

# KISSED *in* dirt

by Holly Love King, Tennessee



Not everyone would choose to celebrate their wedding anniversary in a tent, but for us, it seemed perfect. Not only would we save money, we'd also get to tent-camp at the beach. I could just picture it: bathing suits by day and campfires by night. Whatever our air mattress lacked in comfort, our outdoor adventure would make up for. And after packing everything but the kitchen sink, we were off for a full week of camping at Florida's beautiful St. Andrews State Park.

Our campsite was made of pine-straw floors, evergreen walls, and a sky-painted ceiling. We were snug as bugs in a rug in our little tent for two. Each morning, thanks to my husband, I'd wake to the smells of a campfire and coffee. I'd journal and read while he got ready for the day. And by night, we'd be back in the same spot, campfire lit,

discussing the day's adventure or plans for tomorrow.

The state park offers a ferry ride to Shell Island, a wildlife habitat, where you can see large populations of seagulls, pelicans, and even bottlenose dolphins. The birds fed on large schools of fish and there were rare seashells to be discovered. We kayaked the Gulf of Mexico, sunbathed in the sand, and my husband bought me an ice cream every afternoon. I even refused to wear shoes the entire trip. My feet, buried in the sand or walking along a rock pier, reminded me of my barefoot childhood. Yes, this was an anniversary to remember.

At some point, we realized that the bottoms of my feet were stained in dirt. Try as I might, they would not

come clean. At first, it was a bit gross, but then, it just became funny. Later, however, it was as if the earth itself began to sink into my bones. I thought about my ancestors. Maybe not my actual ancestors, but the ancestors of this land. I bet they, too, had worn feet kissed in dirt.

Looking around our evergreen walls and soft, pine-straw floor, I could feel the pulse of this place, the slow, steady beat of her heart. Though teeming with life, this place was still. Though full of sound, quiet. Surrounded with modern RVs and quaint little campers, it was still simple. And something within me was becoming the same.

I began to see how our evolved, modern way of living leaves us far from the very land that gives us life. How trees can look like plain ol' trees or grass like boring ol' grass. Even the animals can look like pesky wildlife in our suburban settings. We see nature as nice, but not a necessity. We plow through paper towels and plastic like it's not a problem. Our jobs keep us busy, our lives keep us full, and our homes keep us warm. What more could we want?

Yet this very nature we so often ignore is not something we're separate from. Even though we may not see the Earth as our mother, she still sees us as her child. As it turns out, we're not just here to take up space and consume. We're here to live close to the land; touch her, taste her, feel her. And like our ancestors, at least from time-to-time, we can wear feet kissed in dirt.

Holly says, "I am a Nashville-native wife and mama. I own/operate my house-cleaning business, Happy to Be Home, and freelance write. I love everything nature and prefer bare feet." To learn more, visit [HollyLoveKing.com](http://HollyLoveKing.com).