



Issue #1

CRAYNADIAN WANDERIN'

*Railroad folklore, moniker art, poems,
and train photography with additional work
from Mad Kap and King of the Hounds*

BRIEF RAMBLINGS OF THOUGHT

before I begin...

I've been riding freight on and off now for almost four years and traveling on and off for almost seven. The romanticized chatter from **Reddit**, **Squattheplanet**, **Instagram** and books like *Into the Wild* pushed me to live an alternate lifestyle on my own terms, but I had already formed a breakaway long before in my mind. When my job disposed of me like a used tampon I sold everything and left it all behind, my friends, my family, and my life. I was unhappy.

I had worked in the corporate world long enough to know that it's bullshit. I've also traveled enough to know that labeling myself as a "Dirty Kid," wandering in groups with kids in their punk vests and patched clothes, and their dogs, where the booze and needles flourish under bridges by the train tracks, eating trash, hitting up food banks, that's all bullshit too. There is no freedom in either for me other than just running around the country, feeling hopeless and squandering my money to curb my pain. I did that for a bit, but recently I've been making changes in my life to fix that and mend those wounds.

I'm not a "Dirty Kid" and I'm not a graffiti artist. I can't paint and drawing is not my forte. I ride trains because it's a free way to see the landscape and wander around when I'm fed up with work and routine, which happens often. It's why I've had more jobs than I can count; it will most likely always be that way and if not, who cares. It doesn't matter. You can't win anyway, we'll always be in chains and that's fine because I have some freedom and balance in my life and I'm slowly walking away from my demons to become a better person. That's all I can ask for in a society clouded from social media and materialism.

This zine is just a way of documenting some of my wanderings in Canada, my art, which for most of my life I was always told by my peers would never get me anywhere in society and I should focus on career paths. Deep down I've always been a delinquent. I'm not looking to break away, more so to embrace some of the hobbies that bring me passion and showcase some other artists' work whom I've shared some good times with either talking trains over a beer, doing graffiti, taking them on their first ride or just enjoying nature and its simple pleasures. And that's what it's all about, a little graffiti and moniker art, some stories of my travels and theirs, train photography, camping in the woods and watching the vibrant colors blaze by me through nearly untouched landscape as she snakes along curves, squeals and shrieks. It's like drawing or putting a brush to a canvas and letting the strokes of paint guide me along the way, I never know the

outcome, but in those moments that meditation is pure and peaceful. That's what I like about it.

DISCLAIMER

I did not disclose the locations of monikers to protect hop out information for riders. All photography, sketches, and writings are property of Brian Cray, Mad Kap or KoTH. Photography I have used herein to compile this zine is mostly from Canada with some background images around New England as I feel riding in the Northeast and parts of Canada are very similar, slow and low, and pristine so I think it fits perfectly for what I'm going for and I hope you enjoy it. We've spent a lot of time working on this and I spent a lot of time compiling it. I could not have done this without the help of Mad Kap and KoTH so special thanks goes out to both of them for supporting me in this endeavor. As always ride hard, live free, and try to give back when you can.

DEDICATED TO

My cousin "Dan the Man" who passed away in the fall of 2019 from struggling with heroin addiction. I miss you dude more than you could ever know. I know are lives went separate ways after I started travelin', but the times we shared as kids when we had no responsibilities were priceless memories I'll always keep close to me. If you're struggling with addiction, reach out, find people who care, we're here to help, losing people close to you sucks. Rest easy my friend, we love you back east.

A TASTE OF WILD

*A brief diary of my wanderings in
Canada...*

AUGUST 2019

Sharp rays of light tickled my face as I awoke early morning on the incongruent ground with a minefield of walnuts burrowed beneath my back. I sat up; cracked the bones in my vertebrae and neck, giving me only sudden relief from the kinks and knots crawling up my spine, but I still felt rested for the long day of riding ahead of me.



My hand patted the ground scouring it for my pack of smokes and glasses. The air smelled of fresh dew and pollen as smoke entered my lungs igniting the start to a new day where not even a cloud touched the sky. I had a few hours to kill, at least, according to a map drawn by another rider beneath

the bridge. It marked the hop out time and direction of northbound Intermodals despite it being mislabeled as eastbound, which Eugene Bean pointed out beside it in a funny, wax rant.

The hours crawled by much like my motivation to pack up my gear, which I did so in a lackadaisical manner as general manifests entered and left the CN Vaughan Yard sporadically. The pleasures of indulging in Pizza Hut ruminated in my brain, but I stood firmly on the hill pushing this deterrent out of my thoughts, afraid my train would stop on the mainline and that it did.

Just before noon, one of the longest hotshots I ever cast my eyes on parked on the mainline for a crew change, pointing northbound for Winnipeg. I hustled down the embankment of overgrowth rustling through the high trackside weeds to ballast. Cars zoomed, bicyclists zinged and pedestrians zipped along the bridge overhead of me as I walked the line looking for a suitable ride.



If I was riding for multiple days I became picky with my ride, not wanting to ride suicide or on the porch of a 40' with little to no cover. Instead, I strove for mini wells, buckets, something to keep me hidden from roll-by inspections and society, something with comfort, something with hobo luxury. Over the years these rides have become harder and harder to find. In Canada, nearly all rides were suicide 53's and 48's or the porches of 40's. I really needed to search for the right car, looking for ribbed 53's, 40's with mini wells or the occasional bucket on a 48' with a floor, which a simple kerplunk of a rock would tell me when I tossed it inside and it either dinged the steel or thudded against ballast. This sound was more golden than the sound of airing up and departure. Finding the ideal ride involved strenuous hustling along the jagged slopes of track and oftentimes just settling for any ride before air entered her, birthing her of life.



This was one of those instances where I wandered back and forth, searching and searching, until finally I worked my way back the way I came and jumped up on a 40' mini well with the overpass shining next to me. I lay under the grate waiting for her golden hiss to ignite my journey as the fire in the sky melted away my boredom with anticipation and I hoped no one looked down on my well from the overpass above. Sweat dripped down my skin from the hot steel, but a long, blissful journey lay ahead of me on this cloudless day, so I lay unfazed. I waited patiently. The sound touched my ears like the voice of an angel. We were off!



She sliced around that bend through the urban havoc of downtown Toronto and as I peeped up to the baby blue sky, I saw a burst of skyscrapers trickle on by me. Their glass facades twinkled in the rampant sunlight until the city completely disappeared. Then nothing but green blazes of trees burned by as

she slithered through Canadian wilderness. The sound of the train, the smell of diesel exhaust, the gyrating, conical wheels, bouncing and screeching along those endless glinting beams of steel, the complete desolation, it all ran wild on the Canadian Highline. Just me, the train, the wilderness, little streets, towns, and railroad crossings between, it felt all too mystical.

Lakes of blue sprinkled between miles and miles of deep green forest blinded me for the next 2-days and I loved absolutely every fuckin' minute of it. I loved the fresh breeze tossing my hair. I loved the glacial lakes, the swamps, the vibrant collage of aspens and lodgepole pines whipping by me, the cloudless sky and tormenting sun, the speed of the train rippin' it, the squeals, screeches, shrieks, the stops, the hissing, the fly-bys, the pure taste of freedom. I felt alive. Mother Nature carved a masterpiece in it landscapes for me to see and what better way to see it all than by train.



That evening she sided for a crew change in Sudbury. I hopped off and wandered up into the woods to cleanse my bowels of canned beans and tuna packets. I listened for air, but she sat silently on the mainline, waiting to re-crew as I squatted, pushing fiber and protein out of sphincter and covering

the loaf with loose dirt, dead leaves, and twigs. I felt lighter and fuller of energy so I walked the line just a few cars and studied the woodland.

The sharp, strong, poignant smell of pine struck my nose with an undertone of bittersweet fruit, but I couldn't quite pinpoint what mottled beneath it.

My legs brushed through moist clusters of bushes. I stopped. I bent down and ran my fingers along moist, little leaflets, picking up branch after branch and scouring each bush of its wild blueberries. I scavenged the land for hours, plucking one by one, and filling a whole Ziploc with these tasty little zaps of flavorful heaven. Then the sound of air whistled through the foggy silence of wilderness as the cool air of night surrendered to starry sky and the chorus of amphibians and bugs alike. In that moment, I hopped back on my ride and nestled myself deep into my cocoon. My excitement soon faded as the reverberating thud of steel rocked me to sleep in my cradle of solitude.



After arriving early morning in Melville on an IM, I hopped on a NBD later that day at 5 PM only to end up 20 miles away at a grain elevator.

I waited in a golden, glistening, field of wheat to see if the train was picking up or dropping off cars, but after two long hours of lying there in the dirt she only dropped a block of grainers and picked up a string of tankers. There were no rideables back to the CN yard so I just started walking back towards Melville, swatting mosquitoes and smiling, because the road to Churchill would be a harder catch than I had imagined.



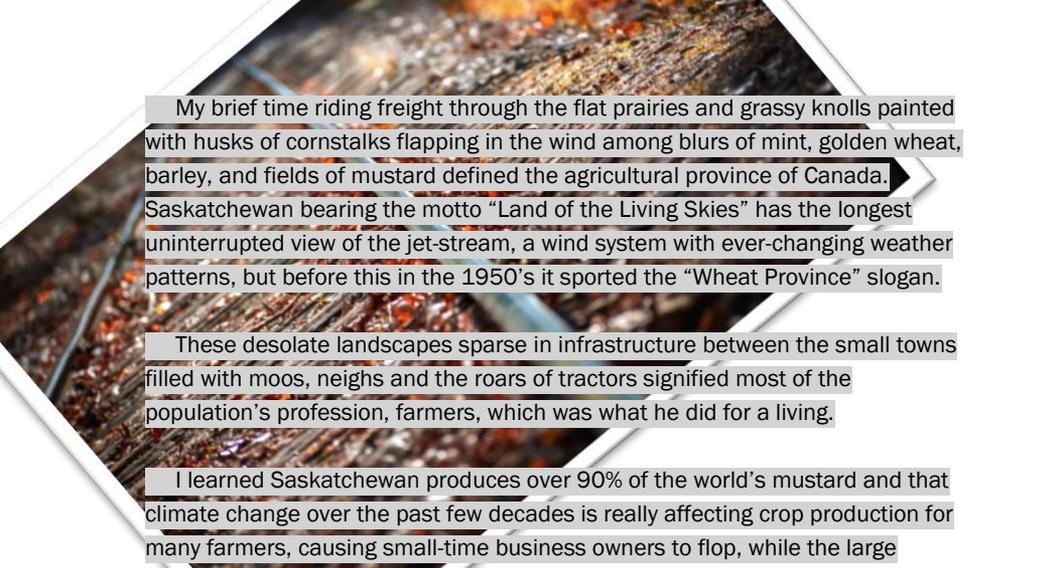


I slept that night beneath the pines near a high school football field and track with my battery bank plugged into the scoreboard and woke up that morning to a dog snarling and slobbering at my face. I panicked, sloppily packed my bedroll, threw loose garments and food in my bag, and

hastily hopped a fence ripping my jacket in the process on a barbed wire. The owner called out for his dog and stood beneath the hill by the track looking for me, but did not know who or what he was looking for since he never saw me behind the pines. I sat in the grass by the chain-linked fence as morning dew soaked into my ass until finally his dog got bored, picked up another scent that piqued his curiosity and wandered off in the field. This gave me enough time to hop the fence, stumble through knee-high brush, saturating my boots and pants to my waist, and retrieve my battery bank before hitting the road to start walking down the highway. It was too early to hitchhike and my impatience weighed me down so instead of standing in the scorching sun holding a sign that read "MELVILLE" in red and white Markals, I just started walking the highway to nowhere.

After five hours of tedious wandering, my pace slowed to a subtle pitter-patter, achieving no more than a mile per hour. I wiped the sweat from my brow onto my forearm bronzed by both dirt and the luminous sun. A pickup with a trailer slowed down and pulled off onto the shoulder, but drove far past me and disappeared into the horizon over the hill. I lost any hope of getting a ride with my sign strapped to my pack, but kept scuttling onward towards Melville, but then my ears heard the soft screech of brakes and I turned around to the very same pickup that pulled past me just moments earlier. He motioned me over.

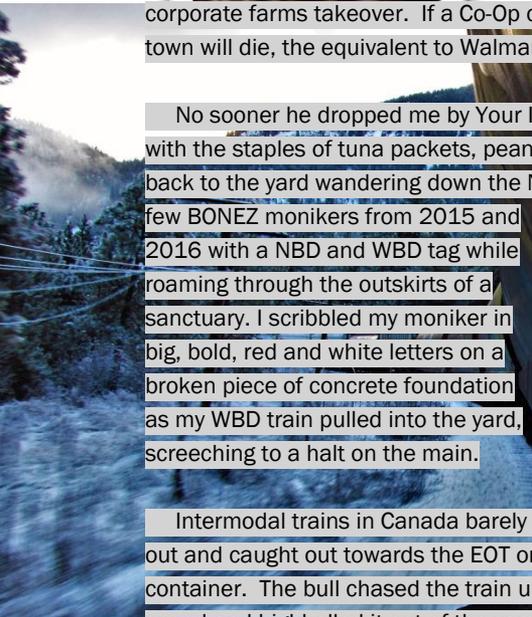
Sunburn and freckles speckled his arms under his flannel shirt. Without even asking I already knew what he did for work.



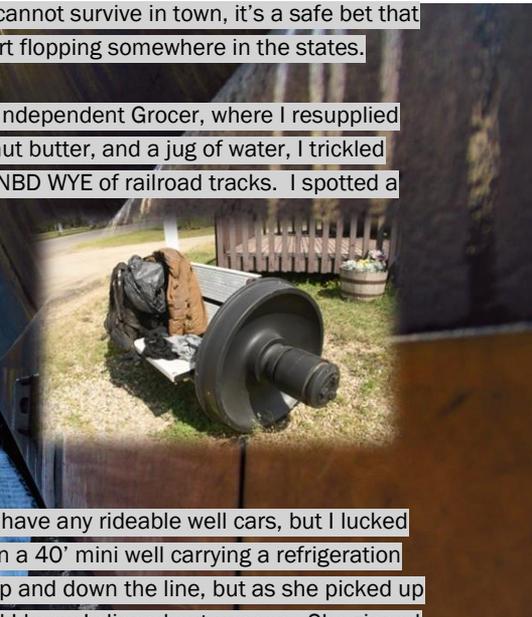
My brief time riding freight through the flat prairies and grassy knolls painted with husks of cornstalks flapping in the wind among blurs of mint, golden wheat, barley, and fields of mustard defined the agricultural province of Canada. Saskatchewan bearing the motto “Land of the Living Skies” has the longest uninterrupted view of the jet-stream, a wind system with ever-changing weather patterns, but before this in the 1950’s it sported the “Wheat Province” slogan.

These desolate landscapes sparse in infrastructure between the small towns filled with moos, neighs and the roars of tractors signified most of the population’s profession, farmers, which was what he did for a living.

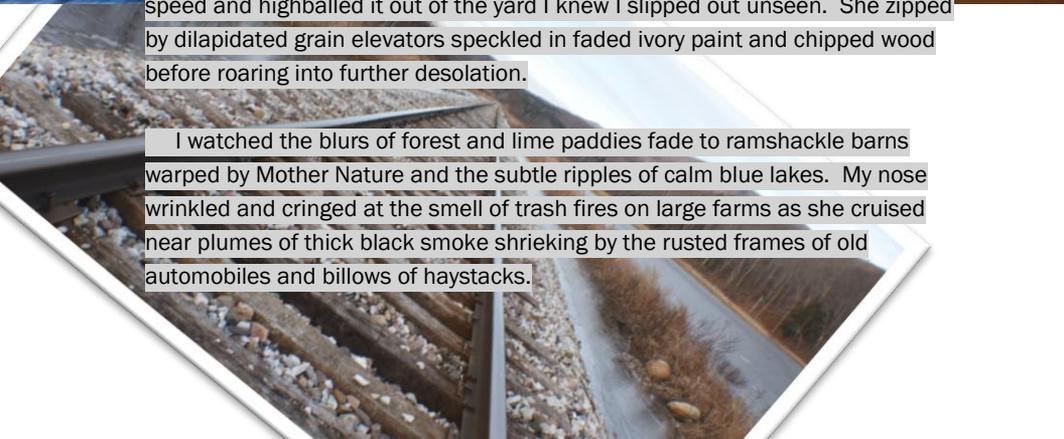
I learned Saskatchewan produces over 90% of the world’s mustard and that climate change over the past few decades is really affecting crop production for many farmers, causing small-time business owners to flop, while the large corporate farms takeover. If a Co-Op cannot survive in town, it’s a safe bet that town will die, the equivalent to Walmart flopping somewhere in the states.



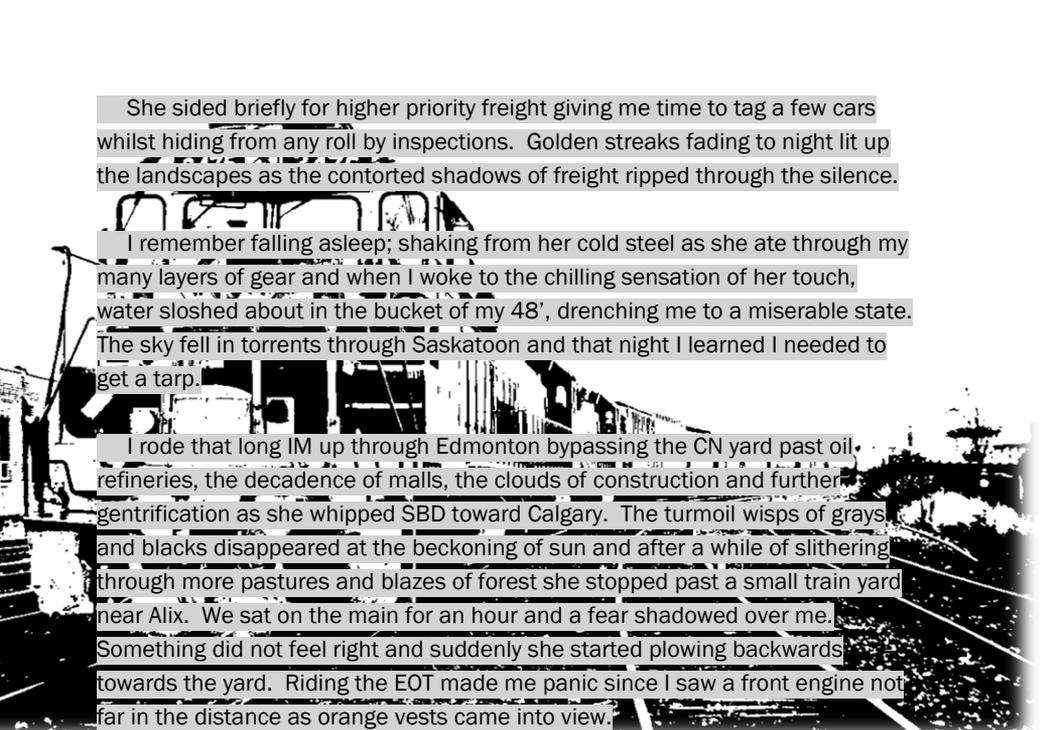
No sooner he dropped me by Your Independent Grocer, where I resupplied with the staples of tuna packets, peanut butter, and a jug of water, I trickled back to the yard wandering down the NBD WYE of railroad tracks. I spotted a few BONEZ monikers from 2015 and 2016 with a NBD and WBD tag while roaming through the outskirts of a sanctuary. I scribbled my moniker in big, bold, red and white letters on a broken piece of concrete foundation as my WBD train pulled into the yard, screeching to a halt on the main.



Intermodal trains in Canada barely have any rideable well cars, but I lucked out and caught out towards the EOT on a 40’ mini well carrying a refrigeration container. The bull chased the train up and down the line, but as she picked up speed and highballed it out of the yard I knew I slipped out unseen. She zipped by dilapidated grain elevators speckled in faded ivory paint and chipped wood before roaring into further desolation.



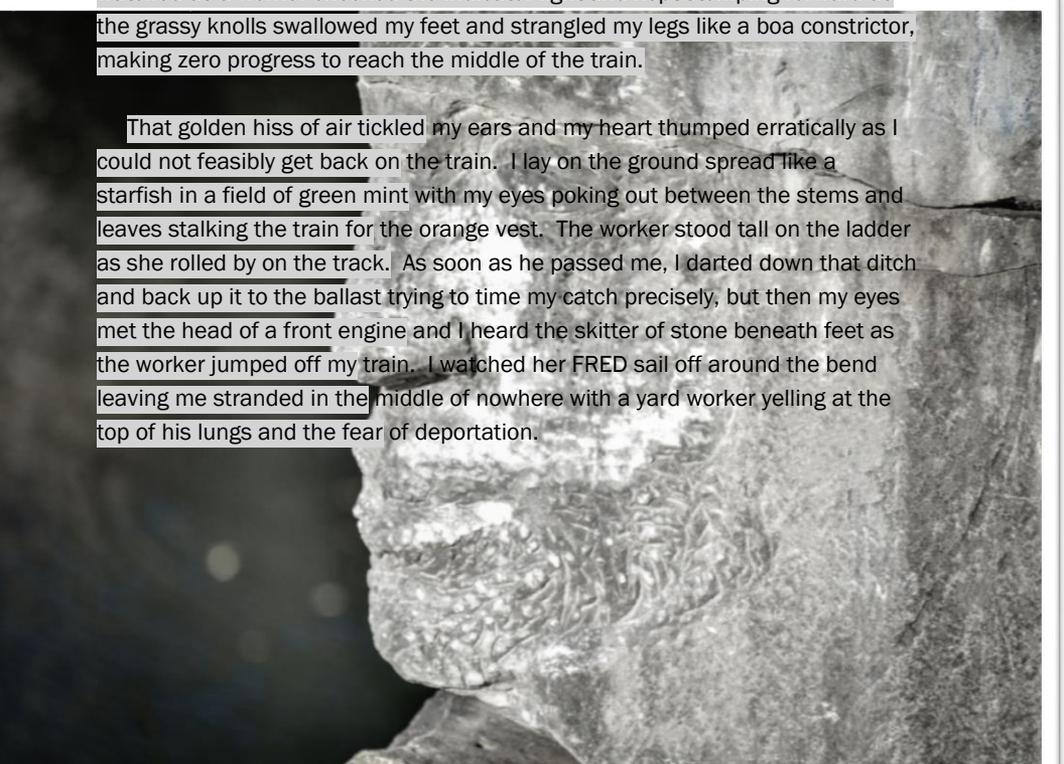
I watched the blurs of forest and lime paddies fade to ramshackle barns warped by Mother Nature and the subtle ripples of calm blue lakes. My nose wrinkled and cringed at the smell of trash fires on large farms as she cruised near plumes of thick black smoke shrieking by the rusted frames of old automobiles and billows of haystacks.



She sided briefly for higher priority freight giving me time to tag a few cars whilst hiding from any roll by inspections. Golden streaks fading to night lit up the landscapes as the contorted shadows of freight ripped through the silence.

I remember falling asleep; shaking from her cold steel as she ate through my many layers of gear and when I woke to the chilling sensation of her touch, water sloshed about in the bucket of my 48', drenching me to a miserable state. The sky fell in torrents through Saskatoon and that night I learned I needed to get a tarp.

I rode that long IM up through Edmonton bypassing the CN yard past oil refineries, the decadence of malls, the clouds of construction and further gentrification as she whipped SBD toward Calgary. The turmoil wisps of grays and blacks disappeared at the beckoning of sun and after a while of slithering through more pastures and blazes of forest she stopped past a small train yard near Alix. We sat on the main for an hour and a fear shadowed over me. Something did not feel right and suddenly she started plowing backwards towards the yard. Riding the EOT made me panic since I saw a front engine not far in the distance as orange vests came into view.



So as she crept to a halt near the throat of the yard, I quickly hopped off and marched through the high weeds of a ditch, stumbling and losing my footing. I watched as a worker checked the indicator light and kept stomping forward as the grassy knolls swallowed my feet and strangled my legs like a boa constrictor, making zero progress to reach the middle of the train.

That golden hiss of air tickled my ears and my heart thumped erratically as I could not feasibly get back on the train. I lay on the ground spread like a starfish in a field of green mint with my eyes poking out between the stems and leaves stalking the train for the orange vest. The worker stood tall on the ladder as she rolled by on the track. As soon as he passed me, I darted down that ditch and back up it to the ballast trying to time my catch precisely, but then my eyes met the head of a front engine and I heard the skitter of stone beneath feet as the worker jumped off my train. I watched her FRED sail off around the bend leaving me stranded in the middle of nowhere with a yard worker yelling at the top of his lungs and the fear of deportation.



"WE JUST PICKED UP A KID LAST WEEK EH, BODY SLICED IN TWO...BITS AN PIECES OF EM STUCK TO THE TRACKS...BLOOD EVERYWHERE...A SIGHT I DON'T WANNA SEE AGAIN!"

"Sorry...I didn't hop back on because I saw you. I didn't realize it was as big a deal here. It's not in the States."

"Just don't do it again...at least not on CN, eh...give ya like a \$20,000 fine."

I paused and didn't say anything.

"I really didn't realize it was as big of a deal sir."

"OH...well it is in Canada. Lemme see ID, please."

"Yeah no problem...I crossed legally in Montreal. Here is my passport."

"How'd you get here then?"

"Trains. I've been doin' this on and off for about four years in America...that's why I didn't think it was as big a deal here. I can hitchhike or ride CP...just in between work at the moment and wanted to see Canada...was actually tryin' to head to Banff, stash my pack in the woods, and hike some of the trails...any recommendations?"

"Four years you say? You must've been a lotta places. As for Banff, it's a hell hole there. Unless you're way out there on the desolate trails away from the flock of tourists, you won't have much fun or enjoyment. That town always has tourism regardless of temperature or season. It's rain the next week anyway..."

"Man, alright...well I can't ride CN west anyway from Calgary. I was hopin' to ride that train you caught me on down to Calgary and switch to CP there. Where exactly am I?"

"You my friend are in the middle of nowhere. The town of Alix is like 4 to 8 KM from here. Your best bet is to walk the tracks and get to Highway 11. There ain't much there, but from that highway you should be able to hitch a ride to Red Deer and continue on south. It'll be a helluva long journey, eh."

I stood there patiently waiting for approval as I had no idea what was going to happen.

“Well, don’t just stand there...we ain’t lettin’ you on our train...this grain train is only goin’ 20 KM anyway...you try to hop on our train and we’ll get the police involved.”

“I have no desire to ride a short grain train...trust me I already know how many locals you guys run as I was tryin’ to ride to Churchill to see the Polar Bears, but ended up in Yorkton, just 20 KM away.”

“You did...didn’t ya...hahaha...”

The engineer motioned the worker over and I heard muffled conversation under the idling of the front engine.

“Alright...hop on up on the front here. My boss says we can give ya a lift to the next town.”

With that notion, a grin curled out from the corners of my lips and I pulled myself up onto the steps of the front engine, standing side-by-side next to the worker who caught me, as the train crept through the countryside. We waved to the farmers in the adjacent fields on

their tractors and by their barns and this truly felt like the longest, most memorable ride of my life despite it being the shortest. I held onto it with the joyous of smiles and despite the gloomy sky, those moments of light wind watering my eyes and flailing my hair fed the presence of sunlight in my mind. It

felt like a lifetime of train rides because of the story. I stepped off that lead engine and my huge smile slowly dissipated to the granules of dirt beneath my feet as she chugged away to the next grain elevator. I looked down the long stretch of barren, dirt roadway, with half a liter of water in my pack and a long trek ahead of me to Highway 11.



I wandered down those empty dirt roads under tears of clouds ready to weep at any moment, with no services nearby, and not much traffic. In the two hours I roamed through desolation between the essence of manure and hay while the smell of rain permeated the thick air, I witnessed just two vehicles zip by me, both going the opposite way, spitting up clouds of dust. Somewhere through my years of wandering I developed numbness to these particular situations. Pain, anger, guilt, shame, happiness and sadness lingered under the surface like a light dose of magic mushrooms, but fear, I always jumped over it like a hurdle in my path or an obstacle easily avoided.

If no one picked me up then I'd walk the fifty miles to Calgary. I had put myself through worse physical pain and mental anguish and with perseverance I hiked 53 miles in the Grand Canyon from the South to North Rim during March of 2016. The 14,000 feet of elevation gain, drastic change of landscapes from a canyon blanketed in snow to arid desert with pink rattlesnakes, green glistening cottonwood trees, the fierce Colorado River thrashing about and the slippery, narrow slopes of jagged rock definitely tested my wits. But, I persevered. That empty pit in my stomach dissipated and once I reached Highway 11 I wandered up and down a series of hills through the verdant countryside.





I had the privilege of siding out in Jasper National Park where CN had buffed out a 2012 THEORY moniker. The dude is a total legend! Of course I couldn't just leave it like that. So I traced it back in for him out of respect (which some have deemed unkosher. I'll never be on his level). Keep on rollin' dude!



The first ICH I've seen on a wall in Montreal



ONLY ROMANTIC IN INK



Crack a Steele kid.
Hoppin' them trains ain't easy.
Drinkin' and smokin',

Bein' free is hard.
No responsibilities,
Dirty socks, disease,

Little to no bills.
No romance in poverty.
Only in the books.

You picked your own life.
Enlightenment of the road.
Hedonism fades.

Live between the worlds,
Work for what you need Greenhorn.

You'll find your own way.

Just stay clean out there.
Happiness is shared Greenhorn,
In and out's ok.

Sex, society...
Don't need to be a lifer.
Bourgeoisie will pay.

STEEL WAY TO HEAVEN

I tried to touch the clouds today,
somewhere near heaven,
but I found an angel.

She trapped me in her splendid
landscapes.

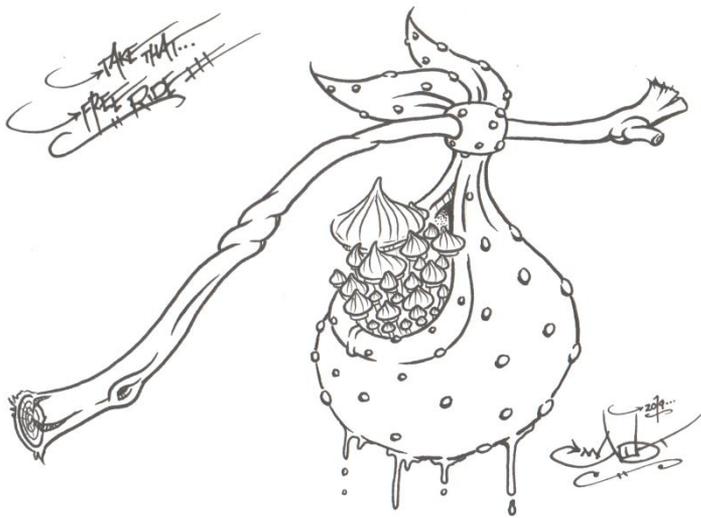
She mesmerized my eyes.

She hypnotized me so much in that
moment that I dare not stand up to
reach the sky,
sitting on the roof grate,
gazing out for miles and miles,
watching Canada roll by,
just along for the scenery and the
free ride.

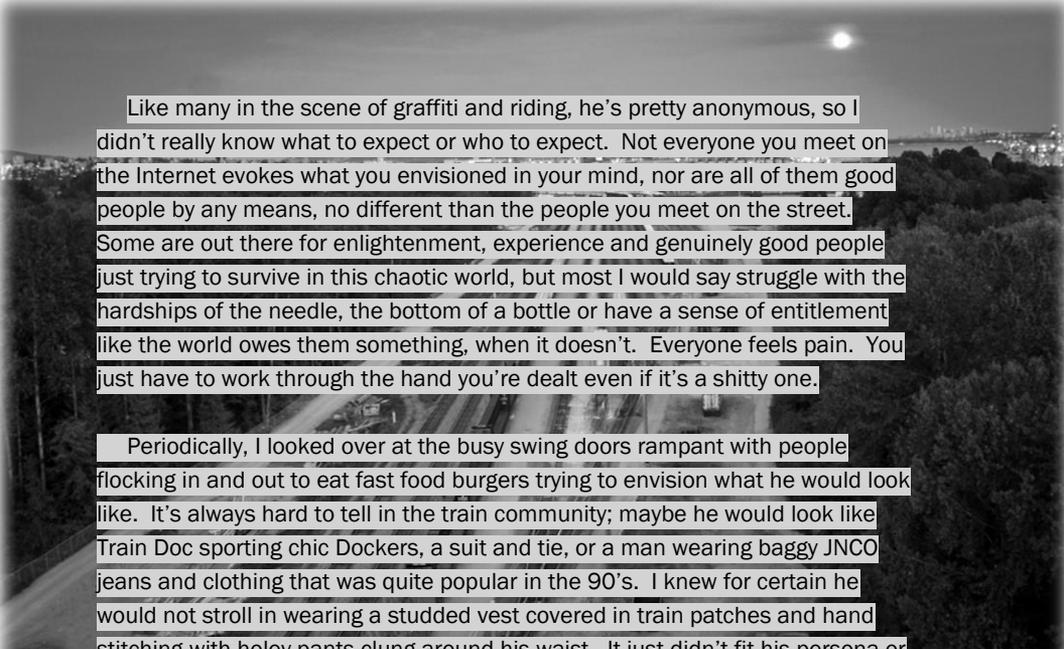




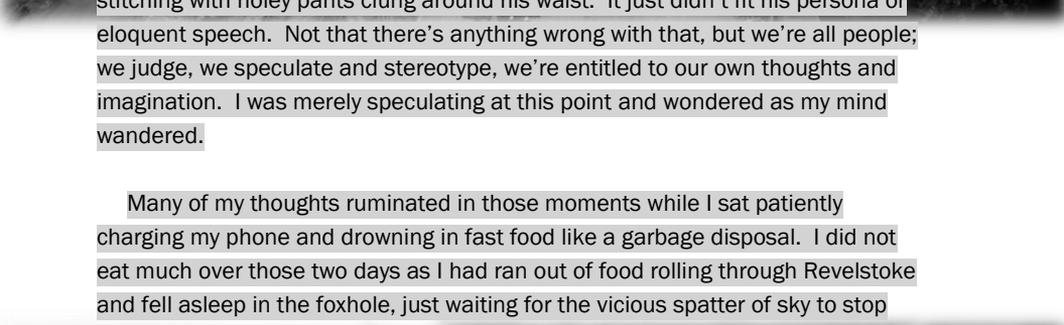
SCRIBBLINGS AND SKETCHES



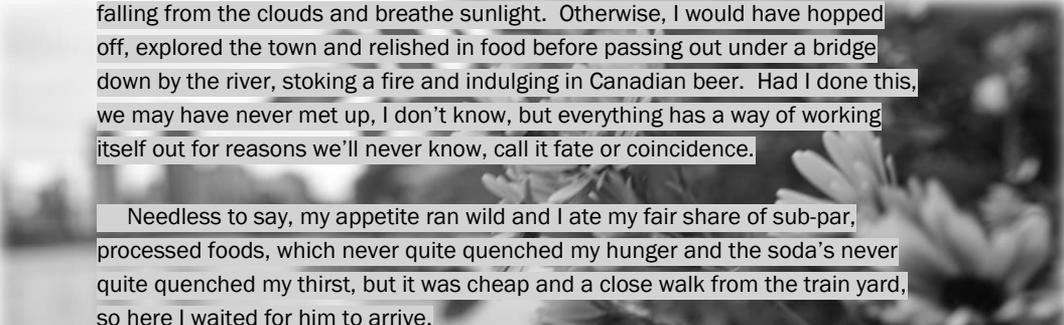
I first met Mad Kap in British Columbia after hopping off the highline in the summer of 2019. I had just gotten off the train after a long two days of riding Canadian Grain through the Fraser Canyon and anyone who's ever ridden a Canadian Grainer knows exactly how dirty they are so you can only imagine how I looked. Between my blackened cuticles, splotches of grime engrained in the pores of my face and hands, dirt-laden, holey clothes, I looked like a spectacle sitting in a booth at the Wendy's waiting for a man I had never met before. We had only talked briefly through email and on YouTube as I am an avid watcher of his scenic freight riding videos and just enjoy his philosophy on life, his words, and his attitude. We are very much alike, just scenery tramps out there for the views and often ride solo stints to where our hearts take us. We're both married, but where we differ is he brought a pack of little ones into this world; I didn't and have no plans to procreate.



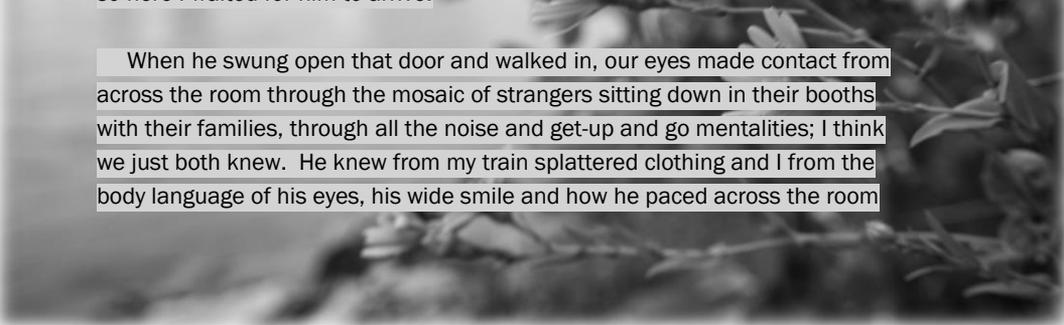
Like many in the scene of graffiti and riding, he's pretty anonymous, so I didn't really know what to expect or who to expect. Not everyone you meet on the Internet evokes what you envisioned in your mind, nor are all of them good people by any means, no different than the people you meet on the street. Some are out there for enlightenment, experience and genuinely good people just trying to survive in this chaotic world, but most I would say struggle with the hardships of the needle, the bottom of a bottle or have a sense of entitlement like the world owes them something, when it doesn't. Everyone feels pain. You just have to work through the hand you're dealt even if it's a shitty one.



Periodically, I looked over at the busy swing doors rampant with people flocking in and out to eat fast food burgers trying to envision what he would look like. It's always hard to tell in the train community; maybe he would look like Train Doc sporting chic Dockers, a suit and tie, or a man wearing baggy JNCO jeans and clothing that was quite popular in the 90's. I knew for certain he would not stroll in wearing a studded vest covered in train patches and hand stitching with holey pants clung around his waist. It just didn't fit his persona or eloquent speech. Not that there's anything wrong with that, but we're all people; we judge, we speculate and stereotype, we're entitled to our own thoughts and imagination. I was merely speculating at this point and wondered as my mind wandered.

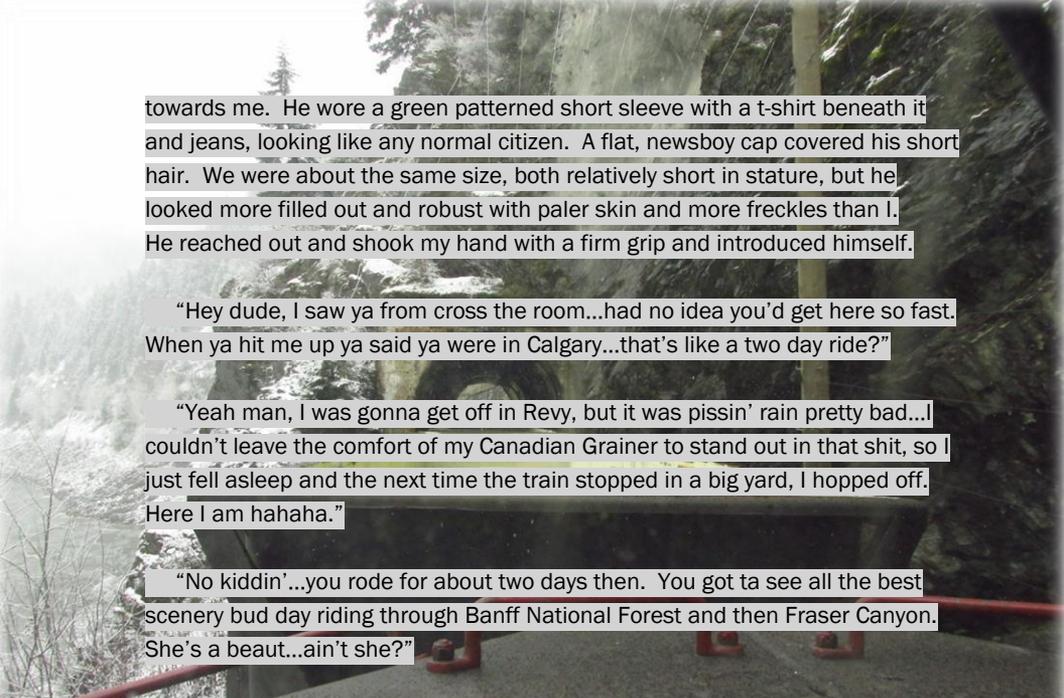


Many of my thoughts ruminated in those moments while I sat patiently charging my phone and drowning in fast food like a garbage disposal. I did not eat much over those two days as I had ran out of food rolling through Revelstoke and fell asleep in the foxhole, just waiting for the vicious spatter of sky to stop falling from the clouds and breathe sunlight. Otherwise, I would have hopped off, explored the town and relished in food before passing out under a bridge down by the river, stoking a fire and indulging in Canadian beer. Had I done this, we may have never met up, I don't know, but everything has a way of working itself out for reasons we'll never know, call it fate or coincidence.



Needless to say, my appetite ran wild and I ate my fair share of sub-par, processed foods, which never quite quenched my hunger and the soda's never quite quenched my thirst, but it was cheap and a close walk from the train yard, so here I waited for him to arrive.

When he swung open that door and walked in, our eyes made contact from across the room through the mosaic of strangers sitting down in their booths with their families, through all the noise and get-up and go mentalities; I think we just both knew. He knew from my train splattered clothing and I from the body language of his eyes, his wide smile and how he paced across the room



towards me. He wore a green patterned short sleeve with a t-shirt beneath it and jeans, looking like any normal citizen. A flat, newsboy cap covered his short hair. We were about the same size, both relatively short in stature, but he looked more filled out and robust with paler skin and more freckles than I. He reached out and shook my hand with a firm grip and introduced himself.

“Hey dude, I saw ya from cross the room...had no idea you’d get here so fast. When ya hit me up ya said ya were in Calgary...that’s like a two day ride?”

“Yeah man, I was gonna get off in Revy, but it was pissin’ rain pretty bad...I couldn’t leave the comfort of my Canadian Grainer to stand out in that shit, so I just fell asleep and the next time the train stopped in a big yard, I hopped off. Here I am hahaha.”

“No kiddin’...you rode for about two days then. You got ta see all the best scenery bud day riding through Banff National Forest and then Fraser Canyon. She’s a beaut...ain’t she?”

“It’s the most stunning line I’ve ever ridden even better than the Highline in the states. Not quite as fast, but definitely sparsely populated, untouched land with a ton of glacial lakes, and deep green forests that go for miles and miles and miles. I didn’t wanna get off in Kamloops so I just kept rollin’.

“Kamloops is a junkie infested shithole. You really didn’t miss much. I’ve ridden that line forever and you really got to see the best parts of it. Anyway, enough talkin’...got the family in the car...it’s not anything special, but I gotta ask ya...don’t get offended by sitting on a sheet in the front seat. Anytime we pick up train riders my wife insists they sit on a bedsheet in the van. It’s nothin’ personal...hope ya don’t mind?”

“Nah dude, completely understand. Those grainers get ya dirty as fuck, but damn are they comfy. Thanks for meetin’ up, wasn’t sure if ya were gonna be able to. Sorry for the short notice. I know you’ve been havin’ a lot goin’ on lately.”

“It’s cool Brian. We’ll show ya around town. I got some cool spots by the river and near the train yard where I bring the family that’re peaceful and not blown up with tourists.”

And that was when I met Free Ride for the first time in BC. Friends for a day always sucks when you meet new people travelin’, but I have a feelin’ this is the start to a solid friendship, which only gets harder as you get older. Ride safe!

.....FITL AND FREIGHTS.....

Author: Mad Kap



My first memory of graff was the wall behind the local 7-11 in the late 80's, when I was in elementary school. It was the 'message board' for the high school, full of disses, penises, phone numbers and things of that nature. The word 'fuck' was prevalent in all its various forms, noun verb and adjective (it's a versatile word!). I recall being amazed at the insight into teenager's thoughts....I spent hours studying all the minutiae and interactions played out on the wall. In the very early 90's when I went to high school myself I started tagging, by then hip hop was in full effect and I had awareness of graffiti in that form. In those pre internet days it was still very mysterious how certain effects were achieved, as a beginner you spent **many** hours in your sketch book honing your craft before you even picked up a spray can in earnest. It was a clear progression from book to felt to spray, and if you tried to run before you learned to walk you got burned quick. We would sit and watch artists like Insight and Ghost{RIP} from the IBCrew as they did their thing in the local alleys and tennis courts, we wouldn't talk to them and they wouldn't say much to us, we were tolerated as long as we kept quiet. Then we would skateboard around town with our markers and pastels doing little things here and there on the edge of pieces and walls, usually high on acid. As we got older and more skilled they would drop some knowledge and techniques on us, teach us the proper way to get down in an apprenticeship type relationship. The scene was very artistic and not too agro here on Canada's West Coast so it was a great place to come up. Top crews here were AA and BA; Virus and Dedos were killing it as far as pure skills in the detail, but artists like Jet1 and Take5 were street kings and also the first ones I knew who rode freight. There were no brands made for graff specifically, no Montana, etc. Krylon and Rustoleum ruled the day, and paying for paint and markers was **unheard of**.

Racking bags full of paint was an integral part of the process, and we would trade store locations that were soft targets or had rare colors. I had a mix cap that would allow me to mix colors from two cans and get many gradations of one color, which was unavailable commercially. We would take caps off of Crisco cans etc. to get different effects, and make our own ink and fat mops. The legal climate was WAY different then. You could tag almost anywhere that wasn't someone's house or storefront, and do full scale pieces on tennis court walls or alley ways in daytime. No one except coke dealers and doctors had cell phones so even **IF** someone wanted to drop a dime on you they would have to run home and call the police, by the time they showed up {if they did} you would be **LONG** gone. But the truth is the cops didn't seem to give a shit. There was practically **NO** buff at all unless you went wild across someone's storefront or something on a drunken spree one night (which I have to admit I **may** have done once or twice).



Alleyways, under bridges and abandoned warehouses would stay up until you or someone else painted another piece over it. I remember several times painting in broad daylight on a tennis court or something and a citizen would walk up, "Here we go" I would think, but 9 times out of 10 they would be totally chill..."I always wondered how you guys did this, it's really neat" or something similar, would be all they usually said. They couldn't care less. It wasn't until the late 90's/early 00's that the media campaign against graff started here (in western Canada). The cities instituted laws that would penalize homeowners if they had a tag on their property and failed to remove it, the city would come by, buff it and hand the owner an inflated bill. The local newspapers became full of hit jobs on graff as the cause of "urban blight"...the 'broken window' theory came in full effect. I remember companies like 'Goodbye Graffiti' starting to buff shit on the regular and thinking "Damn that's a fucking **joke**, that's never going to work". Now they spend hundreds of thousands to paint over graffiti in places like alleyways and under bridges, several times in one year, and pieces only stay up in rare spots. They have special task forces that go around photographing all tags etc. so when they do finally catch some kid in the act they have a **STACK** of charges waiting for him/her, each tag being a separate charge. I talked with one

kid who told me they got a warrant for his house, searched his room and computer, then got warrants for his friends houses and did the same thing.....the kid was like 13 years old! They busted his whole little crew, and they were strictly low level kids; just taggers with no pieces. If they really want to fuck you they can charge you under a RICO like act which is for any group which gets together for the purpose of committing a criminal act. I mean it's just paint on a wall...WTAF? There are a **lot** worse things that kids could be doing, and graffiti may even be a bridge to an interest in art where none may have existed. I've known several people, myself included, who veered off the hardcore criminal path and put that energy into art. Meanwhile psychos like Pickton **kill** dozens of people for years, and kids still go missing on the highway of tears every month, numbering in the hundreds, and no one seems to give a shit. Google it.



Graffiti has historically been the unvarnished voice of a repressed people. In an oppressive regime where free speech is stifled it is often the **only** outlet for the true feeling of the population. Look at Latin Americas history of political murals and graffiti for a good example. When the state controls all the media outlets there is no platform for people to vent frustration. The phrase "Read the writing on the wall" illustrates this perfectly. Anonymous, unfiltered truth with no bullshit, no fear of reprisal. I'm sure in ancient Egypt someone was writing "the Pharaoh is a dung beetle" or some similar sentiment. When you see your inner thoughts voiced in public by another person it empowers you to realize you're not the only one seeing that the emperor is buck nekkid! Graffiti can be a **powerful** tool for revolutionary change, or it can be a vulgar statement of lust or base anger. Especially pre-internet this was often peoples only recourse to voice their dismay at an unjust system. While I still have a closet full of spray paint I mostly only do monikers with Markals and felts these days. The history of rail writing is long established and an interesting study in itself. I have a friend that works at the CP shops and writes grievances under the carriages of trains....this is continuing a long tradition which sprung up alongside of hobo monikers with the beginnings of the rail system in America. My journeys on freights started from painting trains at night in freight yards and lay ups. I would see a train going by slowly and realized I could easily hop on it and go for a ride, if I so

chose. So one night I did. I grabbed on to a Potash unit train and rode the tops for about an hour until it reached the destination port. I was hooked. There is something unexplainable about connecting with all that raw power and riding it into the night, completely anonymous and unobserved. After a few more short trips I finally felt ready to go on a longer ride, and rode to the Rocky Mountains and back for a week. There were no videos on YouTube at that time so I had to learn as I went. It's a steep learning curve, to say the least, and I had a few close calls before I got my shit together. Fortunately my long experience in the streets came in handy as it gave me an ability to read people and situations that could be potentially dangerous, and how to handle them. There are a lot of elements involved in traveling by freight; especially in the Canadian Rockies at winter....the potential for mishap is exponential. I feel a deep connection with the past when I travel along the Line, the landscape I go through IS the history of post contact Canada, many of the communities came into being solely because of the railroad. If you look at a map of western Canada you will see it consists of vast areas of unpopulated wilderness crossed by thin lines of roads which support the communities strung out along them. The smaller crew change towns are still reliant to a large extent on the railroad for employment, they are company towns.

I will get nods and waves from railway employees (mostly the old school ones) as I walk the small towns with my bag, especially if I'm rocking my old engineer hat; and sometimes an old timer will come up and ask if I'm riding. They will then tell me how they used to ride freight in the Depression and wish me luck on my travels, and I can see the light in their eyes as they reflect on the time they spent on the Rails as youths. Trains get in the blood; it seems, no matter how you get into them. These days, as a happy family man, I seldom travel for more than two weeks, just to get it out of my system for a while. I don't need to go far to get world class views as I live blocks from one of the most scenic lines in North America, the CP Mainline of Canada. I know it like the back of my hand and can wake up anywhere along it and know where I am. I have noticed that with both graffiti and hopping being on the internet, more kids are doing both without "paying their dues", wanting to run before they can walk. I get it, but it's kind of frustrating when someone jumps into a scene for a minute and burns it down because they haven't had to work for the knowledge and therefore seem to have less respect. I have a lot of regard for tradition and feel that codes of conduct are there for a reason. I'm no king of the road or the spray can, and I'm not the type to say no one can do these things after me, but it seems like there is a growing lack of etiquette in both these endeavors. In the last few years rail security has been stepping up, and fewer rideable cars seem to be out there. My beloved dirty Canadian grain cars have reached their shelf life and are being rapidly scrapped in favor of the new model with no platform or cubbyhole; and unlocked units are a thing of the past for the most part.

The truth is though, when I read A1 and Jack Black {etc.} I realize that riding freight was a Hell of a lot harder and more dangerous in the past, and we really have it easy. So I'm not complaining. I've never had to ride the rods or watch out for sadistic brakemen with bulging eyes and chilet teeth looking to kill a 'bo. Everything changes and morphs with time, and I'm sure there will always be someone willing and able to exploit the weaknesses in a system to cop a Free Ride.....

KING OF THE HOUNDS

LIKE SOME SORTA MONK
I WALK
WORRIED ABOUT NOTHIN'
BEFORE OR BEHIND
MY WORLD IS HERE
THE MYSTERIES
THE EXCITEMENT
THE DANGER
THE FORGOTTEN YARD OF FREEDOM!
NATURE ABOUNDS ON THESE
OVERLOOKED TRACKS
A GLIMPSE OF HOW WE GOT HERE
AND HOW WE'LL LEAVE
THE WHEELS TURN WHILE WE
FALL IN AND OUT
OF PLACE
REMINDING ME TO GIVE THANKS
TO THOSE TOILIN' IN ITS PATH
CONNECTING US TO ANOTHER
ANOTHER PROBLEM
ANOTHER HAPPINESS
ANOTHER WORLD!
PROVIDING EPHEMERAL COMFORT
ALWAYS FADING
ALWAYS GONE
I LET MY ERRORS RIDE
ALONG SIDE MY TRIUMPHS
I OPEN MYSELF FREELY TO BE
NOTHIN' MORE THAN I AM
LIKE SOME SORTA MONK
I WALK
WORRIED ABOUT NOTHING BEFORE
OR BEHIND...
SHAME I CANT STAY.

BMH
KOH #

MY FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH KoTH

I met KoTH for the first time in Montpelier over a few beers at Charlie O's. I didn't know what to expect. I never do when it comes to meeting strangers whether over the Internet, hitchhiking or at the train yard. I've been meeting people off the Interwebs since before I was of legal drinking age, acquiring friendships from my days of online piracy through BitTorrent, whom in turn I've held good friendships with over the years despite them living across the country. This is also how I met my wife many years ago before online dating was cool and you had to lie about it to your friends.

The same goes for Instagram. Over the past few years, it has opened up many doors for me by connecting me with the train and graffiti culture, a culture I wouldn't have been able to fully appreciate not knowing any of the people behind the masks of art plastered over trains, in aerosol and wax. I've developed a few great friendships from it and KoTH is one of those friendships.

In all my years of travel, this was the first time I've ever walked into a bar while on the road sporting my backpack. I normally avoid people and alcohol altogether while traveling. My relationship with it over the years hasn't been a healthy one. I'm one of those people who cannot drink just one beer and it just leads to trouble.

I placed my backpack in the corner of the bar watching people shoot pool from one of the bar stools while the bartender ID'd me, asking for my name, address, the usual. I was honest, I've moved around so much over the years I didn't know the address on my license. She let it slide and I dove into my first PBR. The booze started flowing while I waited for KoTH to make an appearance and as such, my bladder filled so I wandered to the restroom.

I walked through the dark, poorly lit room, past the locals, to a wooden swing door and looked at the walls of the restroom. Graffiti, monikers, bathroom scribbles, and stickers decorated every face and when I stood over the toilet to relieve myself, I saw a big "HUMEN" moniker scrawled above the tank in an arc. A smile lit up on my face and I immediately thought of Brattleboro and all the riders who had ridden through there over the years. Montpelier started to rub off on me in those moments and my anxiety faded, not from my first beer, but because of the presence of train culture in a tiny dive bar in the middle of Vermont.

I sat back down on the bar stool, keeping to myself, indulging in a second beer and looked over my shoulder towards the entrance. A young man about my height, and my age walked in dressed like a carpenter, wearing overalls, glasses and a newsboy cap. It was KoTH. From the moment he sat down we hit it off, talking about trains, moniker art, and I learned so much about the culture from the perspective of a graffiti artist, and an aspiring train rider.



Before meeting him, I didn't know there was a whole 'nother part of the subculture that completely went over my head. I had no idea the amount of artists out there strictly using trains to spread their art. I knew very little about the Graff scene because I can't paint, I can't draw, and generally being artistic is very hard for me. It's why I've always enjoyed writing and photography as they come easier to me.

I knew guys like Theory, Sluto, Aneko, HBAD, Labrona, Claw Hamr, and SOAK, really threw up some sophisticated pieces; some rode freight, some did not, I was not really sure who did or didn't, not that that really mattered much. But, I did not realize the amount of moniker artists who were out there wandering the yards, either bombing trains with wax to get their numbers up, or just using trains as an outlet for creativity, to spread art on that iron canvas so to speak. He opened my eyes up to that. Before my trip to Canada I had always assumed monikers were either workers or riders. So I guess a part of me was bummed when I learned of this, being kind of a loner in this subculture to begin with, but part of me found it fascinating that over the years the culture has evolved to include so many walks of life. The train community holds a mosaic of so many individuals I find it interesting how people so different in thought, mannerisms, and day-to-day life can be brought together through the art, the scenery, the order and chaos of the steel. This attraction to a colossal beast runnin' wild around the country, feeding capitalism has brought together bums, tramps, hobos, graffiti artists, moniker artists, gutterpunks, Dirty Kids, Railfans, foamers, people of all classes living on one side of the law or the other and it wasn't until our talk over a few beers that this had ever crossed my mind.

Before we left the bar to part ways, he gave me a spare sleeping bag for the last leg of my journey, which was completely unnecessary, but much appreciated. I had lost my sleeping system on Ridley Island in Prince Rupert due to sleep deprivation and impatience. So it was nice to have a night of warmth after so many nights of jumping jacks and wiggling around in a fleece blanket to stay warm. He dropped me off at the hop out later that night so I could catch my southbound train to Bellows Falls to make my way back home to Dorset. I'll never forget the kindness and good conversation of our first encounter and there will be many more in the future for as long as I'm living in New England. I will always try to stop by his neck of the woods to talk trains, write monikers, and appreciate the



art and culture that surrounds the community, something I'm only able to share with few people in New England.

Until we meet again, bud, for our next train. Glad I was able to take you on your first ride this winter and hope you get many more rides to share the same freedoms I've been able to experience over the years. Stay safe.

INTERVIEW WITH KOTH



What inspired your moniker?

Moniker Inspiration! I love dogs...Monarchy is bad...But the idea of being the king of your own world ain't bad...My dogs are the kings and queens of theirs too...Truthfully, it was a song, but I'm not real psyched on it like I was so I won't mention it haha.

Why did you get into Graffiti and Moniker art?

Initially it was just a fun way to break the law...I mean it still is...but, I am also drawn to the "art for art's sake" aspect of it. It's just a fun way to say where you've been. Trains and monikers definitely changed my perspective of the art in it though. I'm drawn to specifically monikers for the folk art aspect of it. No education needed, no credentials, no reason to even really do it! Just plain people out there marking up a car about how their co-worker in the yard is an ass or some tramp out there passing the time or some regular person that just likes to spend time looking at trains.

**How long have you been tagging/painting
trains?**

Just over a year or so...

Do you prefer aerosol or wax?

Definitely wax. I'm not gonna pretend like I haven't done it, but I'm just not typically drawn to even looking at most sprays I pass. Usually cause I can't read them anyway. But, it's also just a huge space that is taken up for one person. The more time I spend around freight the less I want any of my stuff to take away from all the other really interesting things to be found on cars...

**What is your favorite moniker out
there?**

That's a tough one...It always changes...

**What is train culture like in New
England?**

Sloooooowwwwww

Do you have a crew you mark cars with
or do you prefer to do it alone?

I like being alone, but I don't mind marking with friends...It's definitely a way to hang out and have good conversation with people, but there's a time and a place for it. I don't mark with a crew. Maybe it's because I haven't made one or been invited into one, but I kinda feel like it's best to stay independent.

When it comes to monikers do you
prefer Quality or Quantity?

I don't think it could go either way, at least for me. I'm not thinking about either while I'm out there...

If you could only pick one idol to meet
in the subculture, who would it be?

This is gonna prove how much of a hipster I am, but I wouldn't have ever looked at a train if it weren't for Woody Guthrie. And I feel like for a lot of people Kerouac provided inspiration, I'd have to agree. For me, it's not about the moniker scene as much as it's about the adventure of it all. I walked into the yard for the first time just trying to find a new adventure. I don't want to make it out like I ride trains. Just sneaking around a yard is an adventure for me. The back of the signs never say anything...



Riding with KoTH this winter to Brattleboro on his first train, mad props for taking the plunge on such a cold fuckin' night.

RANDOM ART AND STICKER PACKS



MONKEY ART ACROSS CANADA



Nowhere Man



Oats



Salut



Mad Kap, Salc & Murt



Jist



Soak & Stonewall Jim



Claw Hamr



Gone Fishin'





John Easley



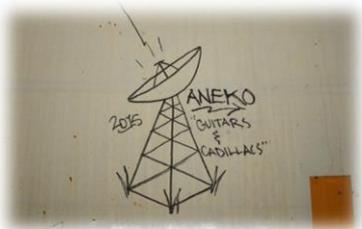
Hoax



Grila



Joker



Aneko



Freight Bandit



Swampy



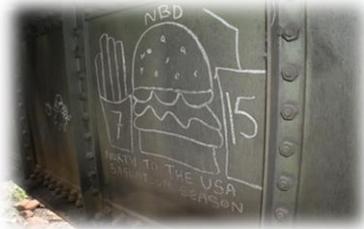
Bonez & Joker



Theory



High Pockets



Eat Shit and Die



Janky Leanto



Whistle Blower



Moscow Mule



Hell Bred A Killer



EXPLORIN ABANDONED SILO #5

A brief history of the derelict grain elevator along the old port of Montreal...



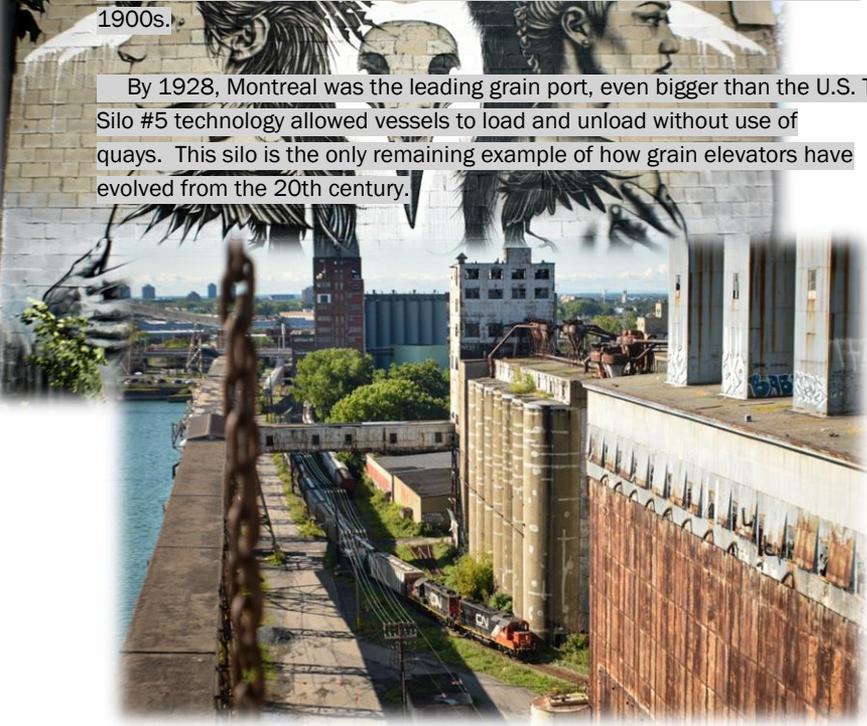
Silo #5 rusts away in Montreal's old port overlooking the city with grain caked along its rubble laden floors as the stagnant smell of decay permeates the air. The silo stretches nearly 400 meters with three distinct parts all adjoined by aerial galleries. There are many access points into this derelict grain elevator despite the multiple No Trespassing signs and the heavy activity by the port and the nearby railroad. I only explored one of the elevators as I did not have a great flashlight to explore the other parts.



Silo #5 completed construction in four stages in 1906, 1913, 1924, and 1958. It started construction in the early 1900s by the Grand Trunk Railway. Grain if you haven't noticed from my video is a major export still to this day in Canada. The CP highline that runs from Calgary to Vancouver deals

with a plethora of unit grain traffic that zips through the sinuous track meandering Fraser Canyon along the river there where the presence of slide tunnels helps mitigate landslides and rock fall. So it's no wonder the old port of Montreal handled much grain traffic with older technology back in the early 1900s.

By 1928, Montreal was the leading grain port, even bigger than the U.S. The Silo #5 technology allowed vessels to load and unload without use of quays. This silo is the only remaining example of how grain elevators have evolved from the 20th century.



Canada's Land Corporation owns Silo #5, but has not done much maintenance on it since its abandonment in 1966.





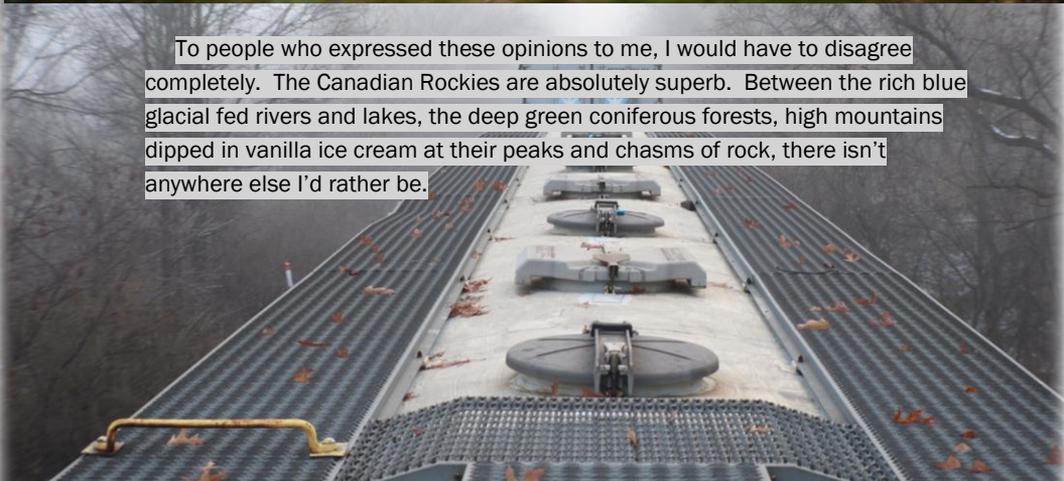
JASPER AND BANFF

When I first dreamed about ridin' freight in Canada I heard from so many people advising me to skip the Canadian Highline.

I heard, "Everyone rides that line. It's a path traveled by many and there's so many other routes often overlooked you're better off explorin' the less traveled routes."



To people who expressed these opinions to me, I would have to disagree completely. The Canadian Rockies are absolutely superb. Between the rich blue glacial fed rivers and lakes, the deep green coniferous forests, high mountains dipped in vanilla ice cream at their peaks and chasms of rock, there isn't anywhere else I'd rather be.





Having the opportunity to rip through Banff on my way out to Vancouver to visit Mad Kap, meet his family and check out some of the hidden gems of British Columbia, as well as, randomly catch the right train out of Prince Rupert that led me to the gates of heaven, slithering through Jasper

National Park, experiencing the sun, rain, wind and double rainbows between the vast streams, lakes and mountainsides. It's just beyond price and I enjoyed my month of ridin' blind across the continent to experience these moments of solitude.

I'm sure other routes exist that are more isolated, less ridden and just as beautiful, but I'll hit them on my next go whenever I head up there again after this pandemic. I would not have had the opportunity to see Prince Rupert and Jasper without venturing out west on the highline and for that, I'm grateful.



.....YOU WILL BE MISSED
RIP EX-BCR FROM
VANCOUVER TO SQUAMISH
UNTIL NEXT TIME...

