



Emily Emails You...

“Inspiring, light hearted, and oh so fun” – Brigit Kenney

Hello, beloved friends and family! I hope this newsletter finds you well... this one is longer than the first, but do not fear, it is mostly pictures.

We have been on the road for over a month now, and as time passes, our trip gains some blurriness. Documenting this journey is becoming increasingly important, as I am often finding myself going “wait, where were we yesterday? Where did we sleep last night?”

This lack of rootedness is exhilarating and makes me feel both grateful for this moment, as well as past and future moments where we enjoyed the stability of high ceilings, big TV’s, and a house that stays in one place.

I am writing from Montana, we have finally made it out West! One of our main desires in choosing this journey was to explore the western parts of America, and it feels great to be here.

I really appreciate all the feedback on my first newsletter. I miss you all and it is so amazing to feel supported.

Questions, comments, concerns, requests?

Reach me at emilyemailsyou@yahoo.com or 770-500-0801

Where We've Been



14. Indianapolis, IN. Pickin' up where we left off, in Indianapolis! After our fun day downtown, we planned to stop at a truck stop and sleep there for free. But, it was very hot outside and we did not want any suffering. We thought long and hard about who we may know in Indianapolis that would let us plug into their house.... We came up with nothing. We decided to treat ourselves to a luxurious night at the cheapest hotel we could find. Right after we booked our non-refundable stay, I remembered that I have 5+ family members who all live in Indianapolis! Whoops. We had an overall disappointing time at a Days Inn, as we longed for the comfort of our RV and found ourselves googling "what does crack smell like?"

Thankfully, we were still able to gather for a lunch before we left town. It was so fun to see everyone, and some people even ate peanut butter & jelly bacon burgers! Cara, Rob, Sarah, Sue, Bob, Grandma – I love you guys!

15. Chicago, IL. We had an absolute ball in Chicago with our dear friends and hosts, Trevor and Easton. They were incredible tour guides. Every meal was delicious, every activity was riveting, and there was a perfect balance of spontaneity and planning. The trip was so great it made me think, perhaps I could be a city girl! We were also lucky enough to spend time with some of Trevor's family. We were waiting for a very late city bus when his mom, Holly, just happened to drive by and she picked us up and took us to the restaurant where his sister, Taylor, works. I didn't think things like that happened in the big city!



We went on a Chicago River architecture tour which was fascinating and made my neck sore. Here are some of my favorites: swirly stairs, wavy boy, and corn.





We experienced city life to the fullest – we went to a free exhibit about the history of comics, a free art show, a free Talking Heads cover show by a band called Big Suit (the main singer wore a really big suit!), and a not-free show at a jazz bar that Al Capone used to frequent.

Check out @andrewarkellart to see some mind blowing water color paintings. Also check out soulmessageband.com, the site for the amazing jazz trio we got to see!

Trevor & Easton, Taylor & Holly & Annie, thank you and we <3 you!!!

PS – anyone needing a stunning 1-5 day kitchen update for as low as \$99-\$249/month in the Chicago area, reach out to Trevor's mom, Holly, at hlane@kitchentuneup.com!

16. Jubilee College State Park, IL.

We spent a relaxing two nights at this state park. There was big drama because a mysterious woman asked me, “honey you’re not drinking that water, are you?” as I was filling up our water jug at the spigot. I informed her that indeed I had been drinking that water and she informed me that I was soon to be ailed with either diarrhea or constipation. I relayed this alarming news to Sam and he insisted she did not know what she was talking about. We asked the campground host if the water was potable and he said yes! I didn’t know who to believe and from then on, every sip felt like a gamble. But I am happy to report that we went on drinking the water and our stools were regular.

Then, we headed to the airport in Peoria, IL to pick up Tristan to head to Summer Camp Music Festival! If you do not know who Tristan is, he is one half of Wiener Beach and one third of our household last year. It was a very happy reunion.





17. Chillicothe, IL. We had a fantastic first Summer Camp, or ‘scamp’, as the regulars call it. ***COPS STOP READING*** To the left you will see our smart & sneaky way of bringing contraband (craft beer) into the festival. Summer camp is different from other large festivals I’ve attended in that once you’re through the initial security check where they check your vehicle, there is no difference between the camping and the festival. Usually, there’s a gate at the entrance of some of the stages where they check your bag, and you can’t even bring water in. But at scamp, once your camp is set up, you can bring whatever you want to the shows. Nearly lawless! No more waiting in line before getting to the stage, no more shelling out \$12 for a beer, no more hiding drugs in your shoe (I’ve heard that people do that!).

Major con of scamp: extremely dusty. Just billows of dust clouds as everyone moved from stage to stage. The first night I nearly snored because of how heavy my lungs felt. But I’ve heard that heavy dust particles mean the covid won’t spread as quickly... (just kidding).

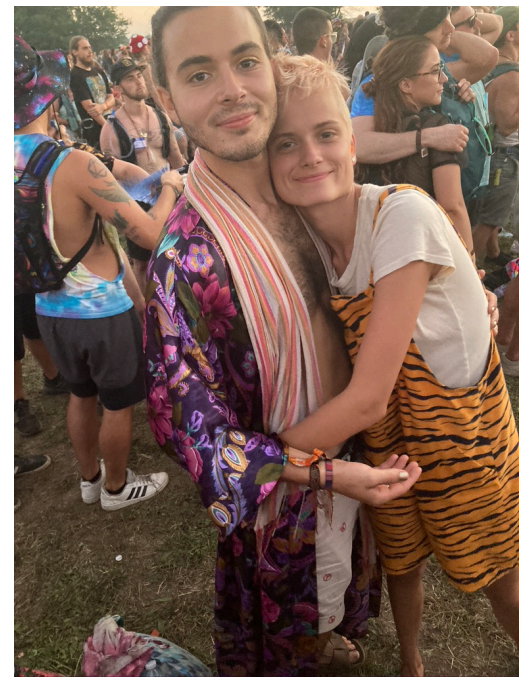
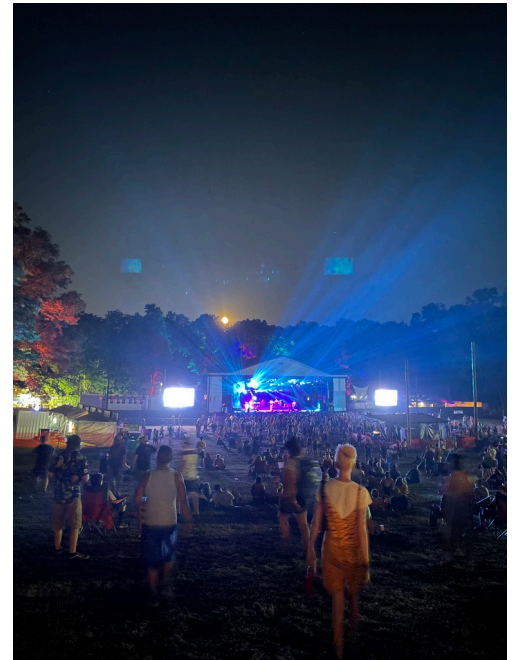
Covid was a real concern, and certainly put a damper on the festival. There’s no excuse to go to a massively populated event amidst a global pandemic. We bought the tickets before all this delta business, when vaccines seemed to be a glorious gateway to doing whatever you want, guilt-free.

And even with telling myself all the things we tell ourselves to abate the guilt – ‘I’m vaccinated’ ‘It’s outside’ ‘I’ll get tested’ – it was still just simply overwhelming to be surrounded by so many humans after the most low-key 16 months imaginable. It was a confusing mix of ‘wow community is so beautiful’ and ‘this person in the crowd is breathing on me and I’m going to freak out’.

Luckily, doctors have been prescribing music to ease anxiety since the beginning of doctors... and the music was GREAT!

My favorite - Billy Strings, absolute legend. Scamp was heavy on the DJs, and I love DJs, but there is nothing quite like the feeling of listening to a group of people move their fingers extremely fast on some string instruments in a coordinated manner.. It was just astonishing.

Other favorites: Tipper (who doesn't show his face because he is an alien), Rezz (also alien music), Doom Flamingo (incredible vocals), Lettuce (always fun), Here Come the Mummies (I had never heard of them but they all wear mummy costumes and they have really encouraging messages about being yourself), & The Wood Brothers (3 men, only 2 are brothers).





Sam on day 1 of Scamp



Sam on day 4 of Scamp



Goodbye, Summer Camp!

We packed up and headed back to Jubilee College State Park. Tristan made the wise call to not fly back to St. Pete immediately after a four-day festival. We went back to the campsite and immediately fell into a 5 hour coma nap. Then we took much needed showers and fell back asleep at promptly 10 pm.

The next day we had our first on-the-road laundromat experience, pictured on the left.

We said our goodbyes to Tristan (we love you, Tristan), and hit the open road once again! We drove and drove and yet we seemed to be perpetually stuck in Illinois.





18. Richton Park, IL. We spent a cozy night here and then woke up, took rapid tests (both negative), and headed to Michigan! Our first stop: All Brand RV Repair Shop. A few days before Scamp we noticed a leak from the bottom of the RV, right under where our kitchen sink is. The leak would get worse every time we used water pump, and Sam realized that our hot water was broken, and was overflowing every time we turned the water on. Luckily, we were headed to the RV hub of America!



19. Edwardsburg, MI. My dad picked us up in this silly rental whip and we headed to Eagle Lake! My grandma is renting this cottage for a month and nearly every one of her relatives is traveling to Michigan to enjoy a few days at the lake. This is where my dad and his siblings grew up, and where I spent some time as a kid. It was so special to spend time with my family and reminisce on the good ole days.

Here are some pictures of us living the lake life.



Grandma made these signs and posted them all around the house, reminding her heathen family members that there is no maid service





I decided to stop giving my hair its monthly chemical bath, I'll be going au naturale for a while... Thanks to the fine skills of barber Sam, I donated my hair to the fish and I'm bald as ever!

Thank you, grandma, for always making a way for us all to be together. We had a fantastic time.

After picking up our RV from the shop, we headed out and stopped by the RV/MH Museum and Hall of Fame in Elkhart, IL. We learned some RV history, Sam taught me, once again, how a transmission works, and we walked through a timeline of RV advertising (goRVing.com – sound familiar?).

Please enjoy these pictures of us in/near a plethora of RVs.











20. Rockford, IL.

“Where’d you guys go on your road trip?”

“Mostly just Illinois”

We spent one night in this pretty backyard, then woke up and prepared to finally, once and for all, leave Illinois.

Montana, here we come!



21. Dresbach, MN. We spent a night at this beautiful hipcamp, a property that is an abandoned limestone mine.

This was a beautiful and relaxing stop and there was even a trampoline, but when I jumped on it Sam said it looked like the bottom was going to fall out.



What We've Eaten

We had some great restaurant experiences in Chicago, featuring Sun Wah, where you can get a reasonably priced duck dinner in which they present you with an entire roasted duck, cut it up for you, and then you craft your own meal with bao buns, plum sauce, and various veggies.



We ate at the World's Largest Culvers in Edgerton, WI. It wasn't *that* big.

At Summer Camp, we experienced chorizo stuffed bread, baked in a cob oven. It was outstanding. Check out @earthnfirechorizo on Instagram. Most of the festival food was overpriced carnival food, but Earth n Fire came with a mission. Everyone who worked there was so kind and had strong arms as they spent all day kneading bread and rolling it out on a huge table and stuffing it with a massive line of chorizo... It was all we could talk about.

We went to this café twice because it was just so good. They had made-to-order hot apple fritters. I have discovered the power and beauty of Lactaid, the famous dairy digestive aid. It took some courage to get to this point but I can confirm: it works. I've been taking full advantage of all the foods I've been missing for YEARS, including: pizza, lasagna, pancakes, and donuts.



These??



Sam very kindly did a Wiener Beach night for my family and it was, of course, a huge success. It was the main topic of conversation for most of the night and will certainly be brought up for years to come. Minds were blown. If you're wondering, he made the Pineapple Express and the Buffalo Chicken Mac n Cheese Dog.



Who We've Met

Stoven – Stoven is a talented artist we met at the Chicago art festival. He didn't have a real booth, he just set up his paintings on the sidewalk, which was pretty artistic of him. Easton really wanted one of his paintings but she is in the unfortunate position of not being able to shell out \$7,000 for art. Stoven was an exciting person to meet because he is "100% positive" that in the next year he will sell a painting for \$1.2 billion. He believes that if you believe something and say it enough, it will happen. I think he's on to something. Follow his journey @stovenart on Instagram

Phoenix – After Summer Camp we stayed at a Hipcamp hosted by a woman named Harvest, whose son, Phoenix was excited to check out our RV, although ours is not as big as his grandpa's. Phoenix was also at Summer Camp festival and I remembered seeing him because he had BLUE hair and I said, "hey guys, that kid has blue hair". He is one of the many kids whose parents brought them to the festival, which seems like it could be fun or awful.

Jerry – Jerry fixed our RV in a jiffy and for a reasonable price. He was so kind and we all felt safe in his care. Thanks to Jerry and his team, we now have a working hot water heater and no leaks!

Leaving my grandmas, we pulled over at a sign that advertised watermelons and German shepherd puppies. We bought the watermelon, did not buy the puppy. There was a language barrier between us and the women who lived there (after 12+ years of Spanish I did not remember that watermelon is not melón, but sandía). Anyway, they were kind and protected us from their aggressive geese and complimented our RV.

What We've Watched

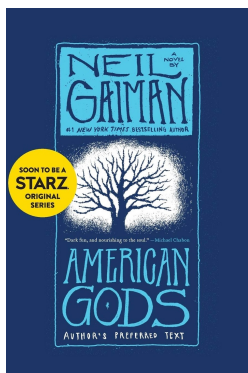
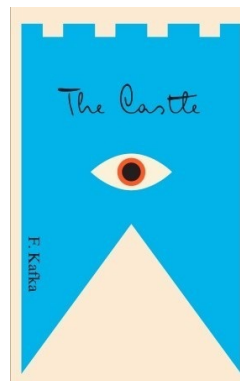
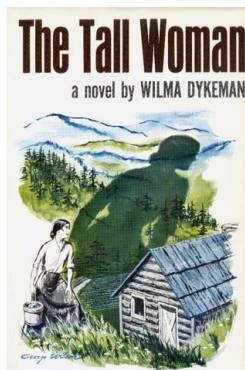
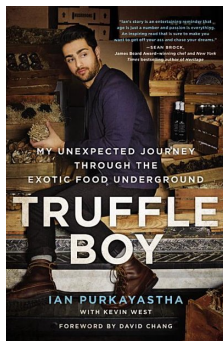
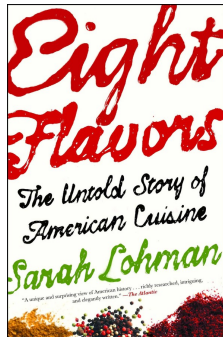
Mostly just *The Blacklist*, which had a twist so infuriating, we almost stopped watching.

We saw not one, but two, people wearing this hat →

We watched the documentary *Fantastic Fungi* on Netflix, which we would highly recommend. We did fall asleep halfway through, not due to lack of interest but due to 4 days of dancing.



What We've Read



Sam continues to read *Eight Flavors*. He is currently on the chapter about curry powder, and purchased a variety of spice blends after reading the chapter about chili powder. He was enthralled with the history of the Chili Queens, hardworking Mexican – Texan women who introduced chili to America as early as the 1860s. They would make a living by selling chili out of carts in San Antonio’s Military Plaza and unfortunately began to disappear with the growing American obsession with food and vending licensure. Most of these women and their families were forgotten by history but every bowl of chili (and chili dog) you’ve ever had is thanks to these Chili Queens. Sam would read more, but he is often busy driving the RV...

I finished Wilma Dykeman’s, *The Tall Woman*, a beautiful novel. I loved glimpsing into Lydia MacQueen’s world, whom in many ways is the ‘ideal woman’ of the late 1800s. She is a hard worker, an empathetic mother and wife, a fantastic cook, and a knowledgeable herbalist. She could easily become a trope, but Dykeman writes about Lydia’s inner world in a way that is not reductionist, but robust and inspiring. Here is one of my favorite quotes, “the living of each day with those who depended on her absorbed Lydia so totally, in all her senses and muscles and mind, that she could not forego the pressures and pleasures of the present for need to be certain of the future. Somehow the future was built of the minutes of now, anyway, and to lose them was to lose all, both today and tomorrow” (274).

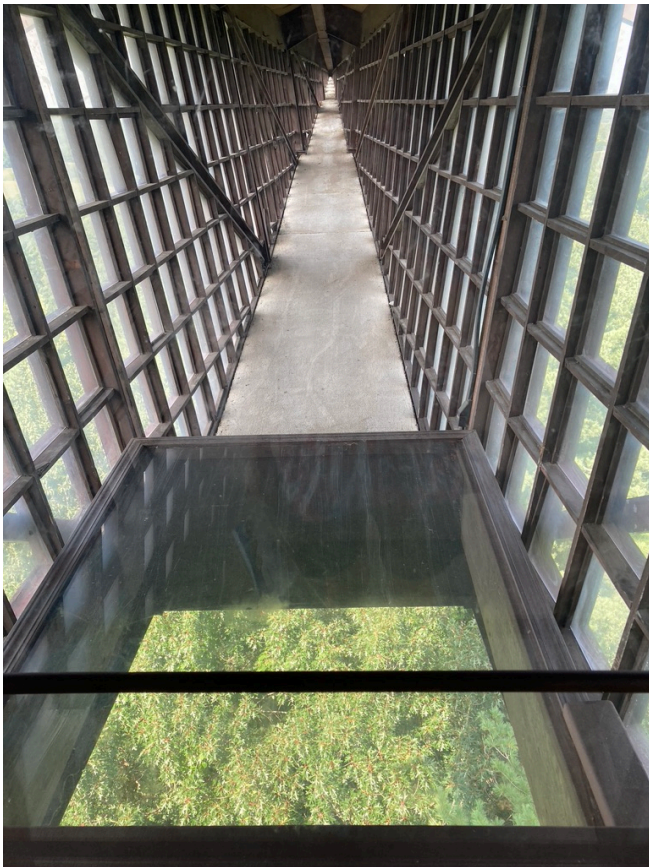
Next I read Franz Kafka’s, *The Castle*. Around 80 pages in I thought, ‘I don’t know if I can do this’. I found solace in Alessandro’s review on Goodreads, “To read this is to know pain. This book is an ungodly torment. It doesn’t even have proper paragraph division”. The story centers around ‘K.’, who has arrived in a strange village and he spends the whole novel trying to get in contact with the ‘Castle’, the elusive building in which all the ‘authorities’ work. The story is super disorienting. You’re never quite sure why he is there or if he is telling the truth. And as a cherry on top, the book was never properly finished because Kafka died while writing it. It literally ends mid-sentence. I know I’m not particularly selling this book, but I am glad I stuck with it. Once you get a bit oriented to the weirdness and the pace of it, it becomes intriguing and actually hilarious. But I definitely need a book club or a classroom to help me digest this one.

America – the melting pot, as they say. People from all over have come to live in America, and they’ve brought their gods with them. What if those gods were alive, and stayed alive as long as some people believed in them? And what if they walked among us, worked jobs, ate food, had sex..? Neil Gaiman asks and answers these questions in *American Gods*, which I am currently reading. Another disorienting novel, but very engrossing. I’m only halfway through, but I think what is happening is the ‘old’ gods are going to war with the ‘new’ gods (internet, television, radio, cell phone). I don’t know how to describe it so if you’re interested, look up a synopsis online.

I enjoy this quote about roadside attractions, how in other countries, people can sense when a place has spiritual power, and so they build temples, cathedrals, etc., but in the US, people build roadside attractions, “they feel themselves being called to from the transcendent void, and they respond to it by building a model out of beer bottles of somewhere they’ve never visited, or by erecting a gigantic bat-house in some part of the country that bats have traditionally declined to visit. Roadside attractions: people feel themselves being pulled to places where, in other parts of the world, they would recognize that part of themselves is truly transcendent, and buy a hot dog and walk around, feeling satisfied on a level they cannot truly describe, and profoundly dissatisfied on a level beneath that” (106).

The characters then visit **The House on the Rock**, in Iowa County, Wisconsin. This stop happened to be right on our route, and we had a truly wild few hours spent in this smorgasbord of a place. This guy, Alex Jordan Jr., felt called to build a house on a rock, and so he did. And then he went on, with the help of others, to build a whole bunch of other wacky shit and fill it with many, many things to feast your eyes upon.

Here are some pics.







INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT THE LARGEST CAROUSEL IN HISTORY

NUMBER OF LIGHTS: OVER 20,000

NUMBER OF CHANDELIERS: 182

NUMBER OF ANIMALS ON THE CAROUSEL: 269

WIDTH: 80 FEET

HEIGHT: 35 FEET

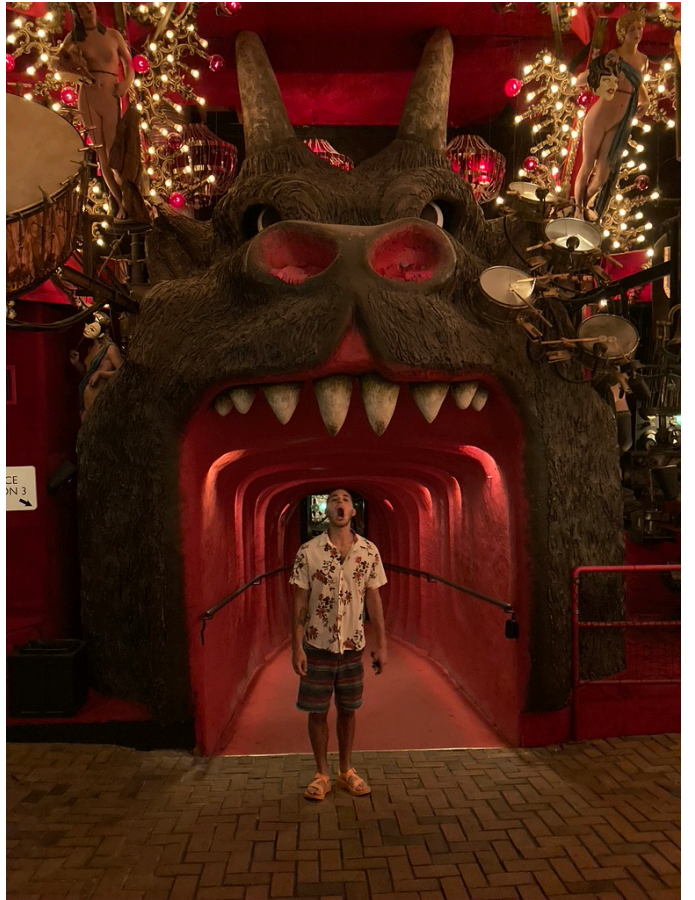
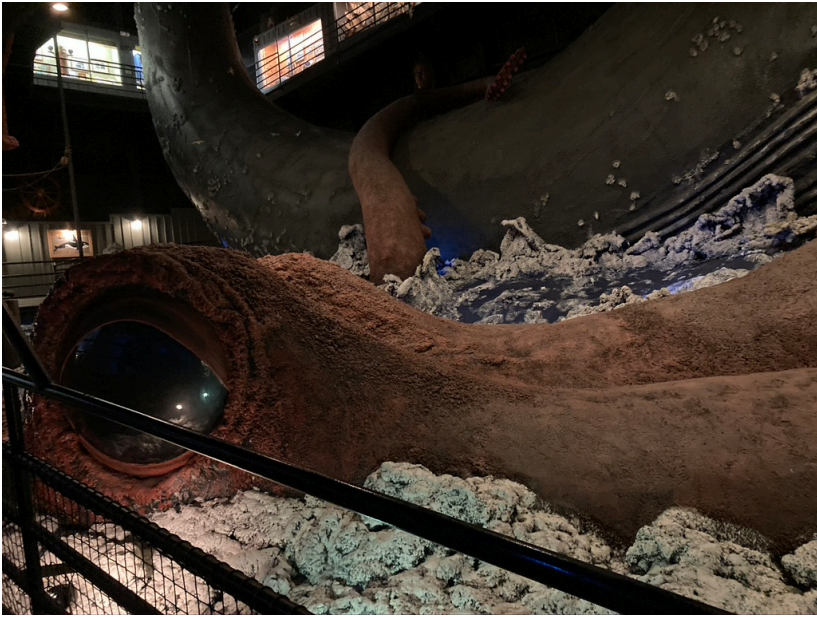
WEIGHT: 36 TONS

PREMIERED: EASTER 1981

VALUE, INCLUDING THE HOUSE ON THE ROCK COLLECTION OF CAROUSEL ANIMALS: \$4,800,000

THESE ANIMALS ARE AMONG THE MOST UNIQUE COLLECTED FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD

NOTE: THERE IS NOT ONE HORSE ON THE CAROUSEL





I thought about making captions to explain what each picture is of, but I want you to feel as confused as I did.

These though, are the women's bathrooms.

What We've Learned

We've learned how to use our propane water heater.

In 1887, the city of Chicago reversed the flow of the Chicago River to provide clean drinking water to its citizens. "Because before they did that, I'm pretty sure there was just a bunch of poop in the water" – Sam

Thanks to the podcast "Serial Killers", we have learned the light-hearted and inspiring stories of serial killers including Edward Wayne Edwards and the Yosemite killer! Two episodes that I would recommend, if you're into that sort of thing.

I learned that I've got to stay on top of this newsletter or I will forget everything I've learned!