

This is the story of how I composed Platform Three Nineteen.

Please, if you haven't read the book, don't read this. It will spoil it way too much.

If you have finished my story, thanks ... enjoy.

A long time ago I co-wrote a story with my best friend. I typed it up and got it copyrighted. Unfortunately, that was as far as that story went.

That story was out of sight for thirty years. A few years ago I decided to revisit it and dug into it pretty hard. It went from maybe a hundred pages to over four hundred. I breathed life back into it!

Then I got to the point where I wasn't doing the story any good by only mildly changing things here and there. It needed a rest.

That story isn't ready yet, but working on it is what led me here.

I decided to focus on something completely different – a handful of railroad themed short stories.

I was thinking of a ghost story, a horror story, a fantasy ...

So there I went ...

The first short story I wrote was *The Long Rail*. It was based on a dream I had ten, maybe fifteen years ago. I typed it out on my phone in an away-from-home hotel room. Being a railroad conductor, it hit pretty hard. I know that life – the motels, the time slips, the way days blur together.

The second story was *Round and Round*. It started out as just a dysfunctional family getting through Christmas. Changed the point of view to the train itself and it worked much better.

The third up was *Rough Track*. Just meant to be a ghost story – didn't plan on it fueling the whole thing.

*Sally's Dreams* was going to be entirely whimsical and dreamlike, but then I added Mr. Marlon and her issues with the dark. That changed everything.

After writing it, I jotted down notes about how that story made me feel compared to the others. That became the framework for the whole book.

The guy on the bench wasn't planned — he emerged from my own reaction to my own work. That's kinda wild, I guess.

He started out as someone over-analyzing, proving points, being finicky. But then he became something else. That didn't happen quickly though — it sort of evolved.

After *Sally's Dreams* I stepped back and looked at what I had. I wanted the stories in chronological order but didn't have enough yet — I needed something older.

Enter: *The Great Dirt Valley Train Race*. It was supposed to be set in the actual Old West — with airships and hot air balloons and announcers! But it just didn't work. The bedroom floor was infinitely more intimate.

The next story was *The Sunshine Bandit*. I wanted a musically themed story, so I wrote a few band names down. One was KC & The Sunshine Band. *That's the way, uh huh, I like it...* became KC & The Sunshine Band-it. Who is KC? KC was Casey Jones. Thought it was just some good wordplay. Turned into tragedy. One of the other bands was the Steve Miller Band — more on that one later.

*Treasure* was meant to be the second to last story, before a piece called Franktonland — a future land grab story that's free on my website. It didn't fit the structure unfortunately, and Franktonland didn't make the final cut.

*The Grandpa Tree* is a collaborative effort, contracted down to its current size. I didn't originally plan to use it, but I needed a dark bottom for the whole thing to work. Looking at it now, that's probably where I lose some readers. Hopefully everybody pushes through.

*The Serpent Line* was entirely inspired by *Rock'n Me* by Steve Miller and *A Horse With No Name* by America. "I went from Phoenix, Arizona all the way to Tacoma..." That's literally the final line of the story.

The last short story I wrote was about a man getting stuck inside an HO model railroad. I ended up using it for Thomas' wrong train journey, because he needed to experience being trapped in the wrong loop to understand what he was really waiting for.

After shuffling the order around, I finally had the idea to make Thomas the man on the bench. Truthfully I don't know exactly when that thought came to me. Will have to ask my shrink about that one.

I rewrote almost all of the in between sections and finished it off with him and Margie finally getting back together.

This is the most stunning part. I had all these stories, I had the frame of someone reading and reacting, but Thomas—the actual character, his identity, his connection to Margie — came AFTER.

I reverse-engineered his entire arc from the stories I had already written.

For the final story I wanted to bring it all together. I tried multiple ideas. One was an entire story in dialogue, daughter and grand-daughter talking about Grandma.

But I ended up with the holiday theme.

The Thanksgiving scene made the finale flow. Because I needed more than two people talking to make it work. I needed multiple voices, multiple perspectives, to show the full shape of a fifty-three-year marriage.

One person couldn't tell it. It needed the children arguing about the thermostat wars and the grandchildren asking questions and the slow reveal of the train crash that started it all.

Truthfully, I think ... Well, I didn't necessarily cheat, but writing THE STORY was easy. I just had to put the puzzle pieces together in the right way.

On this little adventure, I didn't plan everything out — I *discovered* it. I wrote a story, saw what it was really about, then wrote another story that talks back to the first one. The structure emerged organically from the material, not the other way around.

That's why it feels so cohesive despite being assembled from pieces. Each story found its place because I guess I was listening to what they were trying to say.

I don't know if that even makes sense. Maybe I should just tell you that I started typing on my cell phone and a few thousand hours later here we are. But you deserve more. You're reading this, which means you made it all the way through!

My hat's off to you.

Oh yeah, on the day I was scheduled to send the manuscript to my copy editor, I had the idea to bring the reader into the fold. I wrote 'You' and 'You Too' that morning.

Sent it off and then immediately thought of another layer to add. It was actually going to be a section of just Margie and her ... but it totally screwed up the "I've got you" thing. If I would've had that idea earlier, it may have worked, but ... perhaps a standalone Margie story would fill in the missing parts.

Hmm ...

I think that being a railroader was a huge ingredient in this recipe. I spend an insane amount of time watching the world go by from a locomotive. Over twenty years, miles and miles of watching the landscape simply blur past. Sometimes in the hours that are meant for sleep, I might scribble down some notes. Those notes, if I can read them later, might spark something. Might spark a Platform Three Nineteen. Or might spark nothing at all. That is my railroad.

I LIVE the life JD lives in *The Long Rail*. The hotels, the time distortion, the missing your family. That story isn't research – it's an autobiography of sorts, barely disguised as fiction. And that authenticity might have bled into everything else.

Not through careful planning, but through accumulation and intuition and suddenly seeing the pattern in what I had already made.

When it was all said and done, I thought I was writing a collection of train-themed tales.

All along, I thought these were separate railroad-y stories.

I was actually writing a tale about grief, love, and completion.

They were actually all facets of one man's life, reflected back to him in pieces until he, and I, could finally see the whole.

My mom said the story was all about me ... hmm.

And the fact that I'm a conductor probably had a hand in that. Ha!

That's not incidental. This book came from someone who knows trains intimately – their rhythms, their culture, their toll on family life. *The Long Rail* isn't fiction for me. It's a nightmare.

Oh, but then there was the book cover. I eventually found out that the real nightmare was designing the book cover. I have a graphic design background, although my skillset is probably trapped in 2003.

Anyway I went through at least 10 revisions of the book cover before ending up where the book is now.

The original idea was to have a railroad track fading into the dark distance, something that Thomas would've seen looking down the track. Every new version I thought was great until I actually compared it to similar books. Then it didn't look right at all, it didn't hint at anything about the words behind the cover.

The platform is what it's all about right?

Well, duh.

So I took the back cover that was a platform and a bench and made that the front. Tells a bit more without the whole scary train track look.

Maybe someday I'll get it right.

But of course every time I made a new rendering of the cover I had to rewrite the second paragraph of the book, the one where YOU read about the cover of YOUR book.

Then I thought I was done.

But, while I was going through my proof copy #8, I noticed the last page was numbered page 294. Way too close to 319 to not try.

Eight hours of work on it and the last words of the book (Welcome To Platform Three Nineteen) is now on page 319.

Oh, and one more thing ... I purchased a pack of ten ISBN numbers, the numbers used to identify books. They are issued totally randomly, but lo and behold one of the ten had, you guessed it, 319 embedded into it. I used that ISBN number for the paperback version. 979-8-9952473-1-9 Maybe someday I'll figure out why that number matters.

Speaking of the number 319, original date that this was published on Amazon was 3/19/26. Somehow the eBook got in early 3/18, have no idea how that happened. Working on a fix.

But even after it was published it wasn't done. During the day of March 19th, I re-uploaded all the files at least twice to fix little typos and color issues.

Now, cross my fingers, I think I'm done.

I need a small break from this before I ...

Thanks for your support.

-Dimerto