

A blue balloon

By [David Williams](#)

June 7, 2016

We sat on the T, hot and tired after a morning wandering the streets of Cambridge and the ivy-Hogwarts glory of Harvard's campus. It was the final day of an all-too-short vacation. It being public transportation, the public was present, a sampling of the Boston streetscape.

To my right, my wife. To my left, a young black teen, maybe 13 or 14, wearing bright red sports gear, sitting with a large scooter folded between his legs. To his left, a young Muslim man and a young Muslim woman, she in a pretty abaya, he dressed conservatively. Neither were Arab. Malaysian, by the set of their faces.

In front of me, a bearded black man in his late twenties, round of face and torso, casually dressed. To his right, a young German couple, she slender and angular, he red-blond and bearded. They spoke in the quiet percussion of Germanic whispering. To his left, a middle-aged woman, white, her feet in sandals, the hint of bandages beneath.

And between us, as we sat, a blue balloon sat on the floor.

It lolled in the gentle currents of air-conditioned train car, lazily wobbling, aimlessly drifting. The Germans talked. The young black teen next to me nodded, half-asleep. My wife rested her head on my shoulder.

The balloon skittered over the floor on a synthetic breeze, and touched her foot. She went to tap it away.

But her tired tap proved more a kick than a tap, and the blue balloon leapt up. It booped into the side of the bearded black man's face, then ricocheted into the white woman's hair.

And he laughed, and she laughed. He bopped the blue balloon back to us. And we to him. And him to her.

Bip.

Bop.

Back and forth, across the car, four grown-up strangers suddenly playing with a blue balloon.

It came towards me and went wide, and bopped the young black teen. He was not, as it happens, actually asleep. He grinned and gave it a gentle kick to the German couple, who tapped it back to me. And I to them. And they to the Muslim man, who sent it over to the bearded black man.

Back and forth, all smiling, no one wanting to be the one who ended the game.

It floated high, and there was a faint hiss, and it was drawn to an air intake, where it stopped, now affixed by the flow of air to the ceiling.

There were smiles, and gentle laughs. The blue balloon remained, still and quiet above us.

And then we got off the train, and went our ways.

Our life together, I think, needs more blue balloons.

*Originally posted at [Beloved Spear](#)*