

A Treatise on the Safety Pin in Six Boxes

By John Pearring

Safety Pin 1: Confident, clueless, but not smug

The safety pin waits
Longer than the paper clip
Which lives a nomadic life, at glorious times
Traveling to important places with serious consequences
Attached to hibernated bits of this and that
At mournful other times
Policing forgotten details that no longer matter
Waiting paper clips gather in tangled mounds
A piled life among unfriendly cohorts
Irreverently shuffled in fingered reaches
The paper clip is selected for strange desires
Cursedly stretched out
Without mercy
For fatal purpose
Poked into door knobs
And places where it doesn't belong
Or want to go
Then, tossed away
Naked and horribly stiff
Unable to curl back
Into it's fetal purpose
Yearning for the simplicity
Of it's doubly oblong steely minded memory
Jealous of the immortality
Of the elegantly designed
Yet boastful and brash, brand binder
Which flaunts its mighty grip
Winged by alien steel cousins
Unimaginably strong, proudly black
Mammoth in size
Forcibly functional
Relegating the paper clip
To the minor meeting
Of a mere handful of pages
A file folder's feeble friend
Simply a dutiful reminder
That this goes with that
The safety pin pities the paper clip

Safety Pin 2: Confident, clueless, but not smug

The safety pin pines
Longer than the ruler
Placed at the ready
But seldom touched
Rarely lifted up
And then suddenly swung around sword-like
Slapped at thighs, smacked at flies
The ruler rules over nothing
But the length of things
But just the smallest of things
How long they must be, no more, no less
Both the metric measure of much of the world –
French and artistic, exact only in meter
Blamed for limits the ruler only reports –
And, the imperial measure of the rest of humanity
The English born, entrepreneurs
Proud of their feet, quaint in their dozens
Sizing up their victims, challengers and lords
Where the ruler declares conclusive distances
Of infinite amounts of everything it meets
Within a certain space
Only on occasion
When whim won't work
When "this much" requires more attention
Within the space where meals are eaten
Where books are opened
Where drawings appear
The ruler pines for that particular need
Between reckon and inestimable
Precision between here and there
When guesses don't count
Where halves, quarters, eighths, and sixteenths
Determine that things will fit and function
Both the last word and the first look
The ruler looks up only to the yard stick
Unnecessary, but self evident and stunning
It bemoans, though, the tape measure
It's armored conveyance and annoying convenience
Modernity at the hip of every tradesman
Reaching great distances
Flung back with graceless finality
Calculations undeniably quick

Stated with firm agreement
To both men and women
Children and magicians, all
Watching with bated breath
Shocking in its public display
A marvel rare for a ruler
The safety pin mourns for the ruler

Safety Pin 3: Confident, clueless, but not smug

The safety pin watches the world
As it lies among the shuffle
Of rampant paper clips
Inappropriate in almost every sense
And usually only one lonesome ruler
A name more appropriate for another type of creation
A person, truly in charge
Paper clips, stuck on fragments of the truth
Holding once important things together
Wishing nothing more for itself
Pleasing for a moment
Strung together for a laugh
Blamed for not performing well
When all it can do is so obvious
Causing pains that paper more often produces
Cuts and slices that slide into flesh
When the smooth, calming careens
Of the paper clip means no harm
Makes no demands
Reveals no written words
Merely joins relevant things together
The paper clip is irrelevant
To the gathered things themselves

The ruler lies at the ready
Presenting itself
A finely painted crosswalk without pedestrians
Prone perpendicular, vertical, horizontal or catawampus
The ruler stays steady
For months
Even years
Significant for a moment
Satisfying enough to remain in plain sight

Yet, slid about like a nuisance
A thing too big
Needed to measure things too small
Not often enough, though,
Not unnecessary enough
To be removed
Hidden away
So, sits
Marginalized in plain sight

Safety Pin 4: Confident, clueless, but not smug

Waiting longer than the paper clip,
pining beyond the length of the ruler
The safety pin does not know it is lost
It watches the world from a manufactured premise
That the rips in the universe can be mended
It presupposes damage
Fashion rent asunder, so
The safety pin operates from a position
Tuned to imperfection
Where rulers can't rush
Fix or repair
And paper clips have failed
Miserably, and often
Mostly bedded in cloth
When not lost among the paper clips
Or, slid alongside the ruler, that is
The safety pin belongs among the sewing

All those pins orphaned elsewhere
Are lost to ponder the unsatisfied lives
Of clips and pieces of wood lying about
Marking time between the haphazard opportunity
And the ornamental recognition of their existence
"Oh, there you are," they hear
Banal comments of glanced awareness
No vocal giddiness or expectation
Or anything, really
Here, the safety pin lies odd
Existentially interesting
Potentially useful
Shrugged at

Opened gingerly
Reset carefully
Replaced with chagrin
Not played with like the paper clip
Or tapped like the ruler
The safety pin does not know
Safety requires being clasped

Safety Pin 5: Confident, clueless, but not smug

Safety pins remains orphaned
For the sewing room is too far away
Too much trouble to be moved there
It will never be housed properly
Just set back down
Due to more important tasks
Orphaned again, and again
Unaware that the sewing room
No longer exists
Only a box now holds
Still properly proud safety clips
Among the wondrous threads
Wound about worthy wood
Skewered happily with needles
All surprised that socks
Seem to no longer have holes
Yet, nonchalant, unworried
The boxed lie among friends
Tools of an ancient trade
Relentlessly certain of a revised future
Where sewing survives
They feel gathered
Not ignored
Darkened, not unorganized
Cramped, but comfy in the cushions
Humming, in their own way
Unaware of the larvae
That grows within the wool
And even if they knew
Oh well, it's just the inevitable disintegration
Of what they'll end up repairing

That assured confidence

Sewing room, or box, hubris
Resides in each safety pin
They consider themselves
The great aunt of the paper clip
Inspiration of Vaaler's patent,
Unbeknownst to that clever Norwegian,
Common knowledge to the safety pin
Known also to believe they sprung
From the loin
Of the coiled spring
Dated to the beginning of technology
Days, or so, after the wheel
As legend holds
Rolled, inventing the notion
Of invention itself

Clasped snugly in the head
Of the safety pin
Sits compressed thoughts
Rips will be repaired by only them
Safety names their purpose
When everyone else
Knows but cannot tell the certain
The ones just shy of smug, that
Most of them are orphaned
Sewing rooms have disappeared
Rent cloth horrifies no one
Cloth appears from the east
Upon rolls of wood
Spinning wantonly from machines
Birthed from the very wheels and springs
That safety clips honor
The mechanized creators of cloth are deterred by nothing
Discouraging everything
Associated with cloth repair
For tossed cloth fills the trash
Heaped among the murdered paper clips

Safety Pin 6: Confident, clueless, but not smug

Safety clips conceal their contempt
For they have none
They remain confident

Hundreds of years of warm admiration
Spark the temporary need
Holding fast the manufactured skirt
Adjusting the angry wedding dress
Heralding the winning ribbons
Firemen to the rescue
Safely pinning what needs pinning
As they pine for the ruler
The safety pint rights the waist and midsections
Of kings and queens
Wearing their father's shoes
Singing in the school play
Properly fitting the baptismal gown
Snuggling the cloth diapers
For nostalgic parents
Who charge at windmills they feel at their backs
Ranting at paper diapers in their face

And a few safety pins cheer
Poked just shy of a baby's soft hip
Renewed, fearless and confident
While the vast number
Wait longer than the paper clip
And pine longer than the ruler
Sweetly pondering unfortunate others
As their purpose,
Dependent upon nostalgia,
Unmonitored children dressing themselves
Or, last minute fashion adjustments,
Slowly slips away
Paper clips and rulers will soon join them
Ornaments bound for the museum
And the dump

The smug cell phones, ear buds,
Monitors, tablets and plugs,
Plus cables of every kind
Party along, puffed up
Preposterous and annoying
Ignorant of their even shorter lifetimes

The melting pit awaits them