

Thought For The Day

I recently came across this neat story in an article about volunteerism:

There is a story about a man walking along a beach. He notices that the starfish have washed ashore and will soon die in the baking sun. Then the man sees a young child picking up the starfish, one at a time, and throwing them back into the ocean. Noticing the hundreds of starfish and the small size of the child, the man says, "Son, you will never be able to save them all. What you are doing will not make any difference." The little fella looks at the man, picks up yet another starfish, and tosses it back into its saltwater haven. "Matters to that one."



I think this is a cute story that very effectively describes the fears that many people have about volunteering – their heart may be in the right place when they want to help, but then they begin to have doubts, like “I’m just one person, what could I possibly do to help?” or “I don’t have a lot of time, so I probably just shouldn’t bother committing to anything.” The bottom line is, if you have any extra time at all, as little as one hour a week, and you’d like to help others, there is a place in your community that could use and be grateful for your volunteer work. So if it’s something you’ve been thinking about doing, let go of your insecurities,

find someone to answer your questions, and find a place that suits your interests where you can pitch in and lend a helping hand at the same time. Your calling might be at a food pantry, nursing home, animal shelter, community theater, hospital, senior center, community service agency, delivering for Meals on Wheels, etc – the list goes on and on. If you really want to take the time to help others and give back to your community, don't let excuses run your life – just do it!! If you really can't find anywhere to volunteer in your community, try contacting your local churches to see if they have any community programs for which you could volunteer, or perhaps a family in need of some helping hands; you never know what you may find!

More Mental Floss

A while back now, [I made a blog post](#) about a site called mentalfloss.com, which is a collection of interesting, somewhat useless but incredibly entertaining tidbits about pop culture, history, travel, and a bunch of other topics. Here are some links to other articles on mentalfloss I found interesting, and since I collected this list a long time ago and left it in my drafts, forgotten, I went back to check the links. While I was checking, I got so sidetracked on mentalfloss again... their miscellaneous info about anything and everything is really addicting! I collected some of the best ones for you, so that you don't have to risk hours and hours of your free time by going to mentalfloss.com yourself and clicking on link after link after link ☐

See if any of the following capture your interest, and if you make it back here to tangents, leave me comments to tell me what you like!

[An airplane graveyard in The Mojave Desert](#)

[Abandoned hospital in East L.A.](#)

[31 unbelievable high school mascots](#)

[10 unusual playgrounds from around the world](#)

[10 technologies we stole from the animal kingdom](#)

[7 crafty zoo escapes](#)

And last, but definitely not least...

[A collection of videos of dogs welcoming home their soldier owners](#) – this is unbelievably sweet; these are the happiest dogs in the world!!! (I cried)

My Issue (IsSHOE)

I HATE shopping for shoes. For as long as I can remember, I've gotten a pair of shoes and replaced them with the same type of pair when they wore out or when I needed to change sizes – no need to see what went well with my outfits or anything like that for me. It started with some black slip-on Keds that I kept replacing for a few years, then when I played sports I moved on to black Adidas with shoe-strings; followed by some cheapie black velcro shoes from Walmart (when we first got married and were really poor), and finally my black Brahma Bravo boots – each pair of those would last me about 3 winters, and they were great for the summer too. I guess I like black shoes.

So for about a year now, I've had a bit of a shoe issue – they've stopped making the Bravo style of the Brahma boots.

The soles on my current pair of Bravos have been worn down so far on one side of each shoe that water seeps in if its particularly rainy, and my feet ache if I wear my shoes all day – time for new shoes. As I said, I realized this about a year ago now, and that's when I began to search. I thought it was as easy as going to Walmart and picking up a new pair of Bravos, but alas, I can't find them. I scanned the various offerings of work boots, but I just don't want anything with a steel toe, and I certainly don't want to spend more than \$30. And of course black ones would be nice, can't find those either. I put the shoe issue on the back burner all summer last year until winter became inevitable, and I found myself near a Payless Shoe Source in October, so I wandered in and had a look. Sure enough, they had a pair of black boots that fit my fancy **and** my feet – SOLD! I was extremely pleased that my months-long search had culminated in me finding comfortable black boots in my target price range – under \$30, and they were waterproof to *boot*, oh brother...

But not more than a month after purchase, my new boots began to crack – apparently they were SO waterproof that the waterproof shell was just that – a shell; so hard to keep out the water that it couldn't be flexible enough to handle the movement of my feet without cracking. So now winter was really starting to bear down on us, and I was stuck an hour away from any Payless. I lived with the cracking boots all winter, still loving the way they looked and the way they kept my feet warm and dry, but I was also very disappointed. When an awful set of circumstances culminated to basically grind our household to a halt in December, it looked like I was stuck with my boots – didn't have the time nor even the money to get to the faraway land of Payless to exchange the cracking boots.

But then things got better, and we were finally able to afford the time and gas to get to Payless and return the boots. Even though it had been more than 3 months since purchase and the

boots were cracked (though that really wasn't my fault – they shouldn't have cracked within months, err, one month of purchase!), Payless took them back and gave a full refund, no problem. It only took me an hour and half to pick out a replacement pair (I guess I never realized that I might be picky about shoes, but my husband's huffing and puffing at me on that date night made me re-evaluate... a little), but after walking around the strip mall for 5 minutes, I knew these were not going to be my new boots. But I had forgotten to bring a spare pair of shoes with me – uh, oh. My choices were: 1) waste more of date night going shoe shopping until I found the right shoes, then return these awful new boots to Payless, or 2) wear the uncomfortable boots for the rest of the night, then beg my mom (who was coming for a visit that weekend and lived in the vicinity of like, 5 Paylesses) to return the boots for me. I chose option #2 (thanks Mom!), and that's why I've been wearing the years-old Bravo boots with the worn down soles ever since. Every time I get a spare moment; sometimes with the kids, sometimes without, I make it a point to stop in the shoe section of Walmart, Target, Meijer, wherever – to continue the hunt of finding myself a new pair of boots. I've taken home about 3 pair now, but I've been happy with none of them. Now that winter is officially over, I've attempted forgetting about finding boots that will get me through snow and tried downgrading to a good pair of walking shoes, but I've returned at least two pair of those as well – and there is another pair still in the box in my front hall closet, ready to be returned – they just dig into my ankle bone in a way that makes me *crave* high-tops; I can't help it!

The other day, I tried searching online for the Bravo style of Brahma boots, but they only make them in an ugly Wheat color and not even in the half-size I need. I was thinking I could order something on Walmart.com and return it to the store if (when) I didn't like it, but I couldn't even find anything in my price range that would work for me.

So back to my point – I HATE shoe shopping; I loathe it. Many women love it and have a pair of shoes to match every outfit they own. I've always valued myself as different from the average (extravagant) woman in that respect – I'm pretty basic in my wardrobe needs... my husband and I share many clothes actually, and it's not because he wears trendy woman's clothing – I opt for cheap, comfortable men's wear.

But how I would like a nice, inexpensive pair of good (hopefully black) walking shoes (preferably boots, but I'm willing to drop that criteria at this point in my frustrating shoe battle).

Is this really too much to ask?

Shortest Movie Review Ever

Just watched Fight Club – one of the worst movies I have ever seen. I can't believe we wasted over 2 hours of kid-less time on this piece of you-know-what.

The people who voted (yes, all 357,160 of them) for this on imdb.com to give it an 8.8 out of 10 and made it #16 of their top 250 movies of all time should be ashamed – makes me hesitate to be advised by any of their ratings in the future.

I am not going to waste any more of my time writing or thinking about this movie.

Almost Time...

Well, baseball season is almost upon us finally, and I'm really starting to get the itch – not that I'll be able to watch many games anyway since when we're actually home to watch tv it's dominated by Noggin and the Disney Channel... but I can dream, right?

So the other day, I did a search on youtube.com for "Cubs baseball" so I could give my son an early taste of what he'll hopefully enjoy watching with me all summer. I found a gem of a song by Steve Goodman, a grammy-winning artist who passed away from leukemia at the age of 36. Mr. Goodman was a die-hard Chicago Cubs fan his entire life, and sadly, his favorite team never made it to the playoffs during his lifetime. They appeared in the World Series in 1945, 3 years before Goodman was born, and then they clinched the Eastern Division title for the National League in 1984 – securing a place in the post-season just 4 days after Steve Goodman passed away.

I always knew about Steve Goodman from the awesome song, "Go Cubs Go", a song they play at Wrigley Field after every Cubs win. I seem to remember hearing the song over the intercom at the end of a school day one year when I was growing up – principal must have been a Cubs fan...

But anyway, in addition to "Go Cubs Go", Goodman penned and performed other musical works of art; some about the Cubs, some about Chicago, and some about neither. Here is the one I found today and enjoyed, however bittersweet its title and message "A Dying Cubs Fan's Last Request". I chose to post this version of it, rather than the one that shows Steve Goodman singing it on the rooftops of Wrigley – that's just too sad.

And just so that this post doesn't end on a down note, here is the old favorite "Go Cubs Go" – let's hope this is the year the Cubs make Steve Goodman proud!

Night Of Nightmares

Last night, I had the worst dream I've ever had in my life. I didn't realize it was a dream while I was having it, but I remember waking myself up on purpose anyway – it's difficult to explain, as many aspects of vivid dreams usually are.

The gist of it was – a member of my family (who in real life has been estranged from the family for 25+ years) was buckling my kids into her car for a sleepover. She began doing so at a frantic pace, which alarmed me, so I called it off. But before I could do anything, she was pulling out of my driveway with the kids, and I was screaming at her that this amounting to kidnapping and I was calling the police. She didn't stop. My two older girls found their way home, but she still had my younger two – they're 3 years and 20 months. Meanwhile, the pre-planned game night at our house (but it didn't look like our house) was beginning to take shape as guests were arriving. A friend from college (who I haven't seen since) shows up with my cousin (the kidnapper's daughter) as his date, and she is sullen and seems really angry. We manage to get out of her that her mother hasn't been herself lately and somehow come to the conclusion that she is intending to commit a murder / suicide. Where the police were at this point, I don't know, but for some reason, I couldn't go out and look for them myself, and I was inconsolable. It was the most helpless, panicky, horrible feeling I could imagine, and I had to watch my parents watch their daughter go through this as well – the whole thing was just awful. Even though I didn't know it was a dream, I squinched my eyes shut and woke up – thank goodness. It was one of those where I woke up out of

breath, my eyes darting around my bedroom. I realized it had all been a dream, and I suppressed the urge to get up and have a reassuring look at my kids – what good would it do to interrupt their sleep? Besides they'd be getting up soon enough – I could see the light starting to come in through the window. But when I looked at the clock, it was only 1:45 am! What the heck? I had felt like I had a full night's sleep! For once (and I honestly can't remember the last time I felt like this) I felt well-rested and actually *wanted* to get out of bed – and I didn't want to put myself in the position to have another horrible nightmare. So I laid there and mentally composed my blog post depicting my terrible dream, and I was able to fall back asleep. The dream I had next was actually quite a comical episode involving a (non-threatening) alligator in a restaurant. When my alarm went off hours later, I was back to normal – tired as can be, not ready to get up...

There must have been something going on last night because my 5-year-old told me about a nightmare she had had involving a circle of chicken pox.

So was that light coming into my room at 2 in the morning the light of a full moon? Do full moons cause nightmares or vivid dreams? I know my family and friends in law enforcement tell me that they are extra busy and have some of their most interesting calls on full moon nights, but now I remember driving home last night and seeing the moon – and it wasn't full. So why was it so bright in my room last night? Most nights I can't see without my flashlight, but last night I could see easily – I had just assumed it was the sun rising until I looked at the clock... that one's a mystery that remains unsolved.

I have some guesses as to where certain parts of the dream came from – I had been reading *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* before I went to bed. Could my dream have been my own version of a boggart (a magical creature from the series

which is a shape-shifter that takes the form of its intended victim's worst fear – ie, something bad happening to my kids)? And I was listening to an old Don Williams song in the car yesterday ([If You Could Read My Mind](#)), which reminded me of a time when I was a little kid and Don Williams was playing as we were heading to my aunt's house (the kidnapper in my dream). I don't know why my college friend suddenly appeared or why he was dating my cousin, but the game night significance could come from the game night we have scheduled for tomorrow... just a few theories; I think the bottom line is obvious – dreams are WEIRD!!!

(and this is unrelated – but as I was looking for the Don Williams song, I came across this wonderful version of [In The Ghetto](#) by both Elvis and his daughter Lisa Marie Presley – a posthumous duet. I've made my youtube references as links in this post rather than videos so as not to force anyone to watch/listen to anything if they don't want to)

Triangle

Here we go, another movie review – have you seen or even heard of a movie called Triangle (2009)? It's not a mainstream movie; it only got about 5,000 votes on imdb.com

But my husband and I watched it the other night, and we both really enjoyed it – so much that I found it worthy of a little blog post.



So where do I start... because as a reviewer on imdb.com so eloquently said:

How to talk about "Triangle" without giving anything away? It's a puzzle equal to that which the movie presents its audience because this isn't your standard horror movie.

I think that is very true about this movie – it's one of those that is a puzzle all the way through, and while many of these types of movies end up disappointing me in the end, Triangle is the exception. It's a movie where I could see the viewer getting more and more out of it each time he or she watches it, and I will definitely try watching it again. If you're interested in a real puzzle of a movie, check out Triangle – but **don't** read too much on imdb.com about it first. And especially, **DO NOT** watch the trailer. It's better to watch it going in cold; knowing almost nothing about it, which is why I didn't say much in this "review". I will only say that I recommend it as a very different type of movie-watching experience. After you've seen it, you will want to read as many discussion boards about Triangle as you can; it's really interesting to ponder the... well, just see it, then we can talk ☐

And one more interesting thing about Triangle – as I was reading the discussion boards, I came across comparisons between Triangle and an old poem called [The Rime of the](#)

[Ancient Mariner by Samuel Taylor Coleridge](#). It seemed very strange to me that I had completely forgotten that I read The Rime of the Ancient Mariner way back when in school until I was reading about it the other day, which is when details of its plot flashed in my mind like déjà vu – an interesting thing to happen, considering the themes of the movie Triangle...

The New One

Last week, my daughters were playing outside when I heard a bunch of shouting. Since I was heading out anyway – just had to put on the little guy's shoes – I brought him out barefoot and began to work on the shoes outside. That's when I realized that all of the shouting was because my daughter had found her friend from Kindergarten, but since neither of them were allowed to cross the street, they had been shouting across the street to each other. Now that mom was outside, I took my daughter across the street to play with her friend, and her mom came out – which is when we realized a church friend is also our neighbor! So I took the kids for a walk, and we set up a play date for later in the week. After the play date, my daughter was telling us about her friend and what she said was so cute – “My friend Chloe is moving to Mexico – the new one.” Chloe did indeed say that she is moving to New Mexico, but it's not really wise to believe rumors started by 6-year-olds. Until her mom says something to us, we will continue to enjoy Sammie having a friend just a block away, even if eventually she has to move to “Mexico – the new one”. □

Night Of The Hunter

We recently came upon an old horror movie (1955) called [Night of the Hunter](#). And if you've noticed, I don't really write movie reviews anymore – I watch a lot of movies and there is too much other stuff going on in my life... but Night of the Hunter is surprisingly intriguing for a black-and-white horror flick, so I want to recommend it.



In Night of the Hunter, a little kid named Johnny is left with an incredibly adult responsibility when his father is arrested for robbing a bank and killed in prison – Johnny must now take care of his little sister Pearl and hide the stolen money – never to tell anyone where it is. Johnny's father talks in his sleep in prison, and his insane cellmate learns of the money and the kids. The cellmate, played by Robert Mitchum, dons the personality of a preacher and manages to charm the children's mother into making him their new stepfather, even though he is only interested in the hidden treasure. What follows is a riveting cat-and-mouse game between the children and the bad guy, and while old-fashioned, the movie managed to become quite an intriguing horror / suspense film. I would share the trailer since they have it on youtube, but apparently the producers were attempting to attract a different type of audience as the trailer plays up the very few sexual aspects of the film – which really isn't representative of the film at all; the trailer completely misrepresents the film and that's why I'm not going to show it. There was good acting, great directing, and talented camera shots and cinematography that really helped to heighten

the suspense. Some of the characters are incredibly old-fashioned (a friend of the childrens' mother tells her that she "can't raise those children without a man", suggesting that she find a man, ANY man to help her – this idea is completely irrelevant in today's society where single moms are commonplace), but it's easy and kind of fun to transport yourself back in time in order to sympathize and begin to understand the plight of these characters. The movie is set in the Depression era; a time when kids were often more of a financial burden than their parents could handle. In many cases, it was thought to be best for them if they were left to take care of themselves, often before they were teenagers. This aspect of the movie also explains Johnny's determination to take care of his little sister, as well as to explain other events in the movie that are best to be left unsaid here – I certainly don't want to spoil anything. Overall, Night of the Hunter is a riveting, classic horror movie experience that effectively transcends the decades-long gap between its release and modern horror movies – which all too often rely on blood, violence and gore to entertain.

After watching the movie, I looked up the actors on imdb.com, and I was surprised to learn that young Johnny is played by Peter Graves – a popular actor best known to me as Capt. Clarence Oveur in the Airplane! movies. It was quite novel to see him in a movie as a kid when I was familiar with his later-in-life acting roles... And I was also surprised to see that the childrens' mother was portrayed by the late Shelley Winters, an actress that I knew best as Roseanne's Nana Mary on the 90's sitcom Roseanne – no wonder I didn't recognize her nearly 40 years earlier!

And a final note – Night of the Hunter is based on a novel, one I will have to add to my 'books to read' list... er, make that my 'books to read if I ever finish the Harry Potter series' list. □

Crazy Prices!

We live a little over an hour outside of Toledo, Ohio, so it's the 'big city' we visit for extra shopping, better restaurants, and of course, the zoo. We've discovered a little cafe just north of the Ohio toll road called [Nick's Cafe](#), and they have GREAT food (including Greek selections – YUM!!) that comes in HUGE portions at very reasonable prices. Just thought I'd give them a plug since the place is never hopping when we're in there and I would HATE to see them go out of business... Anyway, next to Nick's (well, there is an abandoned honky-tonk bar between them called Bootleggers) is an old Frank's Nursery and Crafts building that recently opened up as something called Crazy Prices. The first time we noticed it, we were too tired to check it out, but last week we had enough energy left to go in, and it's awesome! They have a variety of wares, from groceries and household items to furniture and clothing, all at discounted prices. Like any store like this, some things you have to be careful about since there might not be much of a discount, but when we went, they had a special sale – 50% off ALL grocery items!! We ended up with about 4-64 oz. bottles of juice for the kids, lots of snacks and granola bars for school lunches, and a whole bunch of other stuff for around \$21! Plus, they give each kid a little squirt gun as a prize for "being good and letting mom and dad shop", and they also give you a wooden token for each \$5 spent – the token is good for \$5 off your next purchase of \$10 or more! We will definitely be back! There is also a location in Bowling Green, and [if you go to their website](#), they don't mention the Toledo location but it's there on South Reynolds, just north of the tollway. Better yet, we learned that this is a Christian organization! Their mission statement: *The Vision of Crazy Prices is to see a*

chain of discount retail stores providing income to an ever-growing list of organizations that are supporting young people, many of whom are hungry and hurting, emotionally, physically and spiritually.

If you are in either the Bowling Green or Toledo Ohio areas and you like clearance shopping (my husband can't get enough – we spent over an hour here last weekend and he wants to go back this weekend – no complaints out of me, I like to clearance shop too AND this gets me yet another trip to the zoo!!), check out Crazy Prices!