

By Kevin Grandfield Chicago

## I'M OUTTA HERE

Drawing by A. Bondarenko



# WE

**ALWAYS HAVE SOMEPLACE ELSE TO BE.** When we are on our way some place, we wish we were already there. That's why we cut off other cars in traffic, dash in front of trains, and cut in lines: Those other people actually have no right to be in our way, keeping us from our destination. Who cares what anyone else's destination is?

When we are at work, we wish we were out at a bar having fun. When we are at the bars, we feel guilty and think we should be home. When we get home, we live in television, circling the universe in a starship or ogling other people's tragedies. We wish we were in the perfect families of sitcoms where all problems resolve nicely in 30 minutes of plot. We thank our lucky stars that we are not like the talk-show guests who we love to watch confess their problems and tragedies, so that we feel like our lives and families and jobs are not as bad as we know secretly they really are. They are not where we wish they were, nor where we wish we were. We wish we were at work again, feeling productive. But we know we are not good enough at our jobs, our families, so we wish we were at church receiving absolution, consolation. However, sitting in the pews on Sundays we wish we were back at the bar, watching our football team.

Maybe it's because we all came from somewhere else, barring the Native Americans of course. Is this the curse they promised would sit on our heads for taking their land? Maybe our bones, the DNA in our blood, long for their origin,

the other side of the ocean. Or may be it's the culture we created, which always tells us that we're never rich enough, pretty enough, hard-working enough, successful enough. **We're never where we want to be,** we've never arrived, our cars are never quick or safe enough, our bank accounts never big enough, our families never supportive enough to get us where we're going.

Where are we going?

We always think that, somewhere else, important things are happening; decisions are being made that will affect our lives; the stock tip that will allow us to retire tomorrow is being shared; the perfect lover is sitting alone at a table with two drinks, waiting for us; our enemies are plotting our demise that we could learn of and foil; friends are laughing at our limitations that, if they shared with us, we would be able to overcome and finally achieve what we want. Everywhere else, we are the topic of discussion; everywhere else, people are sharing information that could help us; everywhere else, we are happy and powerful and whole and loved. Because we never feel that way where we are. We think our unhappiness is due to never being in the right place at the right time.

**We want to be where the money is,** so we can feel rich. We want to be where the fun is, so we can feel fun. We want to be where the crowd is, so we can feel accepted.

Politically, this results in people wanting change for change's sake, and voting for the politicians who promise it, without ever questioning their racist, elitist or religious agenda. Culturally, this results in factions of all sorts (New Age gurus, militias, sports fans) who promise to tell you where you are ... then who keep you there.

Why can't we be happy where we are?

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Marketing urges us to stay with the herd, keep up with the neighbors next door. But who? The Fiarellos to our right, or the Radoviches to our left? One owns a Toyota, the other a Volkswagen. Which is more American to emulate?

The publicity machines in Hollywood and New York churn out examples of those who are more successful or successful sooner than we are: child acting stars, basketball-playing tycoons, and artistic prodigies. Shouldn't we be rushing somewhere to keep up with them? Hurrying to the money, jumping in front of the camera. We even a little envy the crime victims on the nightly news: they at least got the attention of the media. Everybody else's 15 minutes of fame seem longer than ours. We never ask why they get that fame, or why we are where we are, or if we are happy, or if we would trade where we are for the fame or success or sex or anything else which the world tempts us to chase.

**Why set up a house if you don't want to nestle in there with the people who share it?**

Why work at a job you don't enjoy? Why rush to ally yourself with any group that favors your boss before you, his workers? Why hurry to get somewhere when the travel time will be filled with new thoughts and sights? Why rush to be anywhere else when you don't know where you are?

Knowing where you are, and being happy with that, frees you to look around, so you can see where, realistically within your reach, you might meet the most friends, have the most fun, do the most good. Maybe if we stopped rushing to try to make our lives better, they would be.

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