

Clotting

by Karen Eileen Sikola

Train travel is listed as a possible cause for deep vein thrombosis, a condition that causes blood to clot in the legs.

Ray did not tell me this, but I looked it up later, remembered the disability status on his Charlie Card.

Baclofen is not used for the treatment of thrombosis. I looked that up, too, remembered the prescription bottle Ray held up to my face for me to read. "They say it's for pain," he said, and shook his head.

Baclofen is used to treat spasticity and is under investigation for the treatment of alcoholism.

Ray was looking for the B train, so I told him not to worry, that I was waiting for the same one, that there wasn't a game so it shouldn't be too crowded. But I'd misread the schedule and when the packed train finally came, Ray grabbed my wrist and helped me on. "There is a game," he said, and he gave me eyes like a grandpa's elbow to the ribs.

"Hit my legs again with that bag," Ray threatened when a Sox fan shoved his way past.

"And what?" the man said.

"And I'll fall," Ray said. He held up his card again and the man's face softened. There was no rebuttal.

I asked a girl with a window seat if she'd mind letting Ray sit. She got up and made her way over a man who sat sleeping.

"You're a sweetheart," Ray told her. "And you, too," he told me.

There was no stopping Ray, then. He opened his wallet and showed me a picture of two boys. "My youngest," he said. In the photo, they looked to be maybe three and five, but he told me seven and nine.

Ray needed to make it to Goodwill, said it was a nice day for a bike ride, but he'd sold his bike because his feet slip out of the pedals, because the pedals then hit his shins and cause his legs to bleed, because his legs never heal.

I confided in him that I can't ride a bike, that I trust the train and my feet alone.

"That's okay," he said. "You know why? Your beauty makes up for it."

Sometimes you need to hear it from a man with scabs to believe.

