

## Benjamin and Barry's Late Night Adventure

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"Which way do you think we should walk?" asks Benjamin as we goes out the door one summer night. Usually on our walks he is indecisive about the direction, but despite his question he strides purposefully down the road towards Little Creek Drive. When we get to Postoak Road I ask him if he wants to drop by to see if Mr. Lehr was home. Meheret had told me she would be in California but Rob had a different schedule this summer.

"Do *you* want to?" Benjamin replied.

"Yes, that's why I asked you."

Benjamin looked up Postoak to the hill where the high voltage power lines were and hesitated, but then said, "OK, we can go." I started to walk towards one of the houses on the Lehr's street and Benjamin said, "I think it's the one next door." We walked to the next house and the kitchen was lit up. Someone sat in the window eating. At first I thought it was Rob but then I wasn't so sure.

Benjamin: Maybe it *was* the other house.

Me: OK, let's just go.

Benjamin: Now he's looking at us.

Me: This is ridiculous. It has to be this house.

It turns out to be Lex. Both parents are in California. We chat for a minute and then head outside again. Once again, Benjamin asks where we should go. I said "How about we keep going on this street, up the hill and then take the Secret Passage back to Smoketree?" Once again, Benjamin has already made up his mind. "Let's go back to Postoak. I want to see something."

We climb up the hill till we get to the power lines. A wide avenue of grass intersects the road on either side, with tall metal towers rising out of the grass and marching off into the distance. Benjamin pulls out his new smart phone to take a picture on the left, approximately southward, and starts backing up to get a better shot. He ends up across the street and takes some more pictures. Behind the furthest hill we can see three columns of red lights blinking in the distance. Each set of lights look to be arranged vertically along a metal tower or antenna, which we can just make out in the darkness.



Benjamin Klinger

“Where *are* those lights?” Benjamin asks. It is obvious to me where they are. It could not be far, and we’ve been on almost every street within miles of our house. “They are probably on those office buildings next to the highway,” I answer smugly.

“No, you can’t see the buildings, and the towers are too tall to be just sitting on top of a building.”

I have to admit I have no idea where the lights were. There seem to be one or two other towers behind the three main ones. Even further was a tower of bright white lights which flashed in succession in a pattern climbing up another [invisible] tower.

“It’s like there are these mind control towers and no one even notices them,” Benjamin says.

“*The eyes of Mordor are upon us,*” I reply. “Or maybe its more like Planckton’s transmitter in the Sponge Bob movie. At least we’re not wearing those helmets.” Benjamin takes some pictures with his new smart phone.

“We can go look for them,” I suggest.

“You think it’s close enough to walk?”

“We can drive. *You* can drive.”

“There’s one other place I saw them. I can show you when we’re in the car.”

We walk home, unplug the car, and Benjamin takes the wheel and drives us along our street. “Benjamin, why are you so far over on the left?” “I don’t want to hit anyone’s mirrors in the dark. Anyway no one is coming the other way.” The other view of the lights was down Seven Locks, so we drive to the street. As we drive towards Tuckerman, he keeps an eye on the horizon and I kept both my eyes on the road. “It

should be around here... wait I think I... no... THERE!" Sure enough, the lights are visible for an instant behind the trees.

I tell Benjamin to go left on Tuckerman. There is a power station down the road where the same power lines near our house cross Westlake Drive. Maybe the towers are there. We drive there and I am straining to see and... nothing remotely like a row of tall towers with red lines on them. I guess that's why I never noticed them before.

"I see them!" we both say at the same time. They are somewhere behind the Montgomery Mall. We drive on the road behind the Mall. It goes over the highway and from the top of the bridge we have a great view and can see that they are really close. But I still have no idea where they actually are.

The road takes us to Democracy Boulevard and we have lost the trail. They should be somewhere in front of us but our only choices are left and right. "Go right," I say, and then "no left." "Make up your mind!" "Well you're in the right lane now so let's go right. Maybe they are back near Seven Locks," I speculate.

"That would be ironic. We just made a big circle when we could have gone straight down Seven Locks."

"Well, not really ironic. I mean, it makes sense that if we saw it when we looked down Seven Locks, because maybe it's because it *is* down Seven Locks. But I don't see where there could be any towers. It's just a bunch of houses."

Democracy Blvd goes over the highway and I look left where the highway makes a gap in the trees. There the towers are, right next to the highway. But they look like they are on the *east* side of the highway, and we are driving west. "Should I turn around?" Benjamin asks. I am at a loss. It seems like any way we take misses the target. Finally we reach Seven Locks and we turn around.

The towers were somewhere southeast of where Democracy crosses I-270. All I can think of is to go down Old Georgetown towards downtown Bethesda. Maybe that will get us closer.

No sign of them as we drive. Once again it feels like we are getting colder. But then we notice a red glow in the distance. "I know, it's the hospital!" I say. It seems especially creepy to think we can see it all the way from our neighborhood, especially after that moment when I needed an emergency operation and as they put me under I thought I was finished. We also catch a glimpse of the flashing white lights, way off in the distance near downtown Bethesda. We get closer to the red lights and see them on the hospital. "No way," says Benjamin, "those are definitely not the lights." Then I see some even higher up, and say "Look, there's a couple of giant cranes with red lights on them." They immediately disappear behind the hospital.

We wander around neighborhood streets in Bethesda. We start discussing the architecture and why I like the old houses better than the ones in our neighborhood. "This is just what I wanted to do, bushwacking in the car," Benjamin says happily. "Well, housewacking anyway," I replied. The cranes come back into view... Once again Benjamin notices that the details are all wrong, not enough lights on each tower, not enough towers. I'm totally at a loss and say we should drive home, but taking more residential streets away from Old Georgetown.

We get to Fernwood and have almost gotten back to Democracy when I catch a glimpse of the towers again. "Should I take a left here?" "Yes, do it," I tell him. The streets get even narrower than before. There is barely enough room for one car. Car mirrors on both sides form a gauntlet practically touching our car, and I think Benjamin is fighting the urge to throw his hands up over his eyes. "Stay on target..."

We emerge from the narrow street and come to an intersection. I say to turn left because it goes up a hill where we might get a better view, but Benjamin wants to go right. We agree to go his way. It looks like the street is a dead end, but we drive to the end just to see what's there.

What's there is a bit of a hill rising up from the road to a large patch of grass, a sign, and a tall radio antenna with three red lights on it. We get out of the car and Benjamin runs up the grass where he can see the other two towers as well. The whole area is just rising out of a residential neighborhood but I think the highway is near. Benjamin asks me to read the sign. It says that there is a permit request to make a mixed-use development here - basically under the towers - on the land owned by WMAL radio, whose towers these must be.



*Benjamin Klinger*



*Benjamin Klinger*

Benjamin asks, "What's WMAL like?"

“I think it’s conservative radio. At least, it seems to play a lot of right wing guys.”

Benjamin hardly misses a beat and says, “It’s true. The towers *are* for mind control!”