If you think your imagination on just how weird things can get is being stretched pretty thin these days, and that your ability to remain sane is approaching the point of no return, welcome aboard the Crazy Train! We are haunted here by the Ghosts of Sanity Long Since Passed.

In this new, devolved phase of our world, we plan and predict our futures in the fortune-teller's tent, in the caboose, where a licensed phrenologist will count, measure, and touch all the bumps on your head, then mutter and mumble your possibilities of success in this modern world. You can even get your palm scientifically read -- back there, in the rear.

The college route to success is too snobbish, you know, and dealing with facts and logic makes you kind-of-funny-upstairs, according to many riders on the American Crazy Train -- people losing IQ points faster than falling off a ladder propped up on our flatcar, back there.

For unbeatable repeat entertainment, Tennessee's doing a replay of the Scopes monkey trial in the dining car -- don't lose your appetite or lunch. They're letting religious superstition bounce around in their science classrooms like wild chimpanzees, a bizarre switch for *chapel-car-goin'* folks who want nothing to do with the evolution of primates.

Rep. Allen West is on board, too -- squinting in the fogged-in smoking car, still able to see card-carrying commies around every corner, inside every member of the Democratic Party, channelin' Joe McCarthy in some sort of list-waving, instant replay from the Paranoid Delusion Control Center, freely tossing in schizophrenic hallucinations on the side, and for free.

Meanwhile, the American Nazi Party decided for some reason they'd almost been left frothing and foaming right at the station, not getting a fair airing of their reasonless views. They now have a lobbyist working the halls of Congress, and on this very train, too. And, shades of Jacob Marley! The failing spirits in the Congressional car are peeling away into restrooms, looking ghastly-ill and ghostly-pale, some nausea response finally triggered.

Meanwhile, in the Goldman Sachs car -- the armed, gated, guarded, armored party car for which birthright reservations are *de rigueur* -- *rigor mortis* has certainly not set in. People there are partying like mad, celebrating CEO Blankfein's 16-million-plus pay package. That's actually *down* a couple million from 2010 -- perhaps his tap-on-the-wrist penalty for helping pilot the world economy into the side of a mountain, then spring-boarding it off cliffs.

Then, there are the near-death experiences of the Post Office -- in the mail van, up by the locomotive -- now suffering at the hands of lunatics trying to strangle them, and all government, in a bathtub, in our small add-on bathing car. Of course, being new on board, you might agree that it makes sense to penalize the Post Office for following laws mandated to make them appear broke, then attacking them for doing what they had been ordered to do. Give it time, the Crazy Train will work on you, too.

The lesson will become obvious in time: *Have a cookie?* **Slap!** *No, really -- take a cookie.* **Slap!**
Go ahead -- c'mon, have a cookie!

See? It's those pesky facts again, they keep coming back, like clouds of gnats -- all up in your face, hoping to get all up in your mind. You want a breather, there's a museum car, like

time travel into a sounder and saner past.

This month, in honor of the premature accounts of the Post Office's death, it's the Dead Letter Office, opened in 1825. It wasn't too long before more than seven million pieces of ghost mail poured in every year. Even today, the DLO's exploits are as intriguing as one might expect, its workers being part Sherlock Holmes and CSI, with a whiff of ghost-whispering X-Files for flavor, even some dead-reckoning via cryptography and code-cracking, trying to decipher where mislaid and waylaid mail should end up. They've reunited lost family members, forwarded millions in cash, checks, and jewels to the rightful owners, and on and on.

Here's a little know fact: Women were selected for much of the decoding and sleuthing, as their analytical skills were seen as being much keener than men's. Lots of stuff you might come to appreciate, after a long stint on the Crazy Train.

You might find some comfort, as I do, having some sort of anchor and solid link to the passing of days, before you start wobbling and weaving, lurching around on these old train tracks, left to rot and disappear into the past.

Too bad about the shape of our sad, national railroad and its bad tracks -- even worse, the news of our Crazy Train, always threatening to jump *waaaaay* off its rails.

http://www.postalmuseum.si.edu/resources/6a2c_deadletters.html

http://www.postalmuseum.si.edu/exhibits/2_virtual.html

http://inventors.about.com/library/inventors/blmailustimeline.htm

http://www.fair.org/blog/2012/02/17/postal-service-broke-letter-explains-what-usa-today-omitted/