

This is an excerpt from *Imaginary Year*, a work of serial fiction by Jeremy P. Bushnell. Visit the *Imaginary Year* website (<http://www.ImaginaryYear.com>) on Mondays and Fridays for new updates.

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September arrives and Jakob renews his lease, begins his third year in this Chicago apartment.

It's not a perfect apartment—it's too small, and the faucets in the shower leak, and the intercom system hasn't worked well since last winter (one freezing in February, Freya spent twenty minutes chucking stones at his window so he'd come let her in). And yet, for all the things he'd change, he has to admit that it feels good to go a few years without moving. It feels nice to know, with certainty, where things are.

He gets the coffee filters out of his kitchen drawer, stands there in his bathrobe and grinds some beans. Pours water into the back of the coffeemaker, and switches it on.

A tremor passes through his feet, followed by a second one moments later.

He draws the curtain, to check out what's going on, just to make sure that it's not the end of the world out there or anything. He's not that worried. For the past week they've been demolishing the defunct industrial building that used to be next door, reducing it to a fenced-in field of debris. He looks out onto the lot, where there's a bulldozer dumping piles of bricks on the earth. He watches it for a few minutes. A toddler's love of heavy moving equipment still lives within him somewhere, down deep.

He hears the coffeemaker gurgle like it does at the end of its cycle. He goes and pours himself a cup, then returns to the window.

He'll miss the plating works. He enjoyed the sense of continuity that the building provided, the way it hearkened back to Chicago's industrial past. Maybe he's just nostalgic, but still, he'll take an old empty building over a Starbucks, or whatever else they'll put there next. (Maybe it'll be a Blockbuster Video. Then there will be three within walking distance of his apartment instead of only two.)

On the other hand, his apartment has more view now. He can see a deeper picture of Chicago's tangle of trees and poles and wires and bricks than he could before. If he looks through a particular sliver of space framed by buildings he can even see the L tracks. He sips his steaming coffee and waits until a chain of cars rumbles through. He smiles: seeing them reminds him that he lives in a place where trains circulate constantly. He can derive comfort from that. It reminds him that life is always happening.

He feels the faintest pulse of caffeine in his blood. He begins to calculate plans for the day. He thinks he'll go visit Freya at work, maybe they can grab lunch or something. He will take the train out to another point in the city. And then, later, he will return here, to home.