

# WHERE IS THE RAT?!?

My daughters are having a garage sale today. They've been working it all by themselves (along with their older friend), and it's fun to peek out the window and watch them. They've gotten a lot of customers, and people are buying our old junk and popsicles and some have even donated money just because the kids are so cute. It kept them busy all morning, and things were going great until they went upstairs to get their bathing suits on because they were hot. That's when they noticed that one of our four pet rats was not in his cage! Where do you even begin to look for a missing rat in a house?!?

Not only that, but one of our dogs is a terrier mix and has been yearning to taste a pet rat. We needed to find that rat before the dog did! My oldest daughter is a worrier, so of course she started panicking about her rat – near hyperventilation and everything. I started to look for the rat, but then worse-case scenarios started running through my head – what if it got outside and we never found it? What if it was dead somewhere? What if the kids found it dead? What if no one found it dead and it stank up the house for weeks? What if we couldn't find it and it starved? I went to look under my bed (funny that I thought I saw something running across the floor this morning. I chalked it up to a hallucination caused by lack of sleep which happens to me a lot – I sometimes see my cat running across the floor, and she died over a year ago!), but then I realized that I wouldn't really WANT to find the rat under there. I'm not scared of rats in the slightest, but today I was not in the mood to look under my bed and have a rodent come running at me. As I was debating what to do next, my daughter found the missing rat (Bobby Jack) in her sock drawer. Apparently the sock drawer was a "safe place" for Bobby since the girls have been putting him in there (!), and he likes it. Nevermind their poor,

unsuspecting laundry maid who has rats running all over her work, sigh.

But the good news is the rat is safe and sound. Now we have to figure out how that happened in the first place. My two-year-old admitted to letting the rat out, but my husband thinks she is giving a false confession because she is usually scared to pick up the rats. Hopefully someone let him out and forgot about him and he didn't get out on his own. I am just thankful we locateed the MIA rat before the dog did!

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## Facing Fear

In church as of late, we are in the midst of a pastoral series called Fearless. I am enjoying this series because so far we have been able to study the Biblical story of David and Goliath and also the story of Moses and the Parting of the Red Sea – two stories I've certainly heard about, but hadn't heard the details or about how they relate to modern-day Christianity until now. Last Sunday at church, our pastor told of an amusing story during his Fearless series, and I thought I'd share it. Also in this service, the band accompanied an amazing Bossa Nova / Spanish-style vocal duet unlike anything I've seen in church so far – it was awesome! I can't reproduce the song unfortunately, but here is a summary of the pastor's fun story:

*A beautiful village nestled on the bottom of a valley erupted in flames. All of the surrounding villages' fire engines came to fight the fire, but they all stopped at the top of the hill on the road leading to the burning village in the valley, for they figured the village would not be savable and would only pose a danger to their own firefighters. A rickety old fire*

*truck soon showed up from a distant town, and it didn't hesitate as it crested the hill and rode straight into the valley to fight the fire. The fire was extinguished, the village saved, and there was a grand ceremony of celebration. When the fearless fire department who put out the fire rose to accept their rewards and thanks, the fire chief took the stage. The mayor of the saved village asked him, "What are you going to do with your rewards and with your thank-you money?" The fire chief of that heroic fire department who fearlessly rode down the hill to save the neighboring town said, "The first thing we are going to do is to fix the brakes on that fire truck!"*

The moral of the story? Here's my take: The "fearless" fire-fighters didn't even mean to go into the fire to fight it... But they did just that, and once they got down in the valley accidentally (because of the failed brakes on the fire truck), they faced their fears and conquered that fire, even though they didn't originally intend to and also despite their fears.

The story tied in nicely with our church's Fearless series. And our pastor told us that story, I think, to get our attention and to get us thinking... And that it did.

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## **Decision**

I have been given two choices to choose from at Goodwill. Well, actually three if one really thinks about it. I am either able to stay on as a cashier, move up to head cashier or move into the bak and start sorting clothes. I have already said no to staying a cashier. I need more hours. So that leaves me with head cashier or sorting clothes. I have been told by my boss that either one would be all right for me,

since I am a reliable person, but I really don't know which one would be the best for me.

With being the head cashier, I would be making more money, with the \$.20 increase in pay. I would be working about thirty hours a week, though it could be more, and I would be able to get managerial experience. But there are downsides to this as well. I would not be able to be in choir, most likely because I would be working at least two Sundays a month, I would be working with people more, since I take complaints and stuff like that and I'm still not full time.

Now, with the sorting job, I would be full time, get weekends off and spend all day with Monica. But, unfortunately, I wouldn't be moving around as much, and I would be doing the same thing over and over, which at least up front, I can go from putting away clothes, to helping costumers, and putting things onto the shelves. I would have a job where I would know when I would almost every week. I don't want to say that I would know for sure, since it might vary somewhat from time to time, but it would make hanging out with friends and family a lot easier. I wouldn't have to deal with costumers in the back very often, but that might shove me back into the shell that I had been in before starting at Goodwill.

With both positions I am able to get insurance, which I need. I do not want to choose where I go just because I am able to work with Monica again. I need to choose because that is the best choice for me. I love Monica to death, but I have to be happy with where I am working also. I had hoped that writing this would help me bring my thoughts into perspective and help make my decision easier, but it hasn't. :( I know I don't have a lot of time to choose, so I really need to get this made and quickly. I just have to hope it is the right decision.

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# An extraterrestrial virus killer

All the way from Qo'noS comes something to kill...computer viruses/virii. That's right, today may be a good day to die but we're pretty safe this time as we are not the intended targets of Klingon wrath- the computer virus apparently is. Read about it at it's site: <https://www.sophos.com/klingon-anti-virus/>

Do you suppose they used the [Klingon keyboard](#) to program it? ☐

Even if you think this is a stupid idea (read: you're not a Trekkie), at least go to the site to hear a classic cult piece sung in its original tlhIngan (Klingon). Hilarious!

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## CUBS Vs Sox



I haven't had a chance to blog much, but a few posts ago in my "To Hellinois... .. And Back Again" blog series, I mentioned that I might be partaking in a "very exciting, awesomely fun event" to which I promised, "more on that later".

Now that the event is definite, I am bursting with excitement, so I will share – hubby got us tickets to see the Chicago Cubs play the White Sox LIVE! I've been wanting to go to a Cubs game for awhile (since our last visit to Wrigley in 2004), but last summer was out because I had a baby and unscheduled surgery from which I had to recover. So, June 28 at ~~Comisky Park~~ US Cellular Field, we will venture into Chicagoland once again to cheer on the Chicago Cubs while on the turf of the Chicago White Sox – AWESOME! My mom was nice enough to agree to watch all 4 kids for the day (and the eldest 3 for the rest of the week, BOOLYAH!), and the tickets for the BIG GAME arrived in the mail the other day.

They accidentally got thrown away in the garbage with the junk mail, but LUCKILY hubby was heads up and asked about the whereabouts of the tickets. That's when I realized that I probably had thrown them away – by accident of course! Good thing he asked when he did – the tickets were found not too near the bottom of the garbage and salvaged, thank goodness!

But anyway, I am looking forward to this event like you wouldn't believe. Not only is it **LIVE** baseball, but it's MLB, not AAA or AA. And it's the Cubs I get to go watch, and they're playing the SOX – their arch-rival (especially as far as I'm concerned – I HATE those White Sox!!!). So I would say yeah, even though it's not even 2 months after our last Chicago visit, this visit will be well worth it! So watch for us – we'll be decked out in Cubs gear to be sure to properly invade the South Side Sox turf. The game is at 12:05pm local time on June 28 – the last of a 3-game series between the two teams, so it promises to be that much more exciting! It's scheduled to be shown on WGN, so if you get that channel, check it out, you just might see Taylhis and Co.!

GO CUBS!!!!



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## No Go JOE : (

Well... it is official. I have the results of the audition for the summer production of *Joseph*. I don't know what to feel somewhere between total bewilderment and depression. Not because I do not know what part I might have gotten but that the show was totally cancelled because of "[lack of bodies](#)." I cannot believe that this area does not have enough talent to fill the roles of the show: it has been done in the area at least twice in the past 10 years by two different community theatres. It is just a weird feeling knowing that a show was cancelled BEFORE it was even cast. I just hope that the theatre can put this behind them and move on to their next musical production. I really am upset about this and to say that we should move on and think about the next production is not helping a whole lot because I really did want to be a part of one of my favorite shows and hopefully be in it with one of the best performers and friends I have ever known... but there WILL be another time for that.

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# Doomsday In Smallville

I can accept most things concerning the long, tedious 8 year run of Smallville... For example, character introductions much earlier than acceptable for the sake of increasing ratings. For another, the Incredible Hulk meets Superman interpretation of Doomsday HOWEVER, when viewers have been waiting all season long for what is supposed to be the much-anticipated knockout/dragout battle of Clark Kent's life (still just Clark, no suit, no secret identity except for his moniker of The Red-Blue Blur) and they get next to nothing... well. All season long, the arrival of Doomsday has been announced... even going back to the finale of Season 7. And we get two minutes of less than thrilling spectacle. This creature was supposed to be the end of Superman and it was handled poorly. Sure there was a super catch of a flying automobile, rescuing a small child, a few big explosions, but that was about it... LAME! I had been waiting all season for that.

Oh, yeah. For two years, one of the comics mainstay characters has been a part of the show (even if he was once again one of those aforementioned too early to come to the canvas characters). Jimmy Olsen was killed by Doomsday. At his funeral, we find out that the character's name was Henry James Olsen. The character's younger brother is given his camera. The new character's name? James Bartholomew Olsen: the cub reporter of the Daily Planet. UGH!

Next season, the show is moving to Friday nights which is typically the graveyard of network television. Will I watch? I have my doubts. I enjoy Elsewhere stories as much as anyone, but I see this turn of events as an insult. And on Thursday nights in the 8PM time slot... some teenage angst drama featuring vampires. At least my other favorite show is still looking bright.



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# Misc Kid Updates

My 10 month old's physical appearance is about to change dramatically. Well, first, let me start here – he's been suffering from lethargy, crabbiness, diarrhea, and diaper rash lately. You seasoned parents out there know what I'm talking about – teething! Sure enough, the other day when we were playing and he was upside-down, I saw not one, not two, but THREE little tooth buds on his top gums. Poor little guy. So pretty soon, he will have a *mouthful* of teeth! I just hope that's the end of his awful diaper rash – he's been taking about 3 baths a day; it's one of the things that helps his sore little bottom. And being 10 months old, he's been doing all sorts of other things: climbing stairs, pulling things down, pulling himself up on everything... they grow so fast and it seems that his trouble is just beginning!

His 2-year-old sister, Disney has gotten a Dora the Explorer obsession from somewhere. She wants to watch Dora constantly, and it's so cute to hear her talk back to Dora on the tv – she is even learning Spanish as a result!

And today is their sister Sammie's birthday! She is officially 5! We already had her birthday party, but I think we will take her out to dinner and maybe to the store. She has been a little better behaved lately, but still not as great as she was a few months ago – her behavior comes in waves, I guess. At least we're not stuck in horrible-acting Sammie-ness as a constant any longer – there have been glimmers of hope! She is getting ready for Kindergarten in the fall and has been practicing writing her name. A note about this – she would have aced the writing her name part already if we had just named her "Maps", a word she writes over and over!

Taylor is 9 and almost ready to go to middle school next year. You read that right – where we live, kids go to the middle school for 4th-8th grades. She is VERY responsible with her school work and also when it comes to taking care of their 4 pet rats, so I think she'll do well in middle school. We have noticed an increase in her displaying a poor attitude – typical tween stuff, but I wish my child was somehow exempt. Is there an exemption card I can get for this?

So anyway, there's just been a lot going on with the kids lately, and I wanted to share some things before time passed me by and they moved out of the house before I had a chance to blog it. TIME FLIES!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY SAMMIE!!!!

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## **Waiting Is The Hardest Thing**

Ok... it has been a week and a half since Joseph auditions. Call backs have been called back (although I was informed to not give up hope until the final cast list was posted). As always, I have been trying to focus my attention on other things until last Thursday when another fan was stricken with a heart attack. He was immediately rushed to the hospital, stabilized, and was decided to put stints in. Friday, bleeding continued and by the end of the day, Mr. Z had gone to his heavenly home. Isn't it strange how quickly things happen. It had just been a few days earlier when he was in the store, teasing, asking when a good time to get with my mother for an "ear-lowering appointment" would be, and inquiring about any coming theatrical endeavors. He, his wife, and son frequently sit in the audience of shows. Even going back to school days, I believe that Jason was a freshman when

I was a senior and Elwyn and Jackie were members of the music boosters. I was asked to be on stand-by to sing at the funeral; however, another talented vocalist made the trip from Columbus.

During the service Monday, my mind wandered back to the audition and what was going on there. My mind has not been dwelling TOO much on this show because I know that I have promised to AT LEAST help with the creation of the next show which I have really been looking forward to (maybe even a bit more than Go, Go, Joe). But whatever happens, there is always another show.

May Jackie, Jason and the rest of Mr. Z's family find peace and comfort in the coming days.

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## Tri-State Weekend

We were all over the place this past weekend. I guess it was the nice weather... wait, it rained Saturday!

It started with game night on Friday night – my intentions were to take it easy and end somewhat early so we could rest up for a big day with the kids on Saturday. It didn't end up that way – we began the weekend by staying up too late! But it was a fun game night, kind of a different crowd, so it was interesting to mix it up a little. Our new friend brought presents for the kids to game night, and I can't express enough gratitude – she basically saved game night! Our will-be-5-yr-old-tomorrow Sammie was in a mood, and seeing the new friend (the presents didn't hurt either!) actually got her out of the mood she would have otherwise stayed in all night probably – thanks Mary!

Saturday we were going to take the kids to the Binder Park Zoo in Battle Creek, Michigan. My husband and I (and Taylor in her fetal days) went there in '99, and we loved the zoo. We found out it was only about an hour and a half drive from here, so we decided to check it out. An hour and a half drive doesn't seem like a long time if there's no traffic and the kids are good! Besides, an hour and half drive home after a busy day can sometimes (if we're lucky) cinch the deal and put all 4 of them asleep *for the night*. Well, anyway, it was raining on Saturday. And we didn't want to take 4 kids through an unfamiliar zoo in the rain. So we ended up at Crazy Pinz in Fort Wayne, Indiana. It's a place where they have arcade games, bowling, mini-bowling, mini-golf and the kids' favorite, Ball-0-City – a giant play area with levels and tunnels and balls to shoot at each other. I was really happy when my husband pointed out the Chicago Cubs game playing on the huge tv in the bar. So I stood over there and watched the Cubs wriggle out of a dicey situation – they had been winning 4-0 when all of a sudden, Houston scores 4 in the 9th and ties it up! They also had bases loaded, but the Cubs got out of it somehow and came back with a win in the bottom of a 9th! The bar at Crazy Pinz erupted in a cheer – Cubs fans everywhere! So we stayed there for awhile and then got home late but not too late for us to catch up on watching the season finales of our two favorite tv shows – Lost and The Office.

I guess I should save it for another post, so let's just say we were really happy with the finales of BOTH shows. Lost actually answered a lot of questions that were outstanding, and it can finally be seen how events are starting to come full circle for the characters. Something awesome occurred on the Office, well, it was alluded to anyway, but I think it was obvious what the next *development* is for the Pam and Jim characters. Ahem.

Sunday after church we decided to reclaim our Saturday plans

and head up to Battle Creek to [Binder Park Zoo](#). Sunday was a gorgeous, picture-perfect day weather-wise, and it ended up being a great decision – it would not be fun to tour this zoo in the rain with 4 little kids. The zoo is mostly outdoor, and there is a bit of walking if you want to see the majority of the zoo. You climb aboard a (free) zoo tram that takes you 5 minutes into the wilderness, err Wild Africa as the zoo calls it. But whether it's the wilds of Michigan or the savannas of Africa, the view that awaits you when you arrive in Binder Park's Africa is breathtaking. Beyond the authentic-seeming African village is a wall, and beyond the wall:

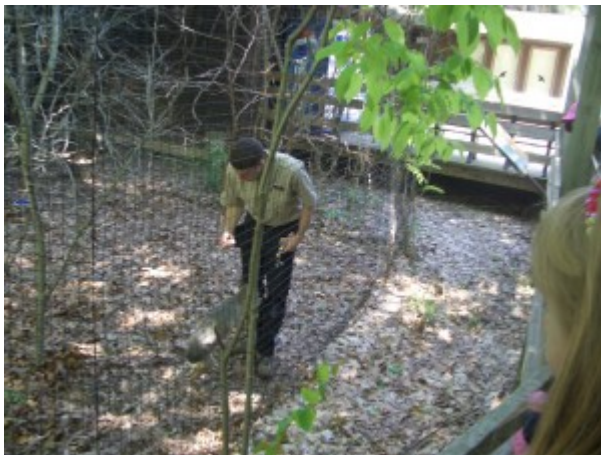


Click the picture to see a larger version – those are zebras and Thomson's Gazelles grazing in the huge pasture. And a clutch of ostrich eggs (real?) on the edge of the exhibit (lower right middle of picture). The giraffes can go out there too, but they are usually over here:



where you can FEED them! It was a

great day at a great zoo, and we even saw an animal I had never heard of – the Patagonian Mara. Fully grown they are about 35-40 lbs. (the one here at Binder Park is 9 mos. old and about half that), and they are rodents most closely related guinea pigs. At Binder Park, the keeper was in the cage with the mara, and she was jumping onto his leg and doing tricks for food – very cool. I didn't get the best picture; there was a tree in the way – again click for a larger pic, maybe you can actually see the mara:



The Binder Park Zoo also has a cute rabbit exhibit where the kids can crawl through a tunnel and end up “in” with the rabbits, a cool children's zoo (housing the happiest Guinea pigs I've ever seen – the first time I've seen Guinea pigs that weren't squealing with fright or freaking out), and a carousel, among other fun things. Here is my son on his first carousel ride:



And two of my 4 happy kids at the zoo:



And my other two riding a giant ant:



So... a great weekend, even if we were never home sweet home. I was going to share my pastor's story he told on Sunday, but this post is long enough, that will have to wait for another post! Until then...