

# **Trains and Railroads**

A Creative Collaboration  
By Shasta Sovereign  
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Dear Reader:

You likely have heard them. You might have seen them. Luckily, you may have even ridden on them. Simple, yet elegant. So old, but they still refuse to disappear. They bring back memories of the past. Of settling into unexplored areas. Of connecting us to other people and areas. So, what are they?

Trains and railroads.

On the following pages, you will see that they mean different things to the observer. Some speak of their past with trains. Some share fantasies. Other share hopes for their future.

We are all on our own trains. Where has your train been? Where is your train headed? Are you happy with your direction and destination? If not, when and where do you want to get off on the next train station? And where do you want to head?

Happy travels.

We look forward to hearing from you.

In Inspiration,

Shasta Sovereign



## Far Away Train

By Modern Haiku

*Graffiti adorned*

*Far away train moves fast*

*In the silent night*

For me, this poem is a metaphor about someone I love deeply who is on a journey that is likely going to take them far away from me. I fear they will not be good about keeping in touch. This person is incredibly beautiful and creative but doesn't see it (graffiti adorned). They are slow to communicate (far away) and eager to move away from a small rural town (moves fast). And all I can do is stand silently by and help them, because it is what will make them happy (in the silent night).

\* \* \*

## Trains can teach

By Buddy 2.5

In 1976 we moved from the Oakland Hills to Alameda. We were a family of 5, needing to be closer to my older children's school. Our baby was 4 months old.

We failed to notice that we were across the street from the Del Monte rail line and factory. As the 1 AM Train made the curve before the entrance to the warehouse, it flashed its lights and sounded the horn. The light went directly into a second story window. THIS WAS THE WINDOW.

My baby, who had always been a good sleeper, started waking and screaming every night. It would take at several hours to calm her down from a noise that the older kids loved (they would try to signal to the engineer to sound the horn).

Once we figured out what the problem was, we started a teaching program during the day. We took the baby outside when we heard the train coming and tried to show her it was harmless.

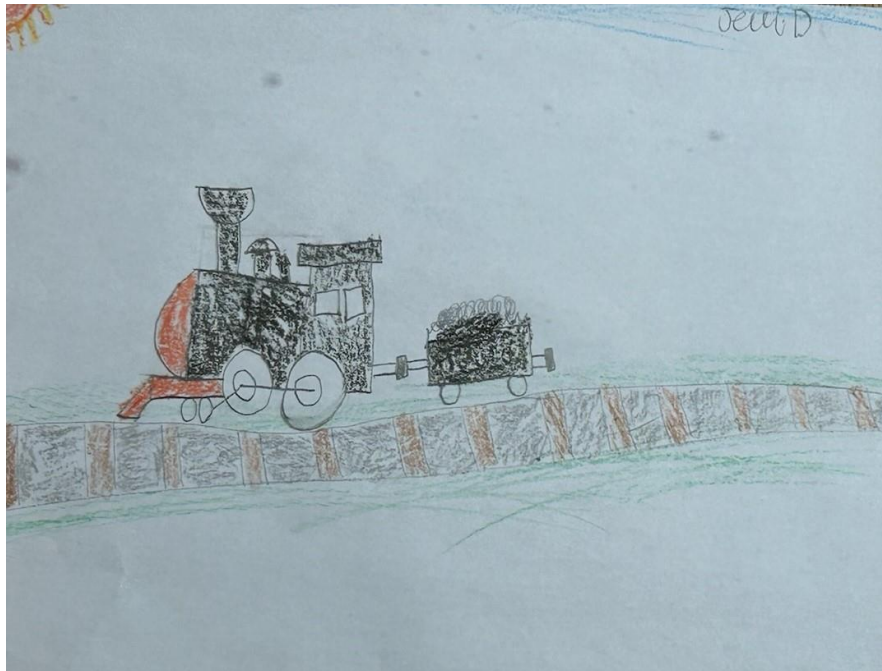
But the brothers were signalling for the horn. Happy gleeful faces when the engineers understood, and a screaming baby in my arms. It took 6 months to condition the baby and for the brothers to hold back their need to hear the horn.

It goes to show one person's joy can be another's terror.



## Dragons and Trains

By Jerry



A long time ago, there was a dragon that destroyed a village. The Vikings tried their best to defend the village but everyone was killed. They fought hard till the end.



## Boomers, Economy, and Retirement

By Dragonflyladyofcali

I just got finished reading an article on the Web about Baby Boomers and their Retirement. Apparently, Boomers have not prepared themselves for retirement.

As for myself, my monthly retirement is well below \$800 a month and that amount does not allow me to pay all my monthly bills. I am now at the point of losing my home, being unable to pay my power bill.

In this article I was reading, the current outcome of this is that Baby Boomers are moving in with their adult children. The media is calling this issue the "Reverse Boomerang Effect." It is truly a very scary problem which is something that is not going to be solved easily. I know that for me, the next step might be homelessness. I have family and I have adult children, but our relationships are estranged.

I would be so grateful to hear our Governor's and President's plan to address the issues that we, as Senior Citizens, have been trying to face each and every day.

I realize that the issue of a lot of the population has the issue of trying to survive, and it is difficult. Please understand I am not just writing about the issue of Baby Boomers.



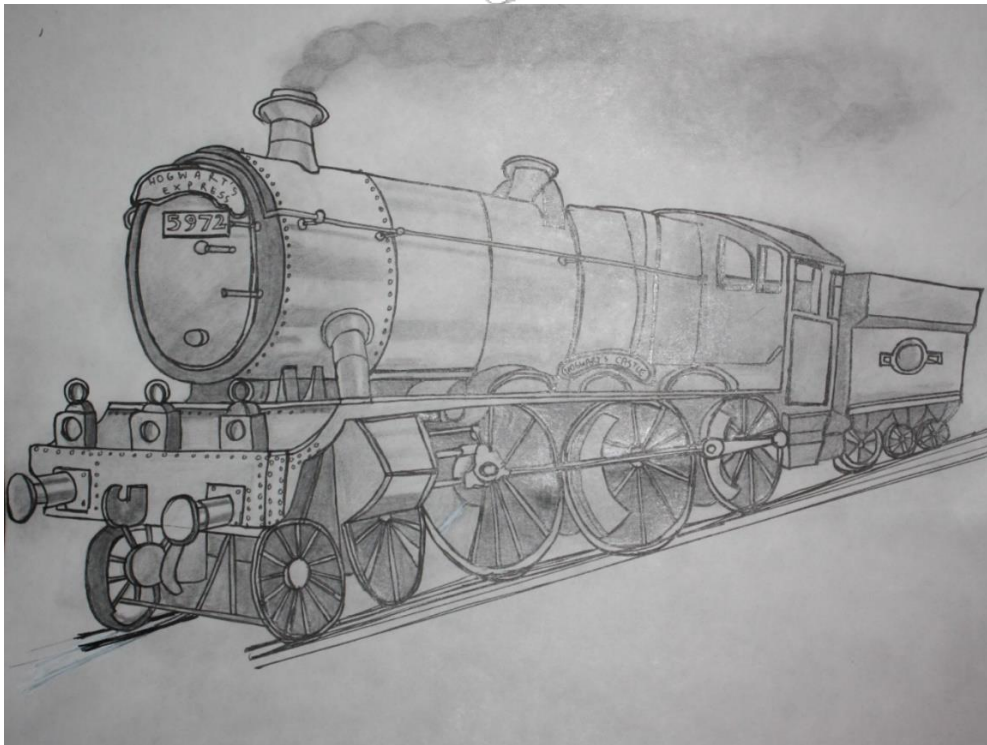
## Where you headed?

Art by Crow Che

Story by Paul Haul

I sat there waiting. For what? Not really sure. I was tired of my life. Tired of feeling used. Tired of no direction. Tired of being alone. I picked up some of my things and put them in my backpack. And bought a ticket to the opposite side of the country. Even though it was spring, it did not register in my mind. I just felt like fall and falling all the time.





The train was coming to a stop at the station. I felt both excited and nervous. Excited for the new and what lay ahead. Nervous about leaving my familiar surroundings. I had never travelled anywhere alone before. But I knew a trip was in order.

As I was boarding, I looked behind me. Was there anyone there who had followed me here? To convince me to come home? Did anyone really care? Were there any friendly faces which comforted me? I saw no one on the platform. I tightened my backpack straps, pulled my cap tight, and stepped on the train.

What was that smell? Popcorn. Coffee. Caramel. Pancakes, butter and syrup. Eggs and bacon. My stomach greeted the smells with a growl of its own.

I went from cabin to cabin to find an empty spot. I didn't know the 7am line was so popular and crowded. I finally find a spot near the end of that compartment with a friendly looking lady in her 80s crocheting with rainbow tie-die yarn.

"Mind if I join you? There's no other spots open." I manage to mutter.

"Why, of course dearie, please have a seat across me, next to the window, if you like," she cheerfully replies.

"Thanks," I respond, putting my backpack on the ground and sliding next to the window.





“Where you headed, sugar?” the old lady asks.

“Anywhere, and nowhere,” I quickly reply.

“Oh, I see,” she says before an awkward silence embraces us both.

She continues crocheting. I take off my jacket and take out a book. The Chronicles of Narnia, a childhood favorite, was the series I managed to put in my sack. Hopefully Aslan can save me too.

“Ticket please,” the conductor asks. “You are going to Gold Beach? 7 day trip? Ever been?”

“No, I just wanted to go to the end of the line.”

“Well, we might become friends by then. It’s a magical stretch of land, a trip many repeat, year after year, as a pilgrimage” he says. He punches my ticket, gives me a wink, and moves on.

“I thought I was the crazy one,” I mutter as he was out of earshot.

“He’s right you know. It is magical. Guess how many times I have been on this stretch?” granny asks.

“Five,” I venture a guess.

“No. I have been coming on this ride once a year, for the past 62 years!”

“What?! Now I know I must not be as crazy as I thought,” I mumble. I go back to reading about how Aslan the lion starts to thaw Narnia to defeat the Wicked Witch.

“Why are you here” she asks, ignoring by subtle attempts to avoid interaction.

“I don’t know,” I respond.

“I didn’t know either when I was your age and sitting right there going on my first ride 62 years ago. There was a lady sitting across me too.”

“They had this train 62 years ago?” I ask.

“Honey, it had just started then. It was a way for young people to be able to explore. And not just on the outside, but on the inside.”



“What do you mean?” I asked curiously.

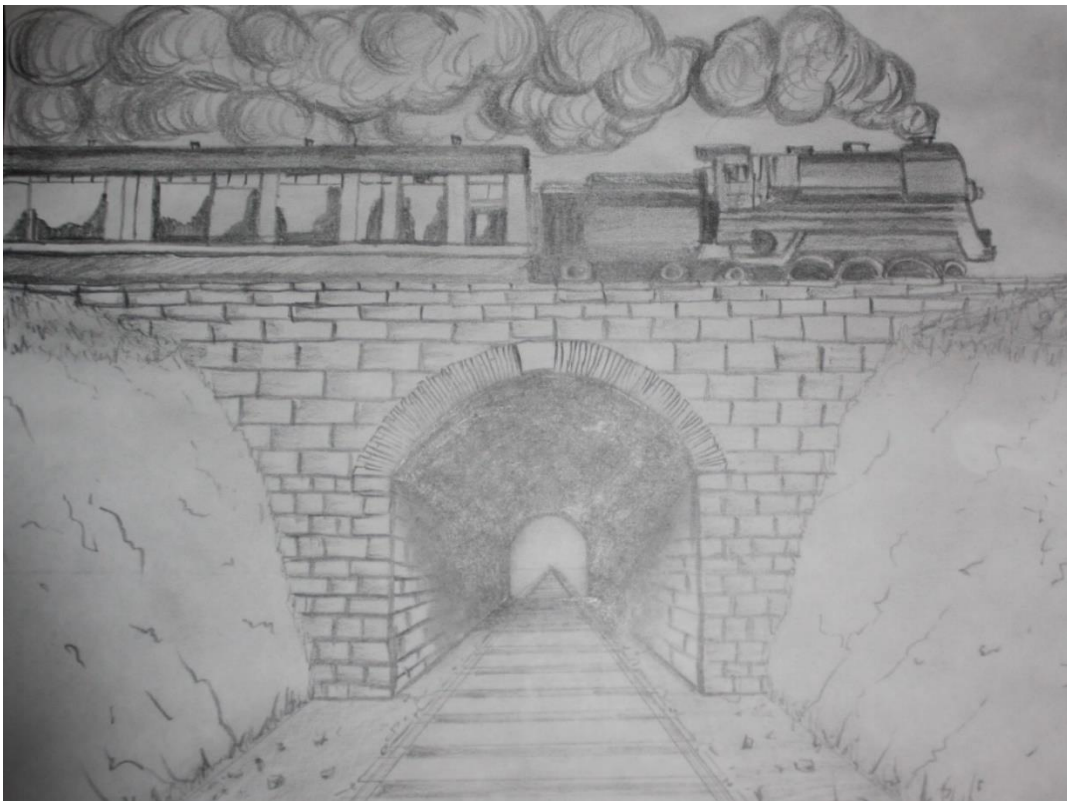
“Well, I was kind of like you when I was your age,” granny says. “Quiet, shy, but nice. I felt no one cared about me. I felt empty. That is why I went on my first ride and that is why I am still here.”

“How do you know so much about me? And how are you so similar? Do I know you?”

“Not exactly, my dear. But hopefully you will figure it out in time.”

“So what happened,” I continued.

“See that there?...” she points ahead.



“Yes, I see a tunnel and another train going on top,” I reply.

“Good, honey, good. That is a metaphor for life. We are headed in a direction. And then we see another direction. Do you know where you are headed?”

“I don’t, granny. That’s why I went on a long train ride. To find some answers.”

“That’s fine, kiddo. We’ve all been there. All that matters is the intention. It’s clear to me that you are serious. But let me ask you this. Where you been?”



“Granny, that’s a dark place that I’ve been trying to get out of, for a long time.”

“Good. There’s no point of dwelling there either. It seems to me that you are ready.”

“Ready for what.”

“To hear a secret,” granny chuckles childishly. “Want me to let you in.”

“Umm, sure?” I hesitatingly respond.

“Come closer.”

I lean closer to her. She bumps her head with mine softly. I feel a warmth envelop me from the site of the brushing of our forehead and slowly crawling down to my toes. I feel a love that I had not known before, but yet I always knew was there. Who was this person?

“Granny, who are you?”

“I am you, Francine. Time is not always linear, like this train. But we need scaffolding. We need structure. We need to know where we’ve been. That way we know where we are now, and where we want to go in the future. We may not have the answers. But that’s ok. I bet you are confused right now, are you?”

“Definitely.”

“That’s the same response everytime. When I made my first trip 62 years ago. Something happened. Want to know what?”

“What happened, granny?”

“Ever hear about the famous Gold Beach accident?”

“Yea. It was about this train wreck 62 years ago. The train derailed. Luckily, most passengers were saved except for a young 18 year old girl... Wait...”

“Yes, sugar. When I found out that many innocent people were going to die, I prayed to God. I asked him what I could do. God said, come home. That if I went home, he would save the rest of the people. So I went home. The train was saved. To this day, they have kept the train the same, the same route, and maintained good conditions. For those weary travellers who are lost and wanting answers.”



“Wow, granny.”

“So honey, keep your chin up. We did not meet by coincidence. I am you from the past, and from the future. I am here to help you get on the right track. Because you matter. Because your past is mine, and your future is mine. Know that you are not alone. I sacrificed myself for you. To ride the same train I did all those years ago. There was an old lady who sat across me. She kept me company for many years, teaching me from her life. Now its my time to pay it forward. And I want to do the same for you.”

Tears started welling in my eyes.

“Don’t cry, honey. No use crying about the past. It was my choice. I chose to do what I wanted. But I don’t regret it at all. Now, let’s start again. Let me ask you again. Where are you headed? I am really curious to know...”



\* \* \*



## Seasons of Death

By Ekko

I look around and see my people  
Dropping like flies in the cold winter months.  
The hurt comes in waves,  
While my emotions can't determine what season I'm sitting in.  
Is it really winter?  
I can close my eyes and almost smell the flowers on your skin,  
I am confused....have the seasons changed again?  
This feels more like spring.  
The anger runs through me like a wild fire,  
Destroying every ounce of beauty until there is nothing left.  
Has the season changed to summer?  
I didn't have a chance to rest.  
The sadness of losing you all comes in gently at first,  
Like leaves falling from the trees  
Slowly building up until it buries me.  
I know I must do something,  
But this sadness has a strong hold on me.  
Did it happen again?  
Am I suddenly in fall?  
The cycle begins with no end to be seen,  
Is this my fate?  
This circle might be the death of...me?  
I can't give up, I can't give in.  
There is too much to be done before winter sets in.  
I'll pick myself up, and put on my best winter coat.  
I'll hold on to the memories,  
They will keep me afloat.  
I'll splash in the puddles, I'll dance in the ashes,  
I'll carve faces in pumpkins instead of in me,  
I'll build up the snowmen, with top hats and all.  
I won't let the seasons control me.  
Until I lose another,  
The storm is calm...for now.

\* \* \*



## Brain Train

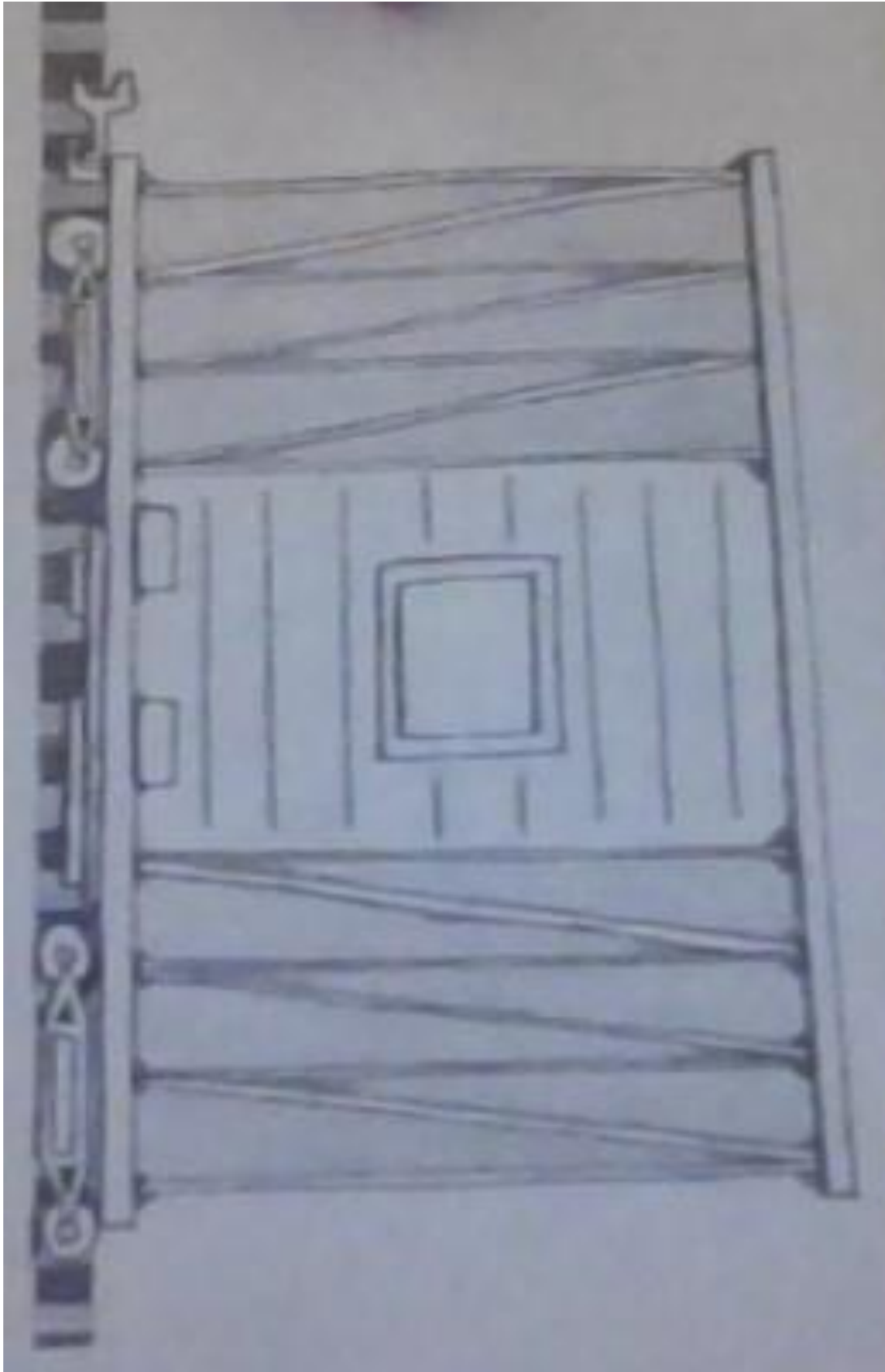
By Ekko

Deep in my brain the wiring is shorting  
And the distractions are way too much.  
I don't know where I've been, and I don't know where I'm going,  
Right now I'm stuck exploring.  
I'm riding around in circles, the train keeps derailing,  
The tracks are getting crossed. I can't stay on task.  
The horn is blaring, the wheels are grinding,  
There are too many sounds, but I can't block it out.  
The seats are too hard, the sun is too bright,  
This train is the worst to ride.  
I get up to stretch my legs, and find various signs.  
One reads snacks, water, and other tasty things.  
The one that catches my eye simply reads "executive functioning"  
And that's where I go.  
The meds are helping, the train is slowing, the rails are straightening.  
It made it so much better...  
At least I am starting to think so.  
There's a new place I am in, and it seems so familiar,  
It smells like coffee and stale cigarettes.  
I have my ticket, my phone and my keys.  
As it gets more familiar, I say "next stop please."  
My hands stop shaking, my mind stops racing,  
It's finally time to step off the train.  
I knew where I was going, I knew where I had been,  
My brain was just too jumbled to make sense of anything.  
I run as fast as I can to get to safety  
Before the train, once again,  
Comes for me.

\* \* \*



By Bella S





## Trains

By DLS 35

Trains. A fond memory.

A sound. A long sound.

It resonates through the dark of night echoing within my soul, my body, my fears, my comfort.

Escaping home as a child from a lonely existence

to Grandma and Grandpa's house. A place where I was loved and safe.

Tucked in bed on crisp cotton sheets

awaiting sleep, dreams and nightmares.

I can hear the train and anticipate the familiarity of clanking.

Shaking metal loudly endures the bumps and tracks of an aged railroad.

Then the horn. It goes on for a while.

These were long trains on old tracks eventually fading into the night welcoming once again the dark silence.

And finally crickets.

Sleep.

\* \* \*

## The Tayianen Desert

By Gus







## The Kansas

By Gus



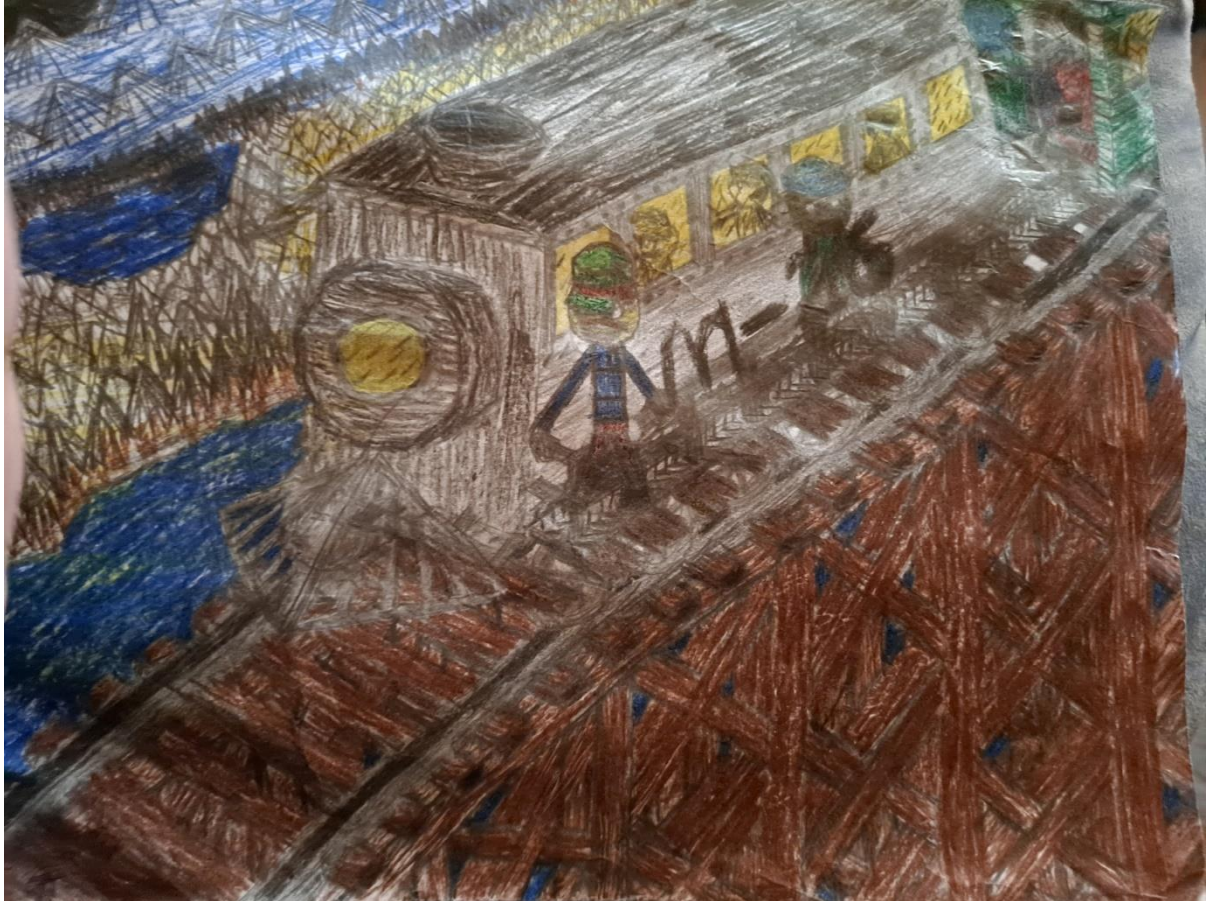
This orange train was coming to Kansas from Italy to deliver some wood boards to a workshop. They then go to Denver to deliver some boats for sailing off of a beach. They will then go to Texas to deliver some drinks, food, and tools!

\* \* \*



## M-26

By Gus



The M-26 train crosses the Datech Yorane snowy mountains. This M-26 train was going to an Alaskan oil company to deliver some special blue, green, and red oils and some toxic chemicals to the facility so they can do some experiments on potions and heating up metals in order to make special tools and equipment. The train then went to an Alaskan ski camp to deliver some ski stuff and equipment. The train then went to Alabama to deliver some copper rods and some steel plates for construction. The train finally went to Kansas.

\* \* \*



## Praise the Sun

By CDP



A man named Solaire of Astora who became undead to visit the Lordran in an attempt to find a sun of his own.

\* \* \*

## The Train

By Magnolia

Thy roar and thunder,  
Thou flesh and bone,  
Hours of snarling and screaming  
Let they mountains roam.  
Hammers and nails, piercing thou art  
Man's work ends and starts.  
Mountain ranges, screaming from afar  
Sweat and tears falling on thy track  
Let thy art scream in  
Excitement and hope.  
The train arrived.



## So I did a thing

By AJ

Facebook asks what's on my mind...

What's on my mind at this very moment. My husband, children and I have ADHD, and my husband and I have PTSD. I have health and pain issues, my husband and kids have their issues too. We have all been through a lot. I could continue to brew on the past and what once was. I could continue to replay past traumas and let them continue dictate my life and drag me down. Making me numb to the world around me. Or...

I just need to get this out. And if there's the possibility it could help someone else, why not?

Well... This morning, I looked in the mirror as I do every day, and I didn't like what I saw. But, today, it didn't get me down at all. It made me angry. That was new... So, I looked quite a bit longer... Then what came out shot right through to my core. I just took a cold hard look at myself, and began yelling at myself. I don't usually talk to myself, inner dialog excluded of course. But, yeah, I'm standing in my bathroom looking like a crazy person, with my hair a mess, having some weird out of body experience, yelling at myself! I said to myself it's high time you get your sh\*t together and say f\*ck all that!! Your inner demons and negative inner dialogue can go suck an egg!!

Then, I made a decision for myself. I realized that all the therapy and meds in the world weren't going to magically make everything better. They help, but the rest is on me. I just wish it didn't take so long to overthink that and realize it!

I choose joy. I choose to ignore the negative inner dialogue. Ignore the rumors. Ignore the comments. Ignore the stares. Ignore the opinions of others. And then I stormed out of my bathroom and thought: WTF was that!?

The only opinions and judgment I care about or need is that of God, my husband (on most days), and my kids. I don't need history, I need tomorrow. Time to secure my boundaries and tear down walls. Kick the negative folks out of my circle. Stop letting people walk on me, stop people pleasing and start taking the reins.

What I know is, I've wasted a lot of time dwelling on what I can't change. Doing this has only impacted my life and my health in negative ways. I've wasted my 160 IQ



by not putting it to use. Couple that with severe ADHD and I have wasted a ton of energy and many years of my life. Overthinking 20 things at once, in ways most folks could never imagine, about things that can't be fixed. Why can't they be fixed, you might ask? Because it's history. Guess what, there is no restart button on life. So, I'm done stewing on that too. Hey dark past, don't let the door hit you on the way out.

Instead, I'm looking into the future I still have available, and I'm not wasting another second. I know what I'm capable of. I know who and what I am. I remember the lessons I've learned.

I'm embracing me again. It's time to finish projects, organize my life, put more focus on myself, put my big brain to work and see what comes out.

I want to be the momma bear I know I can be and make sure my girls know it takes hard work and drive to accomplish what you want from life. It doesn't get handed to you.

I want to remind my husband of who I am at my core, and what he loved about me in the first place. Before my well ran dry. Bucket by bucket, I'm going to fill my well back up. Maybe I can help him refill his too!

By making this change, we will only benefit. It could help my husband heal. It could help my kids feel more secure. Help everyone around me think more positive and be proactive instead of reactive.

Circumstances, finances, legislation, mental health, politics and other troubles do make things a difficult challenge. Well, I'm up for it. Come at me world I'm not scared. I'm going to practice gratitude and affirmation!

We are so blessed to have family that took us in during our darkest days. When things go haywire, I think we make a pretty good team. It certainly could be better. And I realize that's on me and my chaos. I'm going to fix that on my end, and I'm going to help them with what they want, and need, to accomplish. I should do more to repay the favor. To pay it forward.

If your one of the few impressed by me now, you ain't seen nothing yet. The tiny house is just glimpse of what I'm capable of. Just wait and see what I can make of the Lemons that life handed us.

Can you relate?



# Lost Adventure

By Shealyn



Overgrown railroad that contains lost adventures and memories.



## Disembodied outfits

By Pensir

This was an interesting experience.  
I'm laying wide awake, trying to get to sleep.  
Just got voices going through my head  
Just anxiety.  
And I decided to just focus on breathing.  
Started breathing, focusing really hard, just the breathing.  
And I could mentally see it.  
I'm in a clothing store,  
And every anxious voice in my head is a disembodied outfit.  
They all come to stand at attention  
And circle around me, the more I breathe.  
I relax  
And slowly the outfits just start to disappear  
Until there is just me.

\* \* \*

## Anxious train wreck

By Pensir

It's always there, every day and every night.  
Throughout the day I can keep it at bay.  
As soon as the sun goes down and all is quiet,  
This is when it is the worst.  
I move from car to car, trying to escape my mind.  
Like a conductor collecting ticket stubs.  
But I don't want to collect a thing.  
I just want to escape all the anxious voices and memories in my head.  
It all is so loud, all the time.  
Especially when the sun goes down.  
It's all so random,  
From childhood traumas to present day pressures.  
At times, I can feel a topic raiding away  
But as I leave that car, expecting that to be the end of it,  
It's a whole new car opened up.  
I have no choice but to move forward,  
To try to escape the noise.



Then, when I feel there can't be any more, there must be an end,  
I am once again at the front of the train.  
I have not yet found an escape.  
The cars are never in the same order,  
I can never anticipate what is next.  
I have become an anxious train wreck.

\* \* \*

## Paper thin walls

By Pensir

I am surrounded by so many good people, chosen family and friends. I know that I can show my emotions to them and they will understand. They will do what they can to help. I can't help but to feel that whenever I have, they take pity on me. I don't want pity, I just want to be able to talk. So, I hide my emotions behind the paper thin walls. I will smile at you, and joke and laugh. Even when I am in pain. But as soon as I walk into another room by myself, I break down. I may pull myself together after a few minutes. Or you may not see me again for the rest of the day and night.

I don't have any small emotions, so it is extremely difficult to hold myself together. Sometimes I have no way to explain my pain. So I just can't let anyone see that I am suffering. Other times, I just simply don't want others to know what internal battles I am facing. Is that selfish or is it being protective of myself? Or could it be protecting others from sharing in the darkness that hurricanes inside my mind?

I don't know. It's a constant and daily battle. So, for now I will continue hiding behind these paper thin walls.

\* \* \*





## Birthday Gift

By The Always Reinventive Spilly Gypsy



I'm working on a surprise birthday gift for a dear friend of mine from high school. She loves motorcycles and vintage ones at that. And of course, her beloved basset hound Sophie. I put all three together in a painting which I'm going to send to her home when she's going to have a party. Hopefully she will be pleasantly surprised with this gift.

\* \* \*



## Feeling Two-faced

By Marie

You may feel like you are mad all the time  
But while you aren't angry you feel sad.  
On top of that, you feel like everything you do is a lie  
So you feel like you are trapped in a bottle of feeling bad.  
While you are around your friends, you feel two-faced  
So you can never feel like you are at ease.  
And you can never really solve your case.  
You feel like you are lost in a forest full of trees  
All of these feelings are inside of your heart.  
One side is in flames and fire,  
You think it is a lot to handle but it's only the start.  
You tell people that you're fine, but they can tell you're a liar.  
The other side is dripping, full of sadness  
Crying, feeling like you can't breathe for air.  
Feeling this way drives you to madness  
You feel that these decisions are crazy, but life isn't fair.  
You got a pretty crappy hand of cards, you can't change it.  
But sometimes at the end of the day  
You can't keep it forever  
You gotta get rid of it.

\* \* \*

## Alter ego

By Marie

You know that inescapable feeling of anger  
When you're being yelled at in particular.  
All you want to do is yell back,  
The only thing you want to do is attack.  
Holding it back is kind of hard  
It's like trying to bury someone alive in a graveyard.  
Then eventually there is a spark  
One that fights back like a shark.  
All that anger is suddenly released  
Then later you may feel at ease.



Or you will feel bad and regret everything you said  
Until you'll want to cry in your bed.  
Not me, but I should feel like that  
My reality cowards away and scurries like a rat.  
My alter ego is only about violence  
I can't keep her contained.  
I don't know why she is like this, always there babbling in my brain  
She drives me insane.  
But, I wonder  
Does anyone else have that blunder?  
Or am I the only one  
With a pain, that has only just begun?

\* \* \*

## Rain

By Marie

One day I went outside  
I went and lay on the ground.  
I liked looking at the cloudy skies  
I liked the wind sounds.  
The clouds, they start raining  
As I'm out there getting wet  
From the sky crying.  
I then remembered my brother making a bet  
About if it was going to rain.  
Then I wondered why is the sky sad?  
I saw that it was in pain.  
So I asked the sky, "Why are you sad?"  
"I don't know," the sky said.  
"I guess I was lonely  
When I saw you, it made me happy.  
I am not sad I couldn't be  
I'm just glad you're out here with me."

\* \* \*



## Tangled

By Marie

We take a look at the brain  
We can see she is in pain.  
She wants to get to freedom  
But she knows she can't see them.  
She comes upon a fence  
It looks super dense.  
She noticed its hands tied together,  
She looks down and there is a letter.  
When she reads it, it said:  
"Our arms were as thin as a thread  
The more we suffer,  
We got buffer.  
Our hands have been tied together for years  
We are beginning to fear.  
If this is the end and we never let go,  
We should've listened and said no.  
I guess this is what we get,  
When we don't let go and don't listen instead.

\* \* \*

## If I were a tree

By Marie

I like the way trees stand there  
Blowing in the wind.  
Trees, are calm, cool, and collected.  
I wish I were a tree  
Standing there strong,  
Not having a worry  
Or any care in the world.  
I wish I were able to be that centered,  
Being able to change when I can.  
Having a fresh new restart when my leaves fall for the winter,  
Being able to give the world air.  
If I were a tree



I would be one of the strongest plants  
That would help people of course.  
A strong calm helpful tree,  
That's what I would do  
If I were a tree

\* \* \*

## Differences

By Sahib



I wanted to send in my drawing of the train but when I was drawing the train, I didn't really have a clear image of what I was going for. By the end of it, I came out with a drawing that I had not envisioned before. I guess my drawing shows that you have to be you even if everything else around you is different. This is reflected as the train is in black and white whereas everything around it is in color.



## Trains of Thought

### By The Conductor

All Aboard!

As Amtrak's 5 a.m. whistle slices through my sleep,  
I board the car housing my four year old self  
Leaving Oakland's train yard adjacent to Monky Wards  
Clutching Grandma's hand as we cut through  
Grandpa's raspberry and bean garden  
To the back door of Minerva's Florist Shop  
My grandma proudly showing me off  
Her giggling friends tousle my curls

Tickets, please!

3 SP Engines, 52 boxcars, rusty caboose  
Train's speed surging  
I stand barely a foot from the tracks  
Screaming, belly, throat, heart screeching  
Louder than the whistle

Tickets, please!

Cross-country skiing in a blizzard  
On railroad tracks, snow hard and flat  
My husband and dogs gliding behind me  
Laughing  
Deaf to the approaching train  
slowing as it rounds the turn  
We scramble, all feet, poles, and terror  
Up the hillside. Engineer shaking his fist  
His threats swallowed by wind and snow  
Our terror turned to desperate laughter

Tickets, please!!

Late to pick my daughter up from preschool  
Very late. Trapped on east side of the tracks  
Counting boxcars trying to make sense  
Of stark graffiti on them  
Scanning for hobos, imagining  
One jumping off as the train slowly coasts



By our dust bowl farm, ripe raspberries  
 Ready to harvest.  
 I feed him fresh baked bread and beans

Tickets, please!!

Sisson Museum displays a miniature railroad track  
 Red engine and caboose pulling a dozen boxcars,  
 My three year old grandson's nose pressed  
 Against the viewing window, counting stops  
 As the engine pulls cars through valleys,  
 Up mountains, through towns, over bridges  
 He's conductor, caboose rider, and hobo too

Tickets, please!

Railroad days in Dunsmuir  
 My four year old granddaughter  
 Clutching my hand,  
 I tousle her curly hair  
 My husband conducts us through  
 Crowded streets  
 to the head of the train ticket line

All Aboard!

\* \* \*

## The Train

By Trinity

This train has been running the main line tracks way too long.  
 Not being properly serviced  
 And the engineer just keeps pushing!  
 Can't this engineer see  
 Just how much he is driving the train  
 and every piece is a heavy equipment?  
 Without the proper service and maintenance  
 This train isn't going to run the main line like he wants it to.  
 So the more this engineer pushes  
 This train might have a few more good runs on the main line!  
 What the engineer doesn't care about



Is that the train just wishes the last few runs  
He would stop at a depot change the tracks!  
Who wouldn't just love a change of scenery  
In the last few runs on these tracks!  
What would it hurt,  
You could have put more maintenance and service  
Into this beautiful piece of heavy equipment  
That drove the hell out of these tracks,  
That never complained!!  
Oh engineer, you should have made sure your train was maintained,  
For it was so beautiful and loyal to your pushing.

\* \* \*

## Local train

By Jeff



\*Photo taken in Southern Siskiyou County





## Raildad

By Tammy

My daughter and I are packing away the model trains of my late father. My mother had spread them out on a table in the garage and photographed them for a potential buyer. Above us are bins with tracks and transformers to power the trains. I keep a bright yellow Union Pacific railroad engine as a memento of my father's great love for trains.

My dad was a "railfan." A railfan is someone who has a fondness for trains that could include any manner of things such as studying train timetables, watching train videos, running toy/model trains on tracks, studying the history and artifacts of trains, knowing the models and years of trains, photography, riding trains, etc.

Dad passed on his love of trains to his children; none of us are railfans like him but we love to see a train going down tracks and hearing the whistle blow. Trains are awe inspiring: such powerful ingenuity!

My earliest memory of riding a train is going to visit my aunt with my mother. The train seats were shiny green vinyl. As we left the train station, my mother looked out the window of our seat to see that she had left the lights on in our car out in the parking lot!

My family would camp in the Imperial Valley sand dunes when I was young. From our campsite, we would travel through the dunes and on a dirt road to a small store in the desert for gasoline and ice. Across the dirt road from the store and through the desert sage were train tracks. We would put pennies on the track and wait for a freight train to come and roll over them. Waiting for the train in the shade of the store was fun for me. I was fascinated by the old fashioned gas pumps and the store had a real taxidermied jackalope. My father didn't mind waiting and passed the time chatting with other desert rats, smoking and drinking a beer. After the train had passed, we would run to find our coins that were made hot and thin by the steel wheels of the rail cars.

One time, as the train went by, I saw a man standing at the open door of a train car. He had a huge oversized tie on like a circus clown would wear! He raised his free hand at the elbow and waved at me.

The Amtrak passenger train runs twice a day from Dunsmuir. The northbound arrives at 5:00am and the southbound arrives at 12:45am. Either way, you must wake up early or stay up late to meet the train. I love the anticipation of waiting for the train to arrive in the darkness and bring my son home from college for a long awaited



visit. One night in particular was especially memorable as it had snowed about eight inches and everything was white. The streets of Dunsmuir were unplowed and silent. I heard the train whistle blow and saw the train come down the tracks illuminating the falling snowflakes before it. My son stepped down from the passenger car laughing because he was still dressed for Santa Cruz weather in shorts. After we were in the car, the big decision about which way to go from the rail station needed to be made. Dunsmuir is steep hills up from the train station unless you take the long way along the river towards southern Dunsmuir. I decided which road that I would go up and nearing the top the road began to struggle, lost traction and slid to a sideways stop! The unplowed street's steepness was proving to be a challenge. We got out of the car to clear the snow, started to kick a clear path in from of the tires. We got back in and I moved the car forward with a bit of struggle but soon got to level ground and were free to drive home on the empty quiet highway in the falling snow.

While the arrivals are joyous, the leaving at the station is always bittersweet—our family stays awake talking, eating, dozing and playing games. At the station, we wait for the sound of the incoming train's whistle signaling its imminent arrival, say our goodbyes one more time and hug tight until the next time. It's hard to watch the train leave...

My father passed away 2 years ago. Every time I see a train, I think of him. I treasure a black and white photo of him as a young boy of seven dressed in a wildly printed summer outfit. He is walking away from the camera down some train tracks. I imagine that the little boy who was my dad would have loved to walk those tracks until the end of the line...





## Wally and Me

By Tommy

He's been drawing F-16s in snap-knife-sharpened carpenter pencil after failing to find a yellow No. 2 in my leather bottomed blue High Sierra backpack. On the sagging card table we kept in the empty and foul-smelling kitchen, despite a firmly entrenched family custom of eating on the couch near the wood stove, are variously strewn pamphlets, forms, brochures, and applications creased carelessly from having stuffed them in his soiled toolbelt as he left the recruiter's office.

His rounded shoulder caps are lean and muscle striations are visible every now and then as he tightens and focuses on finer detail. Perched above ribbed white undershirt, a wifebeater, I recently discovered, his deltoids distract me and I stand with the door to the fridge in my hands, a barren warmth emanating from inside.

Unsurprised, but still hungry, I slam the door and being empty, the whole appliance totters and shakes.

I'm standing there and I see the mouse trapped in the corner, peanut butter smashed flat against its neck. Is it my job to throw it away, I wonder?

My eyes are drawn again to his shoulders, and below, a thick stellate purple heap of tissue winks at me.

I see his smile, with out-of-place perfect white even teeth—with a gap between the upper front two—and his slack jaw allows his tongue to dance, wiggling loose and then taugth from side to side, seemingly a novel focus technique I've never seen before. Tongue dangling, he withdraws it and licks his lips.

He's always said I have his lips. I know they're not his. They can't be. My father gave me these lips before leaving and they're mine.

His wide and dark brown pupils assess the gentle curve of the aircraft's canopy.

"I'm joining the Air Force, baby. Going to work on these bad mamas. Yeah!"

Near the table now I see better the graphitic scrawls and see he's drawing the billion dollar fighter jet pictured on the opened pamphlet to his left. He's left out the pilot, I see.



A gold hoop in his ear—my mom’s, who’d recently accused me of taking it—dangles. His heels rise as he digs his toes with force into the torn linoleum.

In fifth grade, with homework to do, and all I want is to ask about the squinting scar staring and winking at me. Stomach growling, I wish I hadn’t been ashamed to use the orange free lunch card at school today, opting to read Goosebumps instead in the cacophonous cafeteria.

“Dad.”

He reaches for the yellow snap-knife and thumbs out the blade a quarter inch, shaving the thick gray nipple to a fine point and resumes his efforts.

“Dad. What does it feel like to get shot?”

He turns to look, then turns back and puts his pencil down, holding the sheet of paper up as a proud father might hold his newborn son.

“It burns, baby! It burns!”

The next day he sold the VCR and left for good.

\* \* \*

## Our train ride to Nebraska

By Jadee





## The Once Thunderous Magic of The Forest

### By Spirit of the Rails

McCloud River Railroad, Long Bell Lumber Company, Weed Lumber Company, and countless other names, and many lost to time. Logging railroads, mining railroads, construction railroads, narrow gauge railroads, standard gauge railroads and so much more all hummed and echoed in these forests as a melodic heartbeat. All but a couple railroads remain now with the sound of modern engines.

Those railroads, now old to us, seemingly branched everywhere are vastly without a trace now. The logging camps and small towns that arose from them were people's communities they called home existed for long periods of time because of them, sometimes even for years. Children were born because of them; memories of fond times were made and shared because of them; and life grew and matured in them. Seemingly now it's as if they were never there.

These camps and towns were built around main lines and spurs lines. Often, the buildings, homes, offices, schoolhouses even, were brought in on the backs of flat cars or in train cars themselves. Whole communities could be picked up or coupled together and moved when the time was needed.

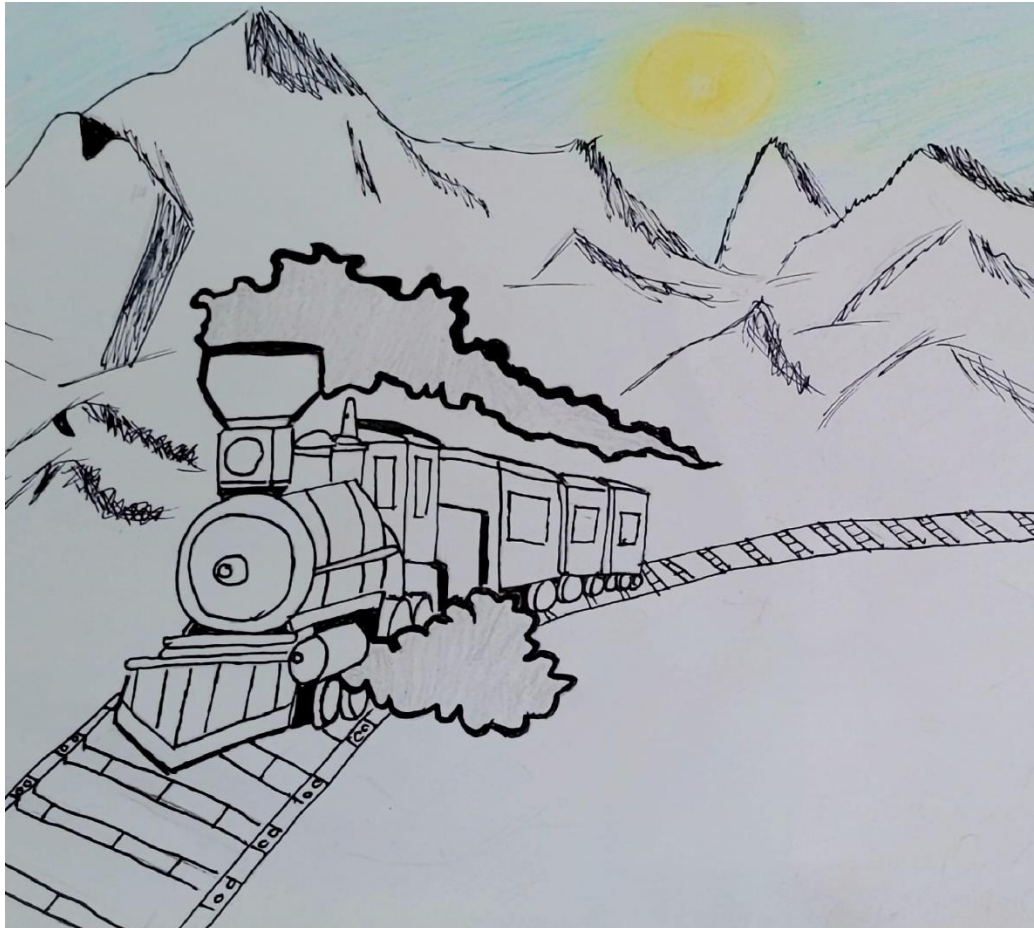
These communities were archaic even for their time in history and were so far removed from the modern world. So far from the progress of the modern world of the late 1800s and into the 1900s, yet they were contributors to it. However, they preferred their place deep in the forests enduring their hardships to stay with their trains. These people never thought of their trains and railroads as objects, but so much more than words could describe, and the connection was as powerful as a spiritual connection.

So many of the spurs, and camps we'll never know where they were. But they were there, and so often it's as if they're still there in a humble spirit remaining part of their forests. Allowing the pine needles and vegetation to grow and hide any last trace from the decades long ago from where they stood capturing the essence of the trains that hummed through their mountains and the essence of the men, women and children who called these places home and the trains and railroads their kin. There was magic in the thunderous trains of the forests.



## Chugging Along

By Kirit



In this depiction, a train emerges from the ethereal depths of imagination, its metallic form intertwining with the tangible lines of reality. Each carriage symbolizes a compartment of human existence, hurtling forward on the tracks of destiny towards an uncertain horizon.

\* \* \*

## Death in the West

By Changing Woman

Death in the West (USA) is a “taboo” subject matter in polite modern society in the West. Death and grief are unspoken about, un-talked-about, an extremely uncomfortable conversation in modern USA, death and grief about a person dying. You can only talk so much about your grief (even to professionals) before it makes people squirm, close up, clam up, and literally run away. You can lose friends from it.



There is no talk or training about death or grief. There is little support for death or grief. There is no ceremony for death. For countless centuries, a casket, the funeral, the burial is the closest thing to a ceremony in the “good old USA.” In the West, death exists in the deepest shadows, the shadows of our hearts, souls, and minds. It hurts. Grief and death make people uncomfortable. I like to shine the light on death and grief about a dying loved one, to pull it out of the shadows for just a short bit to hold it up for a show and tell. To lessen the unexplained, it may help if you lost someone. To lessen the fear of death, it may help your grief even a tiny bit. So you can see and hear what I have to say about death and grief. Please, I sincerely invite you to lend me your ear to listen to what I say with an open mind and heart. Let it roll around in your heart and mind for just a bit. We fear “our own” mortality, and the mortality of our loved ones. That is what Covid gave us humans worldwide, the fear of our own mortality to one degree or another. “For some,” fear ran amok!

Where can you go to talk about death and grief? You may say: professionals like Licensed Psychologists and Therapists. In my personal experience, I’ve had really good Marriage & Family Therapists. The best place for me to talk about anticipatory grief (before my parents died), and grief after my parents’ death (as a daughter and caregiver to both parents) was Hospice Licensed Therapists. I had a lot to process, much grief to work through. This included a mother who never told me that she loved me while she was alive. I had to wait till after she died to hear that she loved me. I’ve waited all my life to hear mom tell me that she loved me. What the hell. I had a female friend staying with me who was very psychic. In a channeling of my mother, my mom said “[she] loved me, I was the daughter that [she] always wanted, and [she] doesn't know why [she] couldn't tell me that while [she] was alive”. My mom “asked me to forgive [her], and [she] wanted me to know that [she] had unresolved wounding that prevented [her] from being a good mother to me.” She felt really bad about that. At my mom's channeling, my mom said the only gift she could give me is her “inner little girl.” The little girl within, mom stated that is the most precious gift she could give me. This brought hot, salty tears. I’ve waited all my life to hear an apology from mom. I wanted an apology that she was sorry how she treated me. My mom never did while she was alive. I had to wait till after she died to get my apology. You see, my mom was physically, verbally and emotionally abusive to me when alive. My Hospice Therapist told me it's NOT uncommon for a dead parent to express that they love you after their death. What a trip, what a gift for me! This is a gift, blessing, that death gave me. And I'm sharing with you. And perhaps, maybe it might give you.

I was told by a very wise one, a “Wisdom Holder”, that when one dies and they are on “The Other Side,” that they don't have the lower chakras anymore. They operate from the heart chakra and up. They have higher consciousness. That they don't have earthly root chakra tendencies, behavior, thoughts or lower chakra emotions. He said that is why my mom apologized to me after she died. Interesting, isn't it?



I want to share with you that I'm a Professional Caregiver. I have been present at, and witnessed, the death of five people. I have been at the dying person's bed-side as a friend, daughter, and caregiver. It is a blessing and an honor to be with someone who passes away in front of you. I have witnessed human birth and death. I find death a deeper gift, an honor to witness someone passing away. The reason being that all they take to the other side is the memories, their personality, their history, their life, their gifts, their acts of kindness. The heart connection, friendship, the relationships. It's the grief of it all, the connection, the sadness of the loved one's not wanting to pass away, leaving loved ones on this side behind, the attachment. Loosing the loved one is hard, it's sad to let any of that go! The loved ones left on this side have an empty big hole inside them that can't be filled. For those left behind on earth, loses the history of that person, the cord that connects us, the heart connection. When that cord has been cut, it hurts like hell. It's their complete letting go of all that here on this side before they go. My heart goes out to the ones who leave, and those left behind. We all come into the world with 'no' breath and we leave this world with 'no' breath. Life is breath, breath is everything, honor your breath!

I like to talk about "Transitioning", and "Active Transitioning." What I mean about that "Transitioning" is that the dying of that person is happening can take a very long time (years sometimes) or can happen quickly. What I mean about "Active Transitioning" is that the person is literally in process of dying, death is close, they are actively dying. It can take minutes, hours, days, months, or even longer. As a caregiver, daughter, and friend, I had amazing experiences with both "Transitioning" People and "Active Transitioning".

My friend & care giving Live-In Hospice Client C.B was an elderly gentleman from Ireland. CB (in life) talked deeply with all his friends and relatives, he would be elder wise council to each one of them including me. He was a good friend who was a very wise man, has seen a lot in his life. He was an amazing man and was good at sharing with all.

When CB was Actively Transitioning, he couldn't sleep as he could no longer lay flat. So he slept sitting upright in a lift-chair in the front room. One night, in the wee hours in the night, CB was talking loudly in his sleep. I awoke from a sound sleep at 2 am, and I got out of bed went to see what was going on. CB was in the front room, and I sat in easy chair for 2 hours listening silently to CB talking to each and every one of his living relatives and friends in his sleep. CB was checking in with all the people he loved, finding out if everyone was alright and solving any problems they might have. CB talked for a long time with each loved one and shared his wisdom. At end of the 2 hours, there was silence before CB said "now I know everyone is OK, now I can go." CB consciously chose to die, he didn't want to be a burden. He had a difficult time standing and walking, He told me earlier that he would transition when he had a





difficult time with standing and walking. You see, CB comes from the old world in Europe. Toward the end, CB spoke of Angels; he saw them and conversed with them. My belief that he was not hallucinating, and I like to believe angels were with him. Two weeks later, CB died on another caregiver's shift. It's been many moons ago that CB passed away, and to this day, I miss him greatly and have fond memories of him. I can even see like flashbacks of the good times we had together, and I tear as I write this. I feel CB's presence to this day. I still have a photo of CB on an altar of him. You see he is "not" gone unless forgotten, and I have NOT forgotten him!

My Hospice client Mr. DM, an elder toward the end, was actively transitioning when he spoke out loud (in his semi-sleep) of Angels, loved ones on the other side, spoke to God. DM asked God, "What do you want me to do?" DM said that he needed help, he saw Jacob's Ladder but couldn't reach it, and he asked God for help to reach Jacob's Ladder. I quietly listened and smiled that there really is a Jacob's Ladder. For the curious, the definition of Jacob's ladder is that Jacob saw (in a dream) the ladder from earth reaching heaven. There are two human forms visible, one on each side of the step (GENESIS 28:12-17). Jesus also refers to Jacob's Ladder Gospel of John (John 1:51). Genesis describes Jacob's Ladder: it's made of twelve steps and each step with a human form on each side of each step. A couple days later DM passed away on my day off.

My hospice elder client Mrs. ZE was actively transitioning when she told me she was seeing people all around her who she didn't know or recognize. ZE saw and spoke to Angels. She was speaking in tongues at times (I couldn't understand a word of what she was saying). People who are passing away often talk in languages they do not know. ZE passed away the next day before my shift.

My elder hospice client Ms DP, who I grew to love as a friend, was actively transitioning and she sang complete songs in her sleep to people I couldn't see (but I knew they were there). DP waited for me on my shift, and upon my arrival, she passed away in our arms fifteen minutes later. Her breath changed, her mouth opened. Her eyes were closed, her breath stopped. She saw angels who came to get her and took her to the other side.

My elder hospice client gentleman BJ was bed ridden when I met him in permanent sleep mode. He passed away on my first work shift with him in the wee hours in the middle of the night. He spoke to people in his sleep, to people I couldn't see. BJ talked in tongues. He quietly and peacefully exited this world in his sleep. I walked away for a minute, and that was when he passed away. It is very common that the dying will wait till you are not around to pass away!

My mom was a resident in a very good convalescent facility. She had 2 medical emergencies: a Brain Aneurysm at the top of her skull, several skull fractures, and a



Brain Hematoma by her right ear on the side of her skull. I was (POA) Power of Attorney and I had to make a painful decision on whether she should have surgery. She would have died without it.

There were two surgeries. The first was for a brain aneurysm, and 3 hours later there was an emergency surgery for Brain Hematoma. During one of mom's surgeries, mom died, but they never told me which one. The surgery team revived her in one of her surgeries, Mom had a stroke during surgery, and she lived with severe handicaps. Her left arm and hand, along with both legs, were paralyzed, and she was bed ridden. She had problems swallowing after surgery, and had to learn to talk and eat again. Her food had to be ground up in super small pieces so she could eat. She had no quality of life.

Did I make the right decision? I don't know! And knowing my mom, she wouldn't have wanted the quality of life post-surgery. Knowing what I know now, I think I made the wrong decision, sadly. Mom wouldn't want to live this way. You see, my mom was alcoholic. During dinners at the kitchen table, my father told me she would black out and fall off her dining room chair, hitting or slamming her head on the kitchen floor. My dad was an alcoholic too. I'm a child of two alcoholic parents. That's why I don't drink any alcohol. Mom slowly killed herself, a slow suicide with her wine and scotch drink. Way to go mom, NOT, so sad. Mom was an alcoholic since I was age 5. My mom mistreated me for most of my life. She was a mean bitch me only. She went out of her way to be physically and verbally abusive to me only, when I was a child and adult. I often got in trouble when I didn't do anything wrong. Post surgery, everything went full circle for mom and I. Changing Woman the daughter became the Caregiver of mom, the Medical POA. I was responsible for my mom, and it was painful especially when I went to visit her at the convalescent hospital. As soon as I walked into her room, she was rude to me. Glaring at me, she was verbally abuse me every time. No one else would visit mom. Dad washed his hands of his wife. My sister lived in England. With a compassionate heart, I visited my mom and checked on her well being. On my visits, sometimes when mom would verbally attack me, my shadow side sometimes would come out and I would think it be easier for me if she would die. God please forgive me. In a way it isn't easier, the unresolved still sits there to this day. I been working hard on it! Damn the unresolved. Some say we pick our parents before we incarnate here on Earth. If that's true, what the hell was I thinking? Some say it was karma for me. One of my teachers is very shamanic, and he incarnated with much wisdom. EJ Gold says Karma is not what we think. Karma lessons we need to learn is what we need on our True will's path.

I got a call from the convalescent hospital about my mom and that I better come quick to see her to say goodbye. Half an hour later, I arrive at my mom's bedside. My sister comes a bit later. My mom's breath kept pausing. It would stop for a long pause. We



thought mom was gone, but she would start breathing again. This went on for hours and hours, as mom was teasing death. Mom saw Angels, she spoke in tongue that we couldn't understand. Mom tried to say something to me. She said "sir" mid-word, then she went a bit unconscious. Then suddenly the biggest fly we ever saw suddenly appeared over my mom. It was kind of freaky. The fly's target was my mom's wide open mouth. My sister and I were determined in waving this damn fly off. The fly was very persistent and unusually fast in flight. This went on for a bit. The determined fly missed our waving arms and hands. Finally, the fly quickly flew into my mom's wide open mouth. Her breathing stopped. She was gone. My sister and I said at the same time that the huge fly was death itself. That was a little traumatizing to my sister and I. It was freaky. Tears flowed. Grief began.

WT is one of my best girl friends ever since 5th grade. At the age of 37 years old, she is very close to dying from cancer in the San Jose Valley Med Hospital. Actively in transition. WT and I have lots of history together. She even knew some of my relatives. On Christmas Eve, I have come to visit WT in Intensive Care Unit in the hospital. The medical staff asks all of us to wait in the hallway. We (WT's Mom ET, sister-in-law MT, and I) wait for a long time to see WT. An ICU nurse comes out and ask us to come in and say goodbye. WT is awake but cannot speak. I knew her favorite holiday is Christmas, and it's Christmas Eve. I know it is common that dying people need permission to pass away, to give them permission to leave their love ones behind! The doctor is standing by the IV drips at head of WT. The doctor explains to us what going on as WT actively dying before our eyes. I speak first to WT, and her family members are crying. I speak up and tell her that "it's Christmas Eve" WT raises her head off her bed pillow in shock of the date. She looks at me with surprise shocked look that it's holiday time. I say out loud to my dear friend to not stay on our behalf, that we will be OK, for her to do what she has to do, and that it's OK to leave. WT immediately started passing away, as the hospital monitors showed. WT's mom started to whimper loudly and WT came back. I had my arms around her mom's waist. I thought she was going fall down so I pulled her toward me. Her mom got the message to be quiet and WT peacefully passed away quietly in couple of minutes in the company of loved ones. My good friend was gone, but not forgotten.

MY NEAR DEATH: I personally have had several near death experiences. When I was 9 years old, it was summertime and very hot. My mom, Aunt GP and her friend "N" went to the Cement Boat beach in Aptos. We were all in our bathing suits. U just finished a 50/50 ice cream on a stick. My Aunt says "Lets go in the ocean." I heard that voice inside saying a strong "NO." My aunt says that she and her friend "N" will hold my hands, what could happen? I heard "No" again. This back and forth happened for a while. All the while, I kept hearing that "No". My aunt kept harping on me, and she finally talked me into it. All three of us were knocked down by a wave. I was swept out to sea. I felt I was in a blender of rolling wave of thick sand and salt-water circling me.



I am literally drowning, can't get loose of the straight jacket hold. All I can think about is that I'm mad at my aunt for talking me into it. I am mad at myself for not listening to that "No" from inside me. I'm drowning, can't see a thing. I'm struggling to loosen the grip of the seaweed that wrapped around me. My arms are pinned to the side my body, and from my shoulder to feet I am wrapped tight. I'm furious at my aunt and at myself for agreeing to come into the ocean. Now I am drowning, laying on the ocean floor and I see approximately 20 feet up at the water's surface. I see a round bright light through semi sandy water. The whitest bright clear light getting brighter and brighter and brighter. It is now so bright, its hurts my eyes to see it. The sea is rough. I'm under water. It seemed forever for a long time, and I'm dying. I totally give up and surrender. I'm being lifted up, lifted up to the water surface up to the light, inside the light, up into space up, up, up. Then the bright clear light blinds me. Jesus Christ comes from above, walks towards me. There's a white light explosion. I see Giant Jesus of silver, white gold light bend over toward me. Next thing I know, a giant hand and arm of light lifts me up out of the ocean. My aunt and her friend are in a panic. They look at me and ask "How are you alive?" I run over to my mom on the beach sitting on the blanket, totally oblivious to anything going on. Oblivious to my drowning, that my life was saved by the hand of Jesus. I had forgotten about this incident of my near death experience until I was walking along the shoreline on Aldo's Beach in Santa Cruz as an adult. Writing in my journal, the flashback came of my near death experience.

Another Near Death Experience happened after my mom died. She is on the other-side. What I saw was pitch black, the darkest thickest deep black. I'm standing up facing a small draw-bridge of white bright light going up a deep hill of dark black. There is some white light there, a two laned paved highway white, and painted yellow and black lines going the whole length of the highway in the desert. It's a lonely highway with no activity and no cars. Toward the compass direction of West, there is a dim white light in the shadows of the gray and black, acting as a beacon to beckon one toward the dim light. I'm staring at the road knowing I'm in the Bardo, the After-Life. All of a sudden, there's a huge crowd of light beings of people who have passed away running across the little draw-bridge up the hill and up onto the highway in the lane going West going toward the dim white light in the shadows of the black and gray. At the end of the crowd is my mom who runs up behind me and kicks me out of her way, knocks me sideways. I witness more light beings running past me to the highway headed West. I'm the silent witness watching this all play out. There's a huge tight group of people on the other side walking down the lane toward the light. 500 feet behind this group is large group of Tibetan Buddhist Monks in their robes holding prayer books walking the Bardo for every person who passed away in that group. The monks were slowly walking in silence and reverence, praying for the departed people walking the Bardo. The monks were some distance up the road several miles away. Next thing I know, I magically appeared on the paved road in west bound lane



watching the Bardo walkers in silence. Next thing I know, the Dali Llama is 50 yards away, walking slowly toward me, praying on his mala of 108 beads, praying on each bead he touches. As he gets close to me, he telepathically tells me I don't belong here, that I need to go back, this is not my time. I hold his arm to help him walk, we turn around and walk the highway in the opposite direction in the darkness back to this realm on earth. The Dali Llama saved me.

AMERICAN BOOK OF THE DEAD BY EJ GOLD (ABD). A Gateways Publication On Death and Dying Metaphysics. The book I have is \$15.95. Its a guidebook in the after-life. It tells you that your mind is a projection and helps you navigate the Bardo, and it's 84 chambers. This book helps the living and those that pass over to the other side. Reading ABD helps the voyager (who passed-away) to navigate the Bardo.

Changing Woman reads out loud for the dying, those sick, and the living. If you are having a repetitive problem, you are stuck in a chamber. One starts with the Prayer of Clear Light in EJ's ABD Book (please see below).

#### CONFRONTING THE CLEAR LIGHT BY EJ GOLD

I am experiencing the clear light of objective reality. Nothing is happening, nothing ever has happened or ever will. My present sense of self, is in reality the void itself, having no qualities or characteristics. I remember myself as the voyager, whose deepest nature is clear light itself. I am one, there is no other. I am the voidness of the void, the eternal unborn, the uncreated, neither real or unreal. All that I have been conscious of is my own play of consciousness, a dance of light, the swirling patterns of light in infinite extension, endless endlessness, the Absolute beyond change, existence, reality. I, the voyager, am inseparable from the clear light. I cannot be born, die, exist or change. I know now that this is my true nature.

#### GRIEF:

In the West, grief is traditionally not dealt with unless you go to your therapist or religious outlet (church, cleric, elder, priest, father, friar, lama, preacher, rector, padre, holy man, clergy person, rabbi). Other resources include Death Doula Schools, Grief Workshops, Grief Support Groups. In my opinion, the West wants you to move through your grief quickly. Remember you are NOT alone, reach out to what works for you. If need be, I urged one to find help with "counseling" from clergy, local Hospice, therapist, psychologist. I find friends can only take so much around the subject of death and grief. This happened to my grandmother over the loss of her husband. She lost several friends over it; they were couples who were uncomfortable with a single lady.

I took a Grief workshop in Boony Doon in Santa Cruz Area. It was taught by two Marriage, Family Licensed Therapists. Honoring grief in ritual in the African Tradition



in community with song, music, talking being witnessed, heard, understood in front of all with loving support in ritual. It soothes the heart to be heard in one's emotions in grief. It really helped me with my grief.

#### BOOKS:

Elizabeth Kubler-Ross (a Psychologist, in hospice, palliative care) was a pioneer in near-death studies, and author of the internationally best-selling book "On Death and Dying" (1969). In this book, she first discussed the theory of the five stages of death, also known as the "Kubler-Ross Model," awarded for "100 Most Important Thinkers" in 20th Century. By July 1985, Kubler-Ross had taught 125,000 students in death and dying courses in colleges, seminaries, medical schools, hospitals, and social-work institutions. She was a central figure in the hospice care movement. In Escondido, California, she founded Shanti Nilaya (Home of Peace), intending it as a healing center for the dying and their families. She was the co-founder of the American Holistic Medical Association. She accepted AIDS patients during a time they were condemned in society and medical institutions.

#### ABOUT DYING:

To "die" comes from the Indo-European base "dhue-" which means pass away. Becomes senseless. Dying is a part of living, a personal experience of the being letting go of it's physical body. I invite everyone to explore the uncomfortable subject manner of death, near death, grief. Get informed. None of us will escape it. The more informed one is, the closer one is to a conscious death. I invite you to research death and grief. A few examples: Tibetan Book of The Dead, Egyptian Book of The Dead, Tibetan Buddhist in Encyclopedia.

[http://tibetanbuddhistencyclopedia.com/en/index.php?title= Chinese Buddhist Encyclopedia.](http://tibetanbuddhistencyclopedia.com/en/index.php?title=Chinese%20Buddhist%20Encyclopedia)

#### MOVIE RECOMENDATIONS:

1) Japanese 2008 movie drama film "Departure" by Shinmon Aoki, directed by Yojiro Takita, starring Masahiro Motoki and originally titled "Okuribito" (means "the sending away" or one who sends off). The film is about a young man who is a failed cellist, thought about finding a job as travel agent, as he stumbles into work as a "nokanshi" (a traditional Japanese ritual mortician). He is ridiculed and experiences prejudice from family, friends, and his wife because of social taboos against people who deal with the dead. People change their minds from the beauty of his work. It's very touching movie, and I even cried.

2) "DANIEL" is by first-time director and adventurer Daniel Northcott who captures his life on film. At 8 years old, Daniel was given a video camera and he chronicles his life with over 1,000 hours of film. At 20 years old, Daniel explored 46 countries and captured his experience on film. Daniel has unconventional philosophy, along with a



transformative odyssey and lifestyle. Visually traversed lands, taught English overseas. Daniel captured visuals to uncover the common threads weaving through beliefs, lifestyles, culture. Daniel is a free spirit, and adored nature. He saw the pleasure in the mundane, acknowledging the shared connections that transcends differences within our diverse world. Daniel's odyssey stands as a potent reminder of the commonalities threading through intricate fabric of existence. His narrative inspires us to approach our individual journeys with an openminded attitude, urging us to explore realms beyond our immediate spheres and to treasure the meaningful connections we forge throughout our paths. Daniel powerfully reminds us to embrace life, embracing all of what life has to offer. I found this film profound and I had a good cry, so keep the tissues handy. Daniel has beautiful profound messages for anyone who has ears to hear. If interested in this film, you can watch a trailer online.

3) YouTube on Tibetan Bardo / Tibetan Book of The Dead.

4) My hats off to your local hospice nurses and staff. They are angels on Earth. Hospice provides services for people who are terminally ill patients, and support families with psychological, spiritual and medical services, and comfort care. They aim to improve quality of life till the end of life.

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## RAILROAD AND TRAINS

### By Changing Woman

The first thing that popped into my head with the creative prompt of Railroads & Trains was my favorite children's book. "I think I can, I think I can," said the Little Blue Engine, and she hitched herself onto the little train. And I thought I could. These two quotes come from my all-time favorite childhood story book "THE LITTLE ENGINE THAT COULD" retold by Watty Piper. Such A powerful life (Mantras) "I think I can, I think I can." "I thought I could." Go climb your symbolic mountain, you can!

Here the Story word for word:

"The Little Engine That Could"

Chug, chug, chug. Puff, puff, puff. Ding-dong. The little train rumbled over the tracks. She was a happy little train for she had such a jolly load to carry. Her cars were filled full of good things for boys and girls.



There were toy animals---giraffes with long necks at all, and even a baby elephant. Then there were dolls----dolls with blue eyes and yellow curls, dolls with brown eyes and brown bobbed heads, and the funniest little toy clown you ever saw.

And there were cars full of toy engines, airplanes, tops jack-knives, picture puzzles, books, and every kind of thing boys or girls want.

But that was not all. Some of the cars were filled with all sorts of good things for boys and girls to eat---big golden oranges, red-cheeked apples, bottles of creamy milk for their breakfasts, fresh spinach for their dinners, peppermint drops, and lollipops for after-meal treats.

The little train was carrying all these wonderful things to the good little boys and girls on the other side of the mountain. She pulled along merrily.

Then all of a sudden she stopped with a jerk. She simply could not go another inch. She tried and she tried, but her wheels would not turn.

What were all those good little boys and girls on the other side of the mountain going to do without the wonderful toys to play with and the good food to eat.

“Here comes a shiny new engine,” said the funny little clown who jumped out of the train. “Let us ask him to help us.”

So all the dolls and toys cried together:

“Please, Shiny New Engine, won't you please pull our train over the mountain? Our engine has broken down, and the boys and girls on the other side won't have any toys to play with or good food to eat unless you help us.”

But the Shiny New Engine snorted: “I pull you? I am a Passenger Engine. I have just carried a fine big train over the mountain, with more cars than you ever dreamed of. My train had sleeping cars, with comfortable berths: a dining-car where waiters bring whatever hungry people want to eat; and parlor cars in which people sit in soft arm-chairs and look out of big plateglass windows.

“I pull the likes of you? Indeed not!”

And off he steamed to the roundhouse, where engines live when they are not busy.

How sad the little train and all the dolls and toys felt!





Then the little clown called out, "The Passenger Engine is not the only one in the world. Here is another engine coming, a great big strong one. Let us ask him."

The little toy clown waved his flag and the big strong engine came to a stop.

"Please, oh please, Big Engine," cried all the toys together. "Won't you please pull our train over the mountain? Our engine has broken down and the good little boys and girls on the other side won't have any toys to play with or good food to eat unless you help us."

But the Big strong Engine bellowed: "I am a Freight Engine. I have just pulled a big train loaded with big machines over the mountain. These machines print books and newspapers for grown-ups to read. I am a very important engine indeed. I won't pull the likes of you!" And the freight Engine puffed off indignantly to the roundhouse.

The little train and all the dolls and toys were very sad.

"Cheer up!" cried the little toy clown. "The Freight Engine is not the only one in the world. Here comes another. He looks very old and tired, but our train is so little, perhaps he can help us."

So the little toy clown waved his flag and the dingy, rusty old engine stopped.

"Please, kind Engine," cried all the dolls and toys together. "Won't you please pull our train over the mountain? Our engine has broken down, and the boys and girls on the other side won't have any toys to play with or good food to eat unless you help us."

But the Rusty Old Engine sighed: "I am so tired. I must rest my weary wheels. I cannot pull even so little a train as yours over the mountain. I can not. I can not." And off he rumbled to the roundhouse chugging, "I can not. I can not. I can not."

Then indeed the little train was very, very sad, and the dolls and toys were ready to cry.

But the little clown called out, "Here is another engine coming, a little blue engine, a very little one, maybe she will help us."

The very little engine came chug, chugging merrily along. When she saw the toy clown's flag, she stopped quickly.

"What is the matter, my friends?" she asked kindly.



“Oh, Little Blue Engine,” cried the dolls and toys. “Will you pull us over the mountain? Our engine has broken down and the good boys and girls on the other side won't have any toys to play with or good food to eat, unless you help us. Please, please, help us, Little Blue Engine.”

“I'm not very big,” said the Little Blue Engine. “They use me only for switching trains in the yard. I have never been over the mountain.”

“But we must get over the mountain before the children awake,” said all the dolls and the toys.

The very little engine looked up and saw the tears in the dolls' eyes. And she thought of the good little boys and girls on the other side of the mountain who would not have any toys or good food unless she helped.

Then she said, “I think I can. I think I can. I think I can.” And she hitched herself to the little train.

She tugged and pulled and pulled and tugged and slowly, slowly, slowly they started off.

The toy clown jumped aboard and all the dolls and the toy animals began to smile and cheer.

Puff, puff, chug, chug, went the Little Blue Engine. “I think I can---I think I can-----I think I can-----I think I can-----I think I can-----I think I can----- I think I can----I think I can----I think I can.”

Up, up, up. Faster and faster and faster the little engine climbed, until at last they reached the top of the mountain.

Down in the valley lay the city.

“Hurray, hurray,” cried the funny little clown and all the dolls and toys.

“The good little boys and girls in the city will be happy because you helped us, kind, Little Blue Engine.”

And the Little Blue Engine smiled and seemed to say as she puffed steadily down the mountain, “I thought I could. I thought I could. I thought I could. I thought I could. I thought I could. I thought I could.”

THE END



I, Changing Woman, am refreshing revisiting this storybook “The Little Engine That Could” for future affirmations “I Think I Can,” “I Thought I Could.” I will! I will! I will!

Trains & Railroads have intrigued me ever since childhood, no matter the size of the train. Either toy, model, miniature, or full size train. I love trains. I have always lived in a home near railroad tracks and trains. When I was a very young child in Saratoga there was a small hobby shop and the man who owned the shop had model train set with mountains, villages, stores, people, trees, flowers, dogs, and the works. I loved watching the model train zoom along on it's tiny train tracks. When I was a kid, my favorite thing to do was to ride miniature steam trains. I did so in (three different parks) in Los Gatos, it was my passion, my delight, I loved it! Still to this day, my 1/3 size steam train (Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad) is in operation, where young and old ride the steam train. I must go one day and ride my train, the Wildcat Railroad, as an adult. Mom would send me to the local grocery store on my three speed bike, most of the time riding my bike near the railroad tracks. In junior high (in Los Gatos) I walked across the railroad tracks Mondays through Fridays for three years. In junior high, boys often would “call out” another boy to a fight, and it was always on the other side of the railroad tracks. In Santa Cruz, I used to walk the railroad tracks and train trestle over the San Lorenzo River to The Broad Walk (an amusement park). The Roaring Camp Railroad in Felton Santa Cruz Mountain Forest or Broad Walk Train Rides and Tours. I took my father on Mountain Forest Tour on Roaring Camp Railroad Train Ride, which was a really interesting tour, especially about the Redwood Trees. I have fond memories of riding trains at Disneyland, and commuter trains in Europe. I rode commuter train once from Santa Cruz to San Francisco Airport for a trip to England.

My great grandfather LB had a long history with trains and railroads. It was bitter-sweet. LB rode the trains underneath the trains. LB wore a three piece suit with a long black overcoat. When the train arrived at the train-stations and stopped, LB would roll out from under the train, would take off his overcoat and put it under his arm. As LB would say, who would question a man in three piece suit and tie? And no one ever did. You would have to know my great grandfather; he was a character and was a cantankerous short Irish man. I remember one time my sister and I were in backseat of LB's car as he was driving on Bayshore Highway to San Francisco Airport to pick up my grandparents (his daughter and his son-in-law who were my mom's parents), from a trip to Russia. LB was getting mad whenever anyone passed him on the highway. He pulled over a driver and was attempting a citizen's arrest. My sister and I were peering out the back window of LB's car. We couldn't believe what we were seeing! The man got out of his car and my great grandfather stood beside the stranger's car. The man was super tall, close to 7 ft tall. He towered over LB, who was very short. I thought the stranger was going to punch LB out. LB turned around and got in his car off to SF Airport. LB got old, diagnosed with Dementia, and had to go into a facility. One day, LB decided to run away from the facility. My great grandfather was on foot and thought



he could beat a “moving train.” My great grandfather didn't make it. Knowing LB as I do, he was a character, an independent wild man. It was a poetic way for him to die. So I guess trains are in my lineage. I lived in Aromas, which had a train going through town. I live in Mount Shasta. No matter where you live in these two cities, one hears and feels the train. For me, the train is a comfort. I like hearing and feeling the sounds of the trains and railroads. The trains are my friends. In Mt Shasta, we have what the locals call “Graffiti Bridge” which is a train trestle bridge that locals have been graffiti-ING since 1950's. These days trains are traveling graffiti cars. A practice I have when I see trains is looking between the cars, the space between train cars.

I invite everyone to be a child-at-heart and ride trains, big or small. I recently found out from one of my caregiver client's LD, who loves trains and he (used to) own 1/3 size train with cars. LD told me that Railroad Mountain has small train rides in Klamath Falls in Oregon. LD built some of the miniature buildings at Railroad Mountain. One day I will ride a small train at Railroad Mountain.



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