

Bowling

by stephen hastings-king

I had a dream about being in a vintage alley that had bowling balls with adjustable relations to gravity, but certain details hadn't yet been settled,

...like how exactly the relation to gravity was to be adjusted---first there was a switch but that would mean it was only a less-than-usual gravity ball because it wouldn't be able to roll on the wood: then a dial, but the problem was only reduced by that; then a kind of dial switch built into the rim of s finger hole.

Then there was the problem of how bowlers adjusted their bowling to accommodate the gravity-relation they had selected, some preferring to launch the ball softly on a trajectory just over the wood so that is might even bounce, so the game acquired at the point of ball-launching a strange diversity of approaches and postures and there was even for a while a whisper-y voiceover like the whole thing was being televised:

"She is laying on the ground and will launch -3.7 gravity ball very softly on a line about 3 inches off the ground looking to hit the fattest part of the candlepins and maximize lateral impact..."

Meanwhile, others liked to throw the ball as hard as possible. When one of these people bowled, and everyone knew who they were, the back wall of the alley dropped away and the ball disappeared out the back of the building only to be found days or weeks later lodged in a hillside or having destroyed an outhouse.

And these were the rosy scenario outcomes. The danger was continuous that a ball thrown by one of these people in one direction would reappear from the opposite direction at some arbitrary-seeming time.

"Arbitrary-seeming but possible to calculate," my brain told itself, before setting out on the task of trying to do so. But the resulting word problem and its data requirements woke me up.

It was like being backstage at rehearsals for a dream before tech problems had been entirely sorted but the directions that things might go in were starting to emerge. Which means there is a process of dream-show building that goes on and dream-show production companies that occupy themselves with that--which means multiple theaters I suppose---who knows how that would work--but maybe we all know about this problem because we've all walked in on rehearsals like this-- but the more adapted among us choose to forget.

