

# *In the Pines*

by Bluebird, February 2015

In the summer of 1996 I moved from Philadelphia to Chicago on a solitary, 24 hour ride on Amtrak's *Cardinal* line. I was 13 years old, about to start high school. On an otherwise empty car I met a friend I have to this day, Lou Capwell. We listened to Belle & Sebastien, which I still do, though not on a Discman. I read a book of Bukowski poems, which I haven't really done since. (I'm more soft than hard, though I try to stay balanced.) Ten years later I was living in Oakland and the *Coast Starlight* ran past my building. The horns would startle me from sleep, but I do miss the sound of the wheels on the tracks.



*Kelso* by Louis Capwell, 2012

I've always loved trains and in particular, folk songs about trains. There are so many of them, there's a even [dedicated page on Wikipedia](#). The most relevant to our studies is of

course the [tale of John Henry](#), a man who fought and died against a steam drill that had no capacity to understand the stakes. Still, the trains pay their respect: "Every locomotive comin' a-rolling by / Hollered, there lies a steel-drivin' man, man, man."



*In the Pines* by Carrie Schneider, 2006

My favorite train song doesn't have a train in every version, and isn't always called "In the Pines." I first heard it a few years before my *Cardinal* ride, as "Where Did You Sleep Last Night?" on Nirvana's Unplugged album. It was almost twenty more years before I heard Lead Belly's version, and only then did I notice the title of the Carrie Schneider photograph at my parents' house. I found every recording of the song I could, and spliced together my own version. I'm singing it here along GarageBand's automatic Bluebird drum kit, and some of Lou's train footage from Macungie, PA.

<https://youtu.be/q8Qi9yvk-GM>