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Go

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Go
By Andrew Cominelli

If he can get the circuits to work and the train to run—if he can set the train running and get the boy who is lost in the woods back to the town, back to the father waiting at the station—then, he thinks, something in him will change, or start anew.

He sits up each night surveying three different model railroad forums, posting questions about his circuitry issue. His idea is for the train to go into the hills and slow in the woods, and for the boy who's been lost in the woods to see it, board it, and for the train to go full steam ahead back to town to reunite the boy with his lonely and shaken father. But the circuitry is complex, and he cannot get the train to go.

He sculpts huge foam blocks into the shape of the Naugatuck Valley. It is long, slow work, but soon the hills rise and fall, the rivers run. With an Exacto knife, he scallops the river surfaces, then paints them high-gloss green. He conceives an angle for the sunlight and hangs a tennis ball from the basement ceiling on a string, to remind himself. He glues miniature trees along the riverbanks and paints their soft reflections on the water.

He sits the father on a train platform, on a bench. He stands the boy in the woods, facing the town but maybe not seeing it? Maybe not knowing how close he is to the town and to the father.

He lays the track all through the valley. He wires the circuit board according to the train set's instruction booklet. But when he tests an engine it will not go. He puts a post on the forums titled "Inexplicable short circuit!" and gets some replies, but when he tries the advice the train will not go.

He paints in fine detail a library, a city hall, several dozen houses. He places feel-good people on front porches, a collapsed drunkard in front of O'Flanagan's pub, a Dalmatian on the firehouse lawn.

Gluing tree after tree to the hillsides, he makes woods.

The train will not go. He repaints the father's hair and mustache gray. He replaces the figurine of the little boy in the woods with one of a grown man, but this is too unnerving, because a grown son is seldom lost but instead chooses to stay away, so he quickly switches it back. It is better, he decides, if the separation is a mistake, the result of some lapse or misunderstanding, no one's fault. Having decided this, he drops the grown version of the boy into a wastebasket.

He gives the Reynoldses a pool and the Romaniellos a tire swing. He paints, sculpts, glues. He troubleshoots the wiring. He makes forum posts

titled “VERY IMPORTANT!” and “URGENT!!!” He paints the words FOR-GIVE ME on a tiny sign, and sets it on the bench beside the father. He puts small fine lines of age in the father’s forehead and cheeks. He troubleshoots and checks the forums. Sometimes he stares at the train and says, *Why won’t you go*, and curses, his thumb pink on the remote’s hammer, saying,

Go.