to objects and resuscitating before replacing. But in this case I do not believe your rear end should lead the way. Comfort isn't the only aim. It's a good thing, but as the warm pleather bench reminds us, sometimes too much of a good thing becomes cringeworthy.

As for the second part of your inquiry, maybe this is one of those times in life when larger existential meaning need not be tied to an event. When it can be easier and simpler — just letting a person you love have her way. That brings a completely different kind of comfort. One I'm guessing might feel fresh for both of you.

— *Love, Boots*

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