

Footnotes on Linoleum

Ordinary and absurd observations from brain cancer philosopher Adam Hayden

September 18, 2024 By [Adam Hayden](#)

I curl my toes under the balls of my feet.

Something is poking my right heel; my big toes flex and slide on the linoleum.

“We used to have that linoleum in my parents’ house in the ’90s,” a friend told me after we moved in. One day, our kids will tell one of their friends, “We used to have that in my parents’ house in the ’20s.”

It won’t be about linoleum, but we’re in the income bracket for economical, mass-produced goods, so I’m sure there are plenty of candidates.

I like the linoleum just fine. The faux tile grout is beginning to warp in areas of high traffic, where it’s pulling from the glue beneath and exposing the subfloor in a few places near the baseboards. Again, this is fine. On Einstein’s view, the curvature of spacetime is like this: the structure of the universe is a taught sheet and massive objects are bowling balls, bending the fabric.

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The birds are with me in the morning and the cicadas at night. The open windows beckon Fall. The bubbling coffee and crisp air greet me each day, and the linoleum in the kitchen is cool. I’ve never stayed in a home, house, apartment, rental, Air BnB, or state park cabin where anything important happening, didn’t happen in the kitchen.

I don’t leave home often.

That’s an understatement.

I sleep in my office, or I work in my bedroom, a family of five and working from home. Sometimes my house can feel like a set. Jerry’s apartment physically [could not exist](#), but that didn’t matter for the storytelling. My house is a set, and I’m the union crew who handles maintenance and cleanup. I’m most active on the off hours. The main characters shoot their scenes, and the recurring guests get in their parts. The clapboards are stored, and the loose scripts are recycled before I lock the door, switch off most the lights, and check on the kids.

I return to the kitchen to write, doom scroll, watch the news with my airpods, or chuckle while crying and surrender to absurdity. Most folks I know who have water dispensers in fridge doors eventually buy bottled water and tell people not to drink the refrigerator water. Ours still seems to work fine, but I admit, it does taste like the ice. Well. The ice tastes like the water because the ice is the water, and the water is the ice, and the vapor rolling off the Kraft mac and cheese is the water, too. Life's a trip.

I walk over to the dispenser and stick my Ball jar underneath. Our water glasses are Ball jars. It's not quaint. It's easy. My neighbor just told us about plastic lids for the Ball jars. Pro tip.

Standing at the dispenser, filling my Ball jar, I curl my toes under the balls of my feet. Something is poking my right heel.

I sit down to write.

Like iPhone portrait mode, the background has been blurry lately; distant, and I'm on stage, acting. I want to be left alone while receiving all the attention. Don't ask me what's wrong but know what is. It's like so many others aren't reading off the same script, and I don't know how to read your lines for you. I need your words to help me fill in my part. I can't do both; I'm just talking to myself.

In the late hours, in the absurd, I get in altercations with myself. I'm angry at me. I'm angry at "the situation." I'm angry that it feels like the only thing I can say that's really worth a damn is saying something about this goddamn disease and reminding us all that we should be living our goddamn lives while all I really want to tell you is that I'm afraid of losing mine.

I curl my toes under the balls of my feet. Feel the cool linoleum and hear the cicadas. I'm alive, ain't I? How about that? Some eight years, huh? Let's get back to it.

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