

Vol. 3, No.1



February 2019

Normalcy Mag

Exploring American Culture

**A Matter of Homes
and How We Share Them**

A HOMEFIELD ADVANTAGE

Home Bodies

MY VALLEY, MY COUNTRY REVISITED

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NormalcyMag

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"Home Between the Valley Heart"

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*Publisher & Editor: Tim Krenz
Assistant Editor: Derek Shores
Associate Editor: J.D. Schloss
Cover Page Editor: Chris "Cree" Larson
www.normalcymag.com*

*The CEPIA Club LLC
P.O. Box 60
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Editor's Standard

Welcome back to NormalcyMag!

In this issue, we introduce our new team member, Chris "Cree" Larson, who started his tenure with our new cover layout design. Please let us know what you think. As we incorporate more design changes throughout the year, we hope to bring our design quality up to the level where we believe we have offered quality content for avid and casual users.

The usual characters, which we love, return for this issue. Khaiti Hallstein, Davey Shoves, J.D. Schloss, and of course that posthumous persona mira, Pi Kielty. In this issue, we would like to introduce a new writer to these pages, Reziel Fielding, who has contributed two stunning pieces to this issue's theme of "A Matter of Homes and How We Share Them."

For some of the experiments we will try in our layout and our themes by design, in this year's third volume set, you

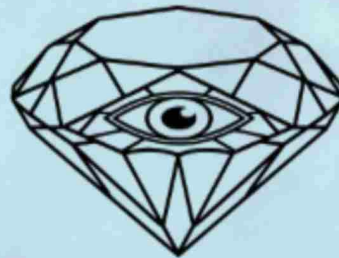
may notice a few things coming and going, things tried or discarded, in order to make this a defining publication for what we offer. Stay tuned for the updates. By the end of 2019, we should have already found our design, the way we have found our magazine's voice via our narrative.

As we have repeatedly said, perhaps a "normal" does not exist except in stereotypes, but we here with NormalcyMag believe people want a stable middle, somewhere in between, where people meet their own normalcy. We hope we have delivered on that sentiment in this issue.

Please, enjoy this issue. And as always, "Please read with open mind."

Tim Krenz
Editor and Publisher

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Reflecting

Home: Live, Laugh, Love. . .and Die

By Khaiti Hallstein

The term “Home” can mean pretty much anything to anyone. You might consider home to be your physical house, or your family, maybe where you were born or grew up, or wherever or with whoever you feel most comfortable. For me, my home is my body. It's where I dwell, no matter where I go.

Since my essay in the December issue, where I wrote about my Mom dying at age 50 making me face my own mortality, the most ironic situation has occurred; my home is threatening to evict me.

In mid-January, I had a preventative early mammogram. The young technician at the hospital handled me gently, telling me that I'd either get a call in a couple days, or a letter the following week with the results. She said if I get a call, that's bad, but to watch for a letter because “it's very unlikely they'll see anything to worry about.” Right after my appointment I texted a pic of the scans of interior of my breasts to my boyfriend and my sisters, it was so cool looking.

Then the following week, I get a message from the Breast Center. They want me to come in for a more intensive type of 3D mammogram. I started shaking and sobbing hysterically when I got the voicemail and began navigating the medical system and insurance world. This is possibly the most depressing and irritating situation to be immersed in, when you've just gotten word that you might be on your way out. Strangers on the phone, trying to understand what you are saying through your choking sobs. I had one woman who works for my HMO telling me to stay calm, take deep breaths, that she too went through this recently and it's “probably nothing.” Another woman gave me about 100 different phone numbers for clinics to call that were in-network and did diagnostic ultrasounds which is what I needed to schedule because my insurance won't cover 3D mammograms, ending the call saying “good luck and have a good day.” Arrrrrgh.

Today I go in for my second mammogram, diagnostic imaging and ultrasound. I'm sure I am using all the wrong terms. What I do know is that they're examining a part of my home to see if it houses something that is trying to kill me. Breast cancer is scary as fuck. It kills. It is not an immediate death sentence, but it kills. I'm not going to sugarcoat or assume the best, like the technician did, because I know better. My Mom fought off breast cancer for 9 years, but these invasive mutated cells spread to other parts of her body until it went into her bones and her brain. And killed her.

So, for the last 12 years since she died, I've been preparing myself to die. I pursued my dreams, lived like today was my last. I am more or less pretty happy with my accomplishments and achievements, adventures and experiences. That was her gift in death, in her leaving her home, my Mom helped me appreciate mine. I just didn't expect to have to face this possible ending this soon.

You know those cheesy plaques that have popped up everywhere in recent years, usually printed in sparkly cursive lettering on antiqued barn board: “Live, Laugh, Love!” They are ridiculous, but I actually 100% agree with the sentiment. Because no matter what, eventually we all will die. And that's something to live laugh love about NOW.

Listen, I know I might not have anything to worry about. Since I don't have a historical record of mammograms yet, they don't have anything to compare my first one to. This is what one of the women from the Breast Center told me. I winced when she said "it's probably nothing." I have dense small breasts, which according to my boyfriend's research means it's harder to get good, thorough scans on. I winced when he said this. I feel surrounded by so many things not going how they "probably" will.

Honestly, it makes me want to push the limits. What else can happen to me while I am here, in my home? I feel further empowered. I don't feel angry. And I am glad. No matter what happens today, what I find out, I will continue enjoying my time in my "home" as long as I can. Later this week my guy and I are going on a week long vacation to New Orleans. We planned it out 6 months ago. I can't wait.



Khaiti Hallstein lives and farms in Clayton with her boyfriend Ben. She switched from raising goats to specializing in ducks and life is good. Check out her website at: www.Ltdfarm.com

Sub Terra Vita

Chronicle #55

My Valley, My Country: Revisited

By Tim Krenz

"My valley, my country!" I exclaimed in the first of these chronicles in Sub Terra Vita, "unmyderground life." What did I mean then by "my valley, my country?" Does my meaning remain valid? What does it mean to me now?

In writing these sketches and mini-memoirs, I talk throughout of those personal experiences and stories of life here, the living stage drama of the St. Croix Valley. In my spirit, the topics grounded themselves upon the influences of my family and its heritage, my friends, my surroundings, and the meandering that shaped my own life and formed the hidden histories that abound in this homeland—my valley, my country.

I feel, deeply, a duty to share, reflect and expound on them. I know some stories and they should say things that help others to understand the people and place we call home. With perhaps too much pride, I mentioned in the first chronicle of having a direct family lineage in the St. Croix Valley going back nearly one hundred and fifty years. My great-great grandfather homesteaded in the East Farmington area just south of Osceola. However, even as a fifth generation descendant to this land, I claim no propriety over the valley's story but only as it extends over my personal life—seeing it, hearing it, touching it, trying to understand it.

Many families, past and now, have put frustration, blood, tears, sweat and loved ones into this ground. These underground life chronicles try to honor those peoples. May they continue to do so, as we live toward the future today. Because of these reasons, "my valley, my country," meant a spiritual kinship with the valley, one that only seeks to nurture all and not demean anyone or anything. For this, my statement remains valid. I care about my home, my homeland in Western Wisconsin, the valley of the St. Croix River. Moving onward, what does "my valley, my country" mean to me now? Times change and time changes. Things have to evolve, and so does our perspective. Along with the oldness of the St. Croix Valley, new people and their families have come. Whereas the passing of time regenerates the soil when nurtured and fed with the old things that expire, new people, new ideas, new ways, new forms can bring an invigorating and creative tension that allows a vibrant life to flourish.

The values of the old things here complement with traditions and customs the new innovations and the growth of the modern world. Indeed, without the wise mix of the old added to the new, unstable relationships between people, and between them and the material, creates turmoil and destructive tendencies beneficial to no one. Without the creative, positive tension in the process of renewal, the valley would wither and die by staleness and depletion. After that, it would snuff itself and its value to the world by becoming the opposite of a home, just a place without character. As residents who need to care, we can not accept the wrong alternatives. It seems better to focus and work toward the positives.

I care about my home, my homeland, in this corner of the world. Because we all should care, we must contribute good, inclusive ideas and by our deeds preserve responsibly the things that make the valley of the St. Croix River more than just a place to rest and run. We need to keep and improve it as a home for us, now and for later. When I started writing the Sub Terra Vita Chronicles four years ago, I intended to explain the past formed by my memory. "My valley, my country," meant that I recognize my debts to others who lived or passed this way. They gave me a vibrant, comfortable homeland in which to live. I still seek only to share my experiences, but in this chronicle I would like to see how my experiences going forward may take shape.

"My valley, my country," remains my mantra for now. A mix of customs and traditions survive but the new and interesting developments should stay relevant. Times change. Physical developments change with them. If traditions pass, culture remains based upon and growing from them. A culture provides the bedrock of sanity and values, and stability, in the change of time and appearance. Like bedrock, like strong personal principles and character, culture grips to the land and water and how people use them. We grow from the experience.



In a land and water, indisputably one symbiotic whole anywhere, we have connections to past, present and future. Both land and water as one and the people and habits the other, all combine to improve if we have the willing effort to grow healthy. We must recognize these attributes—land, water, people, and culture—as one indivisible and undivided whole of the St. Croix Valley. We must recognize our common interest and the multiple denominators as the single, whole, indeed absolute ONE.

The St. Croix River may divide two states, Wisconsin and Minnesota. In spite of that, it impresses all people on both sides of the water with the strong physical reality, and with an almost spiritual bond of history, commerce, fun, and recollections. The

Left--The iconic "River Valley Spirit" statue above the dam in downtown St. Croix Falls, this work of art by Valley native Julieann Stage raptures in a snow storm. Photo by Roger Panek.

course of the river flows like a spine, the nerves to the stem of our consciousness about both its presence and meaning. It has a pure beauty itself, even farther north upriver. Without realizing it, the river provides our reason for life here, even if we remain unconscious of that fact. It has immense kinetic power. The river, though, keeps its own sacred secrets, too. In its meanderings, ever changing its course and barriers by erosion and time's hard pounding science, the St. Croix River's life has its own reasons perhaps unknown to us. It can make comedy in our memory. It has, also, sadly too often brought tragedy as well. That defines its pure power in a non-human, almost mystical form.

Luckily, the national scenic riverway recognizes its sanctity and works volumes of near-magic in spells to keep it purer, cleaner, healthier, and usable beyond most other modern waterways. Without the river we would possess no valley from which to draw its life blood of good water. With the river, children and adults who grow up here had many rites of passage, from canoeing, camping, boating, fishing, swimming; from viewing the expanse from high rock cliffs; from sitting on sand bars exposed when the electricity generating dam in St. Croix Falls slows its discharge. The fun, if respecting the river's power, gives great hope. If not respected, as we tragically re-learn often, it can also take dreams away. These powers give the river the stories of our lives here.

As a kid in Osceola, Wisconsin, born at the old hospital on the top of the bluff overlooking the river, I have always had attachments to that water, and definitely to the land around it. My friends and I, even with my family, spent incalculable time on the St. Croix River. We swam, we paddled, we motored, we camped, we jumped (luckily, no one died—many others have), we explored, and we grew. On its edges of land above, on the islands in the coursing stream, on the backwaters, in the swamps, on its bridges, and in the water itself, we learned to respect it, for its massive effects and for its dangers. We saw its characteristics, its curiosities, and its scars made by human misuse. The St. Croix River, like the entire valley, has its nooks, corners, its concealments—everywhere. Wiser minds took precautions to help the river survive long ago. Today, we benefit from that.

By neutral intent, the river offers no malicious motive to humans or animals. As people who live here or who visit our land and water, we all get to enjoy it. Treat the waters and the land around it well, and the stories grow. Misuse them, hurt them, taunt it with acts of stupidity, carelessness, irresponsibility, or deliberate abuse, and the river will haunt us in the future.

In many ways, both good and bad, the St. Croix River treats its guest and the valley's children with the fate that timing, chance, purpose, or accident calls our odds. This fact holds true for lifetimes. It holds true each season. The river's character possesses qualities neither demon nor deity. It will continue to arbitrate the destiny of all of us in some way. Like any home, the valley around the river ties into those odds of fates. It stays true, never false. It will stay true as long as we treat life here true and never falsely.

The surrounding land in the St. Croix Valley feeds all the watersheds to the St. Croix River itself, so the water and land hold the present life and the future destiny of this homeland. "My valley, my country." The common connectors of land, water, people, and culture, move forward. This forward movement needs to keep the St. Croix River as the key to the narrative we will write. We need the river to enjoy this place fully. Therefore, we should keep always in our mind and spirit this link of our past, the now, and the coming time. Keeping the story strong, we can keep this place a good home.

The river and the watersheds that feed it give a custom and tradition to carry forward. On the other hand, how many people actually know their home well? Regardless of other places we can visit and see, we all need and should want to know our home better. I challenge everyone, the old and the young, to explore and experience this place, this valley, this country. See it, live it, think of it, absorb it into the memory and the sense. Realize what this place means, and why we want it to grow better while still keeping the values of the old. All of the valley's nervous system; the creeks, the hills, the big ridge line, the old farms, the old ruins, the new buildings, the appropriate way to renew the community, all provide a body for our consciousness. All things here

must connect. Use the opportunity to know it wisely. Use it in peace, and share the story. Only in this way can we preserve the narrative of our times, enrich our lives, and learn that we all must consider ourselves neighbors who can get along together. The commons of the St. Croix River give us that life-saving opportunity, to unite around our wonder, and not divide over the irrelevancies.

Building the story with a common language of our culture here in my valley, my country, we can grow and transition to even better achievements. We will meet the future with the confidence of moral gain and not the fears and uncertainties of material addictions. We can only go about the future smartly if we know the facts and even the inspiring myths of ourselves as people of the valley, and of our home as land and water. We can meet the future as ONE.

What does “my valley, my country,” mean to me now? It means living prosperously in every sense of the words. It means a shared understanding with my neighbors of what we have at stake. Yet, now it moves beyond me. To me, it truthfully becomes, “Our Valley, our Country!”



Story

Burnt Bridges

By Reciel Fielding

The billboard leaning haphazardly next to the roadside ditch proclaims the cleanest restrooms and the freshest gas in five miles. I remember when the sign was put up all those long years ago, we had ridden our bikes out on the endless black ribbon whose surface radiated heat and promised escape from the small Georgia town in which we lived. My Grandfather told us all the highway and new gas station would be the ruin of us. We didn't care, everything was fresh, and we welcomed any change from the dirt roads and vegetable fields that stretched to the pines. The Cadillac's grill dipped and weaved as the undulating highway bore its weight while I barreled along those last 5 miles. Pulling into the litter filled parking lot of the station I became aware the cleanest restrooms and freshest gas were a failed promise that my past bore forth. Broken windows and toppled shelving spilled out the store front as if it were running away as I had those forty years ago. I walked around the station looking for god knows what, just like I don't know why I am here. Coming across a broken office chair out back, with a worn fabric seat and broken bits of foam holding on to their last vestiges of existence, I sit down and spin around hoping I don't get tossed. Lighting up a cigarette and watching the tendrils of smoke dance about my head, I feel as broken as this place and must gather up the courage to go on. I know what lies ahead and I am bound and determined to see this to the end. Deciding the chair needs to part of this journey into the past I toss it into the trunk of the car. Smiling, I shut the trunk on my kidnapped prize whispering, “it'll soon all be over my friend, no one will even know you're gone.”

Exiting the lot, listen to the glass being ground to fine dust. I drive slowly through town observing that my Grandfather's prediction became true, abandoned store fronts with graffiti sprayed plywood windows, line the street. The strip mall and conglomerate stores ten miles away, took the town hostage and slowly starved the town to death.

Our driveway begins where the town ends, and I pull the car into the rutted clay driveway. Untended kudzu covers the house, strangling what little life is left in the home. Like a skipping record the word home keeps echoing in my head. The dirt sprayed

windshield offers a hazy view of where I grew up, visions flickering from real to surreal. It's aged like an old man, hunched over and threatening to fall at any moment. When I was a kid anyone driving into the driveway would be announced by yelling kids and barking dogs, no matter how many times someone had visited we treated them with a curiosity as if aliens had just landed. We would dance around the car and yell back to the house who was there. Strangers were reluctant to brave the onslaught of noise and peering faces and they couldn't leave without backing over one or two of us.

Today, silence pervades the air, so quiet that I can hear my heart beat over the pinging of the cooling engine. Stepping out into the Georgia sun, perspiration popping out on my forehead, I look toward the empty house and drag my kidnapped victim from the trunk. If this chair had any ability to flee, now would be the time to make a break for it. Wrangling it into the shade of the massive oak that towers over the front of the house I plop down and savor the coolness of the gray. I lean back and crane my neck to find the groove the rope from the tire swing left. It took some time to find the scar in the dappled sunshine, but there it was. Memories overwhelm me and I try in vain to separate them out. Noises and smells lie just beneath the surface wanting to spill forth the tears behind dams I have constructed. Lurching out of the chair I head back to the car, grabbing a ratty cardboard box I turn and trip on the root of the oak falling headlong into the acorn covered grass. The cardboard box falls heavily splitting at the side, exposing its contents. Suddenly I feel as though someone has caught me glimpsing at a woman's panties and I shamefully turn my head away. I gather and cradle the box to my chest as I nestle into the chair and remove the rubber bands that have held the lid on these many years. The box contains all the letters I wrote home but never sent. They are my hopes and dreams of a reconciliation that never occurred, my longings for relationships that never healed.

They contain my misgivings and my forgiveness of myself and my Father. For forty years I have filled the box but never could empty it. No one is here to hear them, to read them, to comfort me or forgive me. Hot tears splash onto the yellowed envelopes exposing the words underneath as deep sobs emanate from my soul seeking finality to the chapter I have written today. Hours pass and the coolness of the night awakens me. There is an ethereal glow from the distant streetlights as I creep forward as a thief in the night. Opening the front door, I set the letters inside the entryway for I don't have the strength to enter. Moths show up as soon as the car lights turn on and I back away looking up to see the light sweep across my past as I head into my future.



Reciel Fielding lives and writes in Chisago City, MN



Check Your Head List

How to Build A Home

By Davey Shoves

One: Start with a good piece of ground, water, or air.

Two: Decide what factors might affect your prospective building site; heat, wind, cold, rain, snow, etc.

Three: Resource construction materials with love, support and nonsense in mind.

Four: Can you see paradise from your home? If not close your eyes and move closer.

Five: Remember the weakest home is a rigid one. Allow room for imperfection.

Six: Nails of laughter work best for fastening enlightenment siding to any home of your choice; hive, den, boat, levitating VW, dwelling or rock.

Seven: Once you have installed a heating surface bake cookies, squash, bacon, bread, or crickets.

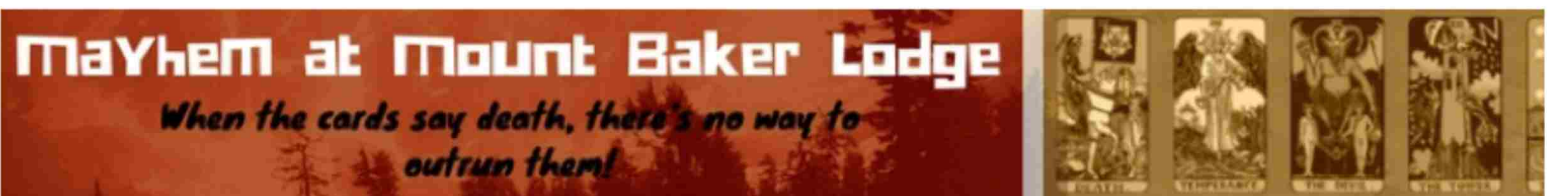
Eight: Find a nice spot just outside the dwelling to become nature.

Nine: Allow a pet into your life. Don't treat he, she or it like a baby. Treat them as an equal.

Ten: Fill all the obviously missing steps to this checklist with hard work, play and smiles.



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Story

Safe At Home

By J.D. Schloss

Riverfront Stadium was a sterile dump. Though I only played there once, I called it home for the first 30 some years of my life. Riverfront opened on June 30, 1970 and played host a few weeks later to the All Star Game. My dad, attending the game with my mother (and me in the womb) caught a foul ball that night off the bat of Jim Hickman. Baseball fans will remember this as the game in which Pete Rose bowled over American League catcher, Ray Fosse in a ferocious play at home to win the game for the National League. To this day, Charlie Hustle's number 14 remains my favorite number.

Riverfront wasn't really a dump; it just lacked character. It was one of the cookie-cutter multipurpose stadia (not even called a ballpark!!) that blighted baseball for the last several decades of the 20th century. Nobody ever mistook Riverfront for a "green cathedral" and writers never spoke of its "hallowed grounds" like they might of Fenway or Palace of the Fans. No ivy covered walls or beautiful cityscapes beyond the outfield bleachers. As a physical structure, it was so unremarkable as to be offensive. The ballpark is always part of the experience, but it's the game that matters. It's the game and the players and the fans that spark new joy and connection with each new day.

Throughout the 70's, the Reds were known as The Big Red Machine. "We grew up on the right side of the rainbow," my alcoholic buddy Jim would say years later about being raised during the Reds heyday. I spent the first decade of my life at the ballpark, sandwiched usually between my grandfather and my uncle. Section 212, Row 4, Seat 2. That was my spot. Grandpa had season tickets about halfway down the first base line.

I'd ask endless questions and Grandpa and Uncle Milt provided all the answers. We'd first and second-guess the moves of the mangers and I think this is where I learned how to play the game of baseball. They'd have me watching the position of the best defensive players, they pointed out that instinctual baseball first step that separates the ballplayer from the guy just playing ball, soft hands, getting the bat head out quick to strike the ball in front of the plate, the importance of hitting the cutoff man. It was a fascinating, endless education and I couldn't get enough of it.

We didn't talk about school or my parents or really anything except baseball. They'd quiz me about the batting averages of American League hitters and have me guess which pitchers numbers were on the line-scores. Felt amazing when I could contribute to figuring out the 5th inning Scoreboard Stumper trivia question. We'd laugh and laugh about players with silly names. They'd tell me all about long dead players who seemed to only hit foul ball homeruns! Often, my dad would join us and it brought a fun element in that he'd hoot and holler at the opposing teams, razz the umpires, and get my uncle all worked up to join him. This was much to my reserved grandfather's chagrin, but I absolutely loved every fucking minute of it.

Baseball is home to me. When I wasn't at Riverfront, I was either playing ball or reading about it. I learned how to read on Baseball Digest and The Sporting News. Checked out every baseball book in my school and local libraries and devoured them. Even from a young age, my favorites were the one's that described not only our National Pastime, but included ribald stories about groupies, and amphetamines, and booze.

Win or lose, I loved going to the ballgames. The decade of the 80's brought lots of losses at Riverfront as the Big Red Machine was dismantled. This in no way dampened my enthusiasm or frequent attendance at the ballpark. I played a lot more baseball in the 80's and the lessons I learned from watching so many games with family made me feel at home on the diamond. Wiffleball, stickball, knothole ball, high school team, summer traveling teams...I was always on the field playing. Something about playing ball that's hard to describe. I'm not a very competitive person. I prefer to win, but baseball transcends wins and losses for me. Being at the ballpark or playing has always just given me this guiding comfort and calm; that all is right with the world and all is right with me. I'm at home.

This sense of home had its foundation in all of those comforting conversations with family and countless friends in Section 212 while watching the greatest game unfold night after night. My high school teams of the late mid-late 1980's resembled the early 80's Reds. We'd routinely get drubbed and it really never bothered me. The first time I got drunk was in 1987. We'd played ball all day, went to a party, and drank beer and nasty wine coolers and the girls all seemed to love me, I felt like the life of the party, and I felt a new sense of home. It was all good fun. One season, we went winless at home, our only victories coming on the road in a doubleheader sweep of one of the Christian schools out in the middle of nowhere. We won those two to a chorus of chants from the Christian fans of "Faggots! Hippie faggots!" We thought it hysterical more than offensive or closed-minded. Give me a bat, a glove, a ball, and some teammates and none of that other shit can touch me.

The decade of the 80's closed with me getting to suit up in the Reds clubhouse and eventually take the field in the bottom sixth inning as a member of the East Side All Stars. It was the same view of the field I'd grown up watching and I must've left about ten gallons of nervous chew spit in the home dugout. Riverfront at that time had 55,000 seats. Maybe 300 were filled for this game and about 70 of those were family and friends. They spent the first four innings heckling our manager to put me in and the final three innings rooting for me. I made a few plays in the field, hit a bloop double, and crossed the same home plate I'd watched hundreds of professional ballplayers touch.

The next twenty plus years were more of the same, but my sense of home got rather distorted. I played a lot of baseball and softball and wiffle ball. I went to hundreds of amazing ballgames with beautiful people, continued reading the box scores every morning, and talked baseball with anyone and everyone. I even began calling games into a handheld tape recorder. My sense of well being got hijacked though. Baseball was all I cared about, but it became a kind of second agenda. I'd always loved the Rogers Hornsby response when asked what he does over the winter: "I stare out the window and wait for Spring," but drugs and alcohol and isolation from self, from home, from joy made life close to intolerable without distractions. My true love and home became a way to escape painful reality. Instead of sitting with family in Section 212, I moved my act to standing room behind the plate in the green seats. Sure, I went with lots of close friends and even my brother, but would avoid grandpa and my uncle knowing they wouldn't approve of the smoking, drug-taking and drunkenness that now took place every time I'd go to the ballpark. It was a badge of honor though to me at the time. Lame football fans tailgate eight times a year and I get drunk and high before and during and after all 162 of the regular season schedule. I'd do the same the rest of the year too.

Riverfront Stadium was imploded just after my 32nd birthday and my life had been in self-destruction mode long before that. It was a downward spiral that was hard to recognize while in it. It continued for nearly another decade. I couldn't find peace. My comfort and ease while on the baseball diamond ended due to drunkenness once in 1993 then again in 2003. I played softball for years in between and addiction robbed me of that as I turned into a liability on the field and an even bigger disaster off it. I was no longer at home on the diamond. The nadir came during a drunken charity softball game in 2006 in Ann Arbor. I'd been up for days on a cocaine and booze binge. Some kids heckling me got me rattled and I dropped a fly ball and then threw to the wrong base. My baseball first step was officially dead. I had no home.

I had lost my sense of home long without even knowing it. I hit the road. I had a house with my girlfriend in Columbus, an apartment of my own in Ann Arbor, and yet spent most of 2003-2010 in motel rooms running away from home while at the same time trying to feel at home. Booze, drugs, music and baseball. Having no idea that everything I thought was leading me home was driving me further away. I was still chasing that feeling from the first time I got drunk. My love of the game has always bordered on obsession. I couldn't find any contentment unless I was high. I created a fictitious baseball league, staying up for weeks at a time making up names and nicknames 1000 players, stats, imagining games and writing about them. I'd abandon it whenever I ran out of the substances. The league was an homage to all the people I'd played ball with, gone to games with, watched play ball, and read about. It wasn't enough. I was dying.

Something happened inside of me, again without me knowing it. My sense of home from within flickered like a rally starting bloop single. And the week prior to Opening Day, 2010, I again went on the road. This time, to get help. I was certain it wouldn't work. Playing ball again or enjoying anything without alcohol and drugs wasn't on my radar. I scoffed at the idea of having fun sober or being creative without drugs. Thank god, I was wrong.

The process of finding and living at home daily has been and continues to be a long, daily journey. Slowly, I've been able to find that place within and position myself in relation to the world there. In 2011, I made my way back onto the softball diamond. I struggled from being so out of shape physically and spiritually. Our team took weekly beatings and again, the wins and losses didn't matter. I loved being with my teammates. The sense of home though was not complete as my self image and inability to pull off playing the game I had been so good at made the experience less than. I was certain I'd never play ball again. I can now see it as wholly necessary though. The stages of confronting fear and finding home aren't always discreet. In 2017, I began writing about baseball. In 2018, I told a new girlfriend about my love of the game and mentioned that I had once played at Riverfront Stadium. Days later I got a call from a friend of hers saying, "We need a shortstop." I half-jokingly told my girlfriend that I regretted bragging about thirty-year old baseball exploits. The decision to say yes and don the spikes again was agonizing. I'd gotten in much better physical shape, but remained afraid that I couldn't pull it off. I went with my new "purity of intent" mantra, said yes, and ended up having one of the greatest summers of my life. I met new teammates, found my baseball first step again, and found out I can always regain the home field advantage.



J.D. Schloss works, lives, writes and laughs from Taos, NM



Versing

Voyager

By Reciel Fielding

Spring sprung.
Door quietly shutting behind me
Striding forward to the known.
Rains fall gently around me
The sun cool upon my face.
Muddy roads become dust bowls
As summer rolls in.
Heat vapors on the blacktop
Creating mirages of an oasis ahead.
Always forward to the known.
No looking back to what was.
The long days start to even out.
Green leaves turn orange, red, and yellow
Colors that blind with the sun's brilliance.
Broken shoelaces do not keep me from the mission.
Days are losing their light and I am close.
Smells of Christmas ham and lighted trees haunt my closed eyes.
Cold and snow does not break my stride.
Throwing the door open.
"Mom?!, "I'm home!" I yell into cold emptiness.
In the corner of the room a cigarette glows red,
lighting her worn face in shadow.
Crawling forward resting my weary head in her lap.
"My boy's home." She croaks out.
Arthritic fingers comb through dirty hair.
Safely home.
The door closes.

Low Adventures: Trekking the Superior Hiking Trail

By Tim Krenz

Part 9: Kennedy Creek and a Little Light In Over-thinking the Weight

In our numerous trips to the Superior Hiking Trail in northeast Minnesota, Craig and I made great adventures, but we also competed. While we walked the same distances, climbed the same hills, and usually did the walking one of us close behind the other, the competition between us centered around which one of us carried less weight in his backpack. I always lost that race to the lightest weight.

In our next trip to the trail near the shore of the giant Lake Superior, the stifling, steaming heat of that second weekend of July 2005 afforded us the opportunity to cut massive amounts of weight from both our bags. With daytime temperatures that weekend in the high ninety degrees (F) range, we would need no heavy sleeping bags, and no massive coats and sweaters. I thought I had learned the lesson of the appropriate clothing to carry on a much earlier trip. For a one night walk from south to north on a section of trail to Kennedy Creek, we would not even bring complicated camping gear like cook kits. All these factors had their advantages, for both of us, even if my quest to carry less than Craig turned out more discomfiting over the course of the one night.

The day before our trip, on a Friday afternoon at my house in Amery, Wisconsin, I had to move some things in a closet to access some of my gear for the trip. In a far too complicated sequence of events to explain here, I picked up a short but full, and heavy, filing cabinet. I heard a crack and I felt a rip pull me in my back. Well, I thought I put the trip the next day in jeopardy. Thankfully, by the time Craig arrived early Saturday morning from St. Paul, I woke up feeling better and able to go walk with a pack.

Before we left, and while my girlfriend, Looey, talked with Craig, I threw out the heavy shit in my bag, repacking it into a lighter, more nimble, “less-Tim-stuff-than-normal” amount of gear. On my scale, I weighed my pack and belt kit at exactly thirty-two pounds. I had not packed so lightly for a camping trip since Boy Scouts.

Unfortunately, following our three hour drive to where we planned to catch the shuttle bus, I lifted Craig's pack. His backpack still weighed less than mine! Disappointed, as always, I fell back on that old justified rationalization: “I carry the shit we need, that you use, but won't carry!” HA!

Walking the trail from the shuttle stop to one of the Kennedy Creek campsites we hoped to secure for the night, we sweated in that horrid heat. I felt, and Craig looked, completely drenched in perspiration. At the top of a hill, with no trees growing on the hard rock surface to obstruct our view, we could clearly see the big-big lake a short

way to our east. The sunshine hammered that rock so hard that it literally burned hot and stinging when I sat down to rest. On those types of days without breeze, I now learned, the steam rose from the lake's surface in a tall and solid, shroud-like, wall of water vapor—hanging there like a curtain in a sky-high theater stage. I then found another power of nature that I never knew existed. I wondered at the immense forces of the gods of the wind, when calm, if Apollo drew his chariot close above the world.

On that rock, as we drank fluids greedily, an older woman, perhaps early in her fifties, and wearing tan slacks and a white, short-sleeve blouse, walked up to our lookout and chatted with us. She had ridden a shuttle, too, and just enjoyed the walk along the Superior Hiking Trail on that icky sticky, hot July day. Craig and I had sweat rushing down our faces, and we tried to catch some shade under the small shrub trees that grew among the lichen-covered rock. This woman, to our amazed and incredulous disbelief, showed not a drop of salty sweat in her hair, on her face, or on her clothing. After she moved along, and while we sat there a spell more, Craig joked that she must have carried a solar shower and changes of clothing in her small day pack on her back in order to stay fresh and clean.

We arrived at our camp around 1 PM, following a short but draining 2.4 mile total hike in the heat. We found the site nice but heavily used. After sitting around for a good part of the afternoon, a nursing student from North Dakota State University, a guy named Matt, walked into the camp and asked to share the site. We agreed, but when some women walked in to ask the same thing. Before Craig and I saw them, Matt had eagerly told them we had no room and they left to the second, already occupied site up the trail. (Idiot!).

While Craig read one of his pulp fiction books, I read the front sections of several newspapers, before we would use them to build a campfire. Although hot as hell, we needed a fire. Not bringing a stove to cut our weight, a nice fire later in the evening would serve a double purpose for cooking and the age old entertainment when camping: setting the scene for campfire stories. Matt had no idea about what would come at him that night. Yet, that afternoon, I learned a couple of lessons while hungry and eating from a giant bag of plain M&M chocolate candies. First, it took little effort to eat a pound of them unconsciously. Second, in bitterly hot weather, M&M's can very well melt in your hands and not just in your mouth! I had the candy coloring all over my hands and I needed to wash my them with soap in the same stream where we drew our water.

When supper time arrived early that evening, for me more out of boredom than the pangs of hunger, Craig used the one piece of cook ware he did bring: A small quart-sized aluminum camp pot for making our coffee and for boiling water over the fire. We looked incredulously while Matt, the student, used his ten piece camp cook kit of stainless steel, copper-bottomed dishes to make a delicious looking pasta dish with white sauce. When Craig got the stream water boiling, he and I used it to re-hydrated noodles, veggies, and chicken parts in prepackaged styro-foam cups. Later, now really hungry since I ate all the candies, I chewed on venison jerky and dried fruit around the campfire as the night entered. Dark will come quickly in the thick forest when the sun starts to settle over the hills. We kept that fire small but nice, and I enjoyed it and more snacks. To my intense jealousy, Matt roasted a juicy cheddar-wurst sausage over the fire. It smelled and look fantastic. Oddly, he did not use a stick from the

forest. From his overstuffed pack, he had removed and extended a heavy-looking, metal, telescopic weenie roaster. I could only envy his culinary choices after our very Spartan meal of noodles, fare fit for a helot.

Around the fire, Craig spent the rest of the evening chatting with Matt, but the student did not have much to say. Craig must have needed to release all of his pent up boredom having only me to talk with him on so many previous trips. Poor Matt got an earful for a few hours, most of it stories from Bill Bryson's book, *A Walk in the Woods*, about Bryson's experiences on the Appalachian Trail with a guy named Steven Katz. Craig loved that book, and it provided him with a large part of the inspiration for starting this Superior Hiking Trail. I liked the book, too, though I heard the stories told, retold, and re-retold many times. In Craig's and mine's experience and our shared antics on the trails, we usually wondered which one of us represented Bryson, leaving the other poor one the personification of curmudgeon Katz. We still argue about that today, from time to time. I always defaulted to Craig fitting the description of Katz, as a tall, burly guy with a scruffy beard while camping

Tired, and surprisingly without back trouble until that evening, I turned into the Eureka two-man tent around 9:30 PM. I laughed to myself as I could just imagine poor Matt driven to tears by his boredom about a book he never read, explained to him by one of the consummate story tellers on the Superior Hiking Trail. I do not think Craig lacked for camp fire story telling skills. He always impressed me on that score. I do think Matt, however, just did not have it in him to listen, or laugh, or anything. I heard Craig's voice clearly but not a word from Matt as they sat around the dwindling campfire. After a while, Craig took to giving tips on carrying lighter weight packs and smarter, cheap gear.

Craig must have made it to the tent before midnight. I had barely slept. In my eagerness to remove weight from my pack, I brought only my self-inflating air mattress and two awfully thin sleeping bag liners. I did not realize how cold the forest at night would get once the sun's July hammer stopped heating the anvil of the earth. The dark, cold woods almost froze me that night. All night I slept miserably. At one point, in sleepless delirium, I rolled my back into something. I put my hand behind me to find out what I hit. To my shock and horrification, I realized I had my hand on Craig's ass! Quickly, I scooted my entire body over more to my own side by the tent door, as close as I could get and still stay in the tent. Morning came early, and tired and cold, I rolled out of bed to make a fire.

Craig and I packed up our gear that morning and drew two liters of water each into our bottles from the stream below our site. Craig then realized how freaking useless water pump filters get. They weigh a lot, everything gets contaminated anyway, and people do "things" in the same water from we drink. From that day, on Craig's useful suggestion, we never carried the pump again but instead would always treat the water with Puritabs. If necessary to get out particles, we could skim the water through our dirty socks. It would taste no different from the normal, filtered stream water itself.

In camp, getting ready to head to the truck, we watched in feigned shock when Matt packed his over-sized back pack. He even had extra things hanging on it. Craig supposed later that Matt must have carried 50 to 60 pounds of

gear. I could easily see that point, considering the type of cook kit he carried. It reminded me of how much gear I carried when starting these camping and hiking trips three years prior. When ready, Matt went south and Craig and I headed north.

That Sunday afternoon, in the hotness and the breezeless air, Craig and I walked up what we titled Mount Motherfucker, a huge, hulking hill. To our relief, the trail eased up on switchbacks and not straight up the side. At the top, we found a look out view of the lake, now farther in the distance. Where in the thick of that hard wood forest the trees parted ways, we found a spot with a rest bench. After that tortuous climb, we almost brazenly prayed for a breeze. We got that almost-prayer answered—almost. While sitting, exhausted and drenched with sweat, the tree leaves rustled just slightly. It lasted a shorter time that it takes to write this sentence. We had a tantalized feel of cool, ever brief. Who says prayers will not get answered?

On the homeward stretch toward Craig's little green truck, we passed two guys coming south from where they camped at Sawmill Dome, a little round hill with a rock top. They had passed our campsite the day before, heading north. They had had no water since the previous night. Having almost drank all of ours, we shared and split with them the remains of the half liter Craig and I each had left in our supply. From their delirium and gratitude, we labeled them with the Trail name, “The Touched Ones.”

Of course, as it never fails, the trail took the path of most resistance about a mile form the road where we parked. It went up a high hill, skirting some low lying marsh that blocked the exit from the trail. Walking the edge of a cliff above the road, following the trail, I had to step over washed out parts that gulley-knifed off the ledge. One trip or stumble and the world would have hurt as gravity would have come up at me in a torrent.

The walk down the dirt road passed uneventfully. As always when finishing a section on the way to the car, I whistled the famous tune from *The Bridge On the River Kwai*—that colonel's march or something, otherwise known as “Comet—It makes you vomit. . .” We gratefully drank the extra water we stowed in the truck and it went down like hot tea. The truck cab itself felt like a furnace. On the way driving south toward Two Harbors, MN, Craig and I stopped at a coffee shop along the highway. We both ordered smoothies, which promptly melted before we got back to the car. Instead of ice cold drinks, we drank lukewarm, raspberry milk. The drink nonetheless refreshed us, with sugar at least, as the steam continued to vapor upward and high from the huge lake behind the little coffee shop building. The trip done, we drove back three hours to drop me off at my home, a drive without many words but with satisfaction of having done yet another low adventure on the Superior Hiking Trail.



Story

Reluctant Feast

By Pi Kielty

I arrived home. Working second shift at the factory the past three years allowed me a certain relief, a freedom from the problem, a distance more in the time away that saved me from witnessing it any more. That day, January 24th, ended like any day even though I felt extra tired. Indeed, the day ended like all of our normal days that we had for years.

When I got home near one o'clock in the morning, like every night, she had long gone to sleep by then. I always made as little noise as possible when I washed my lunch bucket and containers in the kitchen, and set my dishes next to hers in the rack to dry. I also found the normal note that said, "Thank you for helping. Love, Caro." After I showered in the basement bathroom, I watched a little television down there in the family room. Once I ate my snack, I walked quietly back upstairs to the bedroom. I filled and prepped the coffee maker and made sure to set the timer for the morning brew.

Like always, I crawled into bed without turning on the light. That night, like every other night, she woke just enough in the early morning hours to bestir herself closer to me for the warmth. I settled on my side and she snuggled her body over into me. Caroline's beautiful face close to me, I could smell the organic sweet strawberry of her shampoo that perfectly matched the tint of her long, curly hair. As I had fronds of it under my nose, I could scent the color of it in the dark.

I put my arm around her small stomach. Feeling her soft skin covering the bones of her frame, every little more often than before, her body felt smaller, and I could outline her ribs with my hand, trying to measure it against memory. Most couples would make sex on a special day. We did not because we never did that anymore at all. Like all of our normal days, January 24th, ended like any other day for us.

She had started that same day, January 24th, like any other as well. She rose early for work, getting ready and dressing before she woke me for the cups of coffee she brought into the bedroom for us. "Good morning, Ty," she had said, after waking me with a kiss on my forehead. "Happy anniversary." She said that without emotion, more like the inevitable recognition of our five years of marriage. The fact that she said so, in her almost laconic way, at least showed her gratitude for me having remained that long.

"Happy anniversary, Caro," I had replied, with my own forlorn hopes, and I gave her an unenforced smile and the longing look of my unending concern.

When she backed out of the garage and had left the driveway in her sedan, I looked out the bedroom window to see her going down the alley. I felt the warm sunshine coming through the window, and I looked outside to see the bitter cold January snow piles. Soon, the sun would disappear behind the neighbor's house, leaving my window in a thin shadow, and then the window's sunlight once again looked out just at a dead cold view.

Once I made breakfast that morning, I looked in the kitchen and the bath and laundry rooms, searching for the absence of things to put on my shopping list. I noticed Caro needed tampons, which she had told me to put on the list a few mornings ago, but I had forgotten to write it down. I dodged a bullet, for if I forgot those I would have caught righteous hell. I hated shopping for the damn things, yet shopping became my responsibility when I took the evening shift for the four or five days a week. I shopped every other day for the groceries, which I always bought in limited quantities. But once or twice a week I would go to the big store so I could get everything at the same time.

Shopping at the box store, I bought only enough ingredients, fresh or on sale, for the few meals needed between grocery trips. I would sometimes buy an extra bulk package of my snacks, which I kept in my locker at work or in my small dormitory-type

refrigerator in the basement. For no matter how fit and trim I kept myself by exercising, like cross country skiing on my days off work, I still enjoyed my donuts and all the other unhealthy treats I liked.

Back home, I skipped my nap, the only really unusual thing about the day. Like every other day, though, I made the supper. Caroline loved best my spaghetti meals, with the pork and beef and Parmesan meatballs, and a fresh and loaded spinach salad with vinegar and oils, alongside baked garlic cloves for the fresh sweet cream buttered bread. That day, with the garlic liquefied in olive oil and tomato paste, the special whole tomatoes I canned out of our kitchen garden last summer, and with the right amount of honey and brown sugar to take out the bitterness, I made the anniversary dinner extra special. Once I had let it simmer for hours, I prepared to leave for work, packing most of the meal in my lunch boxes and leaving a proper and carefully proportioned amount for my wife. I left the prepared food in the kitchen refrigerator, with the note on the counter for the cooking instructions, what needed cleaning and laundry around the house, and a few other details of married life. On the bottom of the note, on that day, January 24th, I wrote a post-script that I always left for Caroline every afternoon before heading out. "Dearest Caro, I hope and pray that one day food will not hurt you, cause you pain, or make you sick anymore. You must eat. I understand. Don't give up! I Love YOU, Ty"



Pi Kielty, a native Nonopolis, WI, died a few years back, from a mysterious cause, resulting from an unknown symptom--alone.

Story

Departures and Arrivals

By Pi Kielty

Just following a July dusk, several people began to mingle on the platform of the small depot outside the town and some way between the flat-topped hills. Inside the brown brick building, with the gabled wood roof, a short row of travelers lined on the center of the small one-room station. The woman behind the window with small openings at face and waist level, began to perspire. It began under the line of her heavy, wavy black hair, pulled back tight and held together by a white twisted band.

The last man in the ticket line stepped up to the plasti-glass and he could see in the well-lighted booth the baggage behind the woman's tall chair. The station master sorted the suitcases, the big box and the army bag, as he started to carry them out the back door which let in the mugged air, still damp from the rain coating that fell on grateful yellow grass and dust before sunset.

"Dad, . . . dad. . . , DAD!" the man's five year old son said, tugging on his father's T-shirt at the belt line.

"Just a second, Michael," he said to his son. The lady behind the window had already looked over all the paperwork, and pulled the suitcase through an opening in the wall, and put a taped label around the suitcase handle. Stapling the receipt to the ticket, she handed the papers to the man.

"DAD!!" Michael said.

"Wait!" he said patiently, as the woman said something, while moving the hardcover suitcase to the back of the small office on a conveyor set of rollers.

"Have a nice trip," she said through the opening, wiping perspiration from her forehead with the back of her hand. The black bow tie under her collar felt uneven. She straightened the tie, flattened on her blue shirt, and all of sudden she grabbed her big tummy, exclaiming a loud, "Whoa!!"

The station master behind her asked, "Field goal, or extra point?"

"Yeah," she responded. "Three points, from way out—way, way out."

"First one?" The boy's father asked, as his son peered out the station window up the tracks beyond the yard lights.

"Yeah." Looking at the green lettering of the screen on the high desk, she told both men, "The train's runnin' about an hour late."

The station master, young and with a thin black mustache, looked at his watch. He remarked, "That's usual." Then he continued to carry the bags out the back office door into the light of the outside lamp.

The boy, too short to hear the ticket lady through the window openings, again tugged his father's shirt after looking once more at the clock above the front door. He began to bounce on his feet, bending on his knees, and jumping, so that his head bobbed above the counter.. "DAD!! It's almost time. We gotta get out there so we don't miss it."

The ticket lady smiled at the worried boy with the tan and windburned and eager face, as she then grabbed her stomach low below the bulge.

"The nice lady just said it will be an hour late. Don't worry. It won't leave without us. I promise," the father reassured to his son.

Outside the man and his son, and the other travelers, and those waiting for arrivals, waited for the train that seemed to never arrive. Under the platform's awning, the man started to nod asleep on the bench against the brick wall. The boy hopped on the concrete, one foot then two feet and then one again, between the times he looked to the west and up the tracks, into the dark of the grasslands and the wheat fields and pasturage beyond them.

"I miss Mommy," the boy said, his brown hair mussled in a shock that covered part of his forehead.

"I miss her, too," his father said, fully waking up with a drip of sweat running down the corners of his eyes.

"I can't wait to see her," the son said.

"Neither can I. What will you tell her about our trip? You know she will want to hear all about it."

"I don't know," Michael sheepishly replied. The heaviness of the air had not passed from the earlier rain. It just felt hotter, but hotter even without the daytime wind that cools the body, the strong blowing winds over the great plains.

"Are you going to tell her how we fished in the reservoir with Grandpa in his boat?"

"Yeah!" The tall five year old said. "And. . .and. . .how I caught the biggest fish!"

"And what did Grandma do with the fish?"

"She cooked it!"

"And did it taste good?"

"Yeah, it was deli-. . .delish. . .delish-e-us."

"Delicious," the father and school teacher said.

"Yeah, that. . .delicious."

"Will you tell her about riding on Grandpa's tractor?"

"Yeah. . . We made hay!!"

"That's right. And Grandpa and Grandma took us to the movie. What did we see?"

"I forget."

"You 'forgot.'"

"Yeah, I forgot."

At that moment, out of the night's stillness and the moonless star-filled dark beyond the depot's lanterns, the imperial horn of the train sounded faintly in the west, as it blew its warning approach at the cross road leading into town.

The boy jumped, startled, and gave a cheeky smile as he looked around him. "IT'S HERE!!" he said.

"Yep, it's here." The father then began to stand. The other travelers and those waiting for arrivals stirred from the outdoor benches, and the group who stood talking with the station master turned around.

For five minutes, the group milled around for the train's big front light to snake its way to the station along the southern approaches of the town. The train coming close, and lighting the depot, slowed even more on its last approach, around a slight bend before the rail drew the diesel humming, rumbling locomotive the last straight stretch. The front of the mighty host of sure power, pulling over a dozen two-decked cars and some others, moved past the depot building. Michael stood on the platform with his eyes open at the immensity of the machine, the steel ship of the land. His mouth agape, he anticipated his next ride on the train, to home, and his mom and his older half sister.

The middle of the train in front of the platform, the locomotive and the hissing brakes of the cars brought its imperial moving palace to a stop with a final roll, forward then gently—lightly—backward. The conductor himself, wearing a black coat and his flat-topped hat, opened the door on the bottom level of the middle car. Michael started to jump and wanted to run to the door to begin the great adventure of train riding home.

"Wait, Michael," the father said.

As the three passengers disembarked on the metal step stool set on the concrete, the station master drove a small tractor behind the group of people greeting the arrivals. Behind the tractor, he pulled a flat wooden wagon with the small pile of luggage.

Michael tugged on his burnished orange backpack, which his father bought for his birthday before coming on this trip.

Last in the loose line, Michael and his father received a seat assignment from the conductor, seats in the forward row on the upper level. Michael began to run around the metal-walled corners of the entry way, and then scoot up the twisting stairs, making loud stomping footfalls.

"Come on, Dad!" he yelled. "Hurry, hurry, we've got to get our seats!"

Following his son quickly, the man whispered loudly in a worried voice. "SHHHH!! Michael, quiet. Michael. . . Michael

wait. . .”

Michael turned at the top of the staircase and started to run down the aisle of the car. “Come on!!” He repeated, again loud enough, that he woke several passengers. The station-master smiled when he heard Michael yelling in the upstairs of the passenger car, as he finished putting the luggage in the lower store room of the same coach.

Outside, the conductor yelled, “ALL ABOARD!” The station manager exited the car, saying farewell to the conductor, who picked up the steel footstool as he then took a larger step up into the coach, swinging the door shut moments before the entire stretch of mass moved eastward, starting gently and building speed.

Outside, the station master went about his work, preparing to close for the night. His wife had left for home with the car almost two hours earlier, and the station master felt no hurry. Knowing that trains arrive and depart, the station master bolted the front door to the platform. He entered the small, hot office and turned off the lights.

The station's office phone rang. The manager answered.

“Bill,” he heard someone say.

“Yeah,” he replied.

“It's Margie. Hurry home,” the midwife ordered.

“What's wrong?”

“Barbara called me over to your house. It's time. You're having a baby tonight.” The midwife declared.

“You sure?”

“Bill. . . just come home, quickly.”

Bill the station master hung up the phone. Outside, he fumbled with his key to lock up the back door, and he turned around not noticing the moonless-ness and how luminescent the stars uncovered by clouds looked on this summer night, away from the depot lamps. With a flashlight, he ran along the tracks in the high dark, to his home near the cross road in the warm early morning.

Pi Kielty, long now deceased, never finished this story. His notes said "burn," but we offer it here against his wishes.--ED.





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