

# Outbreak

The flu season is upon us, and it's obvious. In our family, we are teetering between two outbreaks of illness. Last week, it was hand, foot, and mouth disease (not to be confused with its fear-provoking counterpart, foot and mouth disease, which is only found in animals). The kids had little bumps on their hands, and a general feeling of being unwell, known as malaise as I learned on the internet. This is an extremely common (in children anyway) viral illness that usually runs its course in most kids. When my mouth erupted in sores last week (it's like having 10-20 large canker sores at the same time), I was shocked because it's supposed to be very rare in adults. We contacted 3 different health professionals to make sure that our trip to Illinois could go on as scheduled, and they all assured us that if there was no fever, we were not contagious. We ventured across the state of Indiana, and I don't know if I was more fearful of what we were bringing with us or what we were going to take home, what with the many recent flus reported in Illinois and elsewhere, H1N1 and otherwise.

More on the really great parts of the trip in the next blog post – I need to get this out of my system so to speak, haha – a sick post and a fun post. So for the sick part...

My husband woke up today feeling awful – the flu. My morning started pretty much like the past 2 or 3 mornings now – tremendous pain in my mouth, worse than the day before. One of my favorite things about visiting the Chicago area is the food – despite the city's drawbacks: the aggravating traffic, the inflated prices, CROWDS; Chicagoans do have a talent for their intolerance of crappy Sysco food – ie, Chicago food is fantastic! Last week, anticipating our upcoming trip, I remember thinking that it was only Wednesday, surely my mouth would heal by Friday so I could indulge in some of my favorite Chicago treats. But alas, Thursday's pain was worse than

Wednesday's, and Friday's was worse than Thursday's. Actually, as I said before, it's gotten worse every day since it started. Somehow, I was miraculously able to enjoy my [Italian beef sandwich](#) Friday night, but pain-wise things just went downhill from there. We had a wonderful breakfast at the [Uptown Cafe in Arlington Heights](#), quite possibly the best breakfast restaurant *in the country*. They have the best eggs benedict I've ever had, but unfortunately I came very close to sinfully wasting my eggs benedict when I could not eat them (let alone carry on a conversation with relatives) without my eyes watering from the pain in my mouth. My little boy saved me from wasting half my order ( I knew I should have gotten soup or at least a half order of eggs benedict, but I literally could not resist – we get to this place less than once a year!) – but my toddler ate *half* my eggs benedict – he is his father's son!

The weekend ended with my sister making us wonderful homemade lasagna, of which I had about 5 small very painful bites. I did not try any of the appetizers, the steamed vegetables, the salad, the garlic bread, or any of the desserts ☐

I also did not get my usual crave case of White Castle cheeseburgers to bring back to Ohio, although generous relatives supplied us with some Chicago beef for sandwiches, homemade soup and Grammy's out-of-this-world homemade spaghetti sauce, all frozen and ready to be thawed as soon as I'm better! Talk about something to look forward to!!!

We ventured home at 2 am this morning, and arrived safely, however painful (and tiresome for my husband) the ride home. And a special thank you to Officer Friendly of the Ohio State Patrol, who did not issue even a warning for my husband's "hovering around 60 in a 55." I'm glad he seemed to take the 4 sleeping kids and the grumpy wife in the passenger seat into consideration – this police stop was completed very quickly and only blocks from our house.

This morning I awoke in a lot of pain, and it's gotten worse

throughout the day. I think if it continues its trend and gets even worse tomorrow, I'm going to have my husband call the doctor to make an appointment. I am so thankful that my kids seem to be over it, and as horrible as it's been for me, I'm still happy I got the most of it in the family. I pray for my husband, and I'm really nervous about swine flu, but he seems to be feeling better, unless he's just putting on a braver face than I. This illness for me has been characterized by bouts of severe pain sandwiched between constant regular pain. In the past hour, twice that I've talked brought on the most severe bouts of pain and was enough to make me start typing on the computer and making my husband read it in order to communicate. Whatever works, it's amazing how easily the threat of tremendous pain can train a person to keep her mouth closed (like [Pavlov's dog](#)). My husband joked that it's the "shut-up disease". That brought a smile; it doesn't hurt to smile – just the talking, eating, drinking, and sleeping. And that reminds me, being in constant pain has made me an insomniac. I couldn't sleep in Illinois at our hotel and ended up listening to an hour-long Larry King interview with Suzanne Somers – even that did not put me to sleep. Did you know that Suzanne Somers never actually had cancer even though 4 different doctors told her to get her affairs in order because they had mis-diagnosed her? That's a tangent that doesn't need to be taken...

Well, anyway, that's enough from me for now. Sorry about the rambling, but this really sucks, and typing is my voice right now. Hubby is watching the Bears game, so it'd just be rude of me to constantly interrupt by making him read my ramblings. I wish I could take care of my husband while he's sick, but for now we're helping each other. Let's really hope this gets better – if I have to go to the doctor, I can't tell them what's wrong with me because I can't talk, and I don't really want to bring my family with me to the doctor's – who knows what else we could get?!? I guess I'd have to write a note, but I feel kind of silly...

A real Halloween horror treat tonight would be for us to watch the movie [Outbreak](#) – now that’s just T00 scary!!!

At least we have a good part of a week to whip these things and get ready for fun Halloween activities abound next weekend! Super-fun blog post about the awesome parts of the Illinois trip – including haunted house ratings! – to follow this depressing post, I promise!

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## Highway Tuneage

Our two day Chicagoland adventure began yesterday around 1PM when Mare and I hopped onto the ‘pike and headed west. It was amazing to me how fast we flew there. We arrived at our hotel around 3PM (according to my chauffeur’s cell phone time... she did not realize that her device automatically accounted for the change in time zones).

Our journey was seemingly made even more quickly with our listening variety. I brought along my *Carousel* Score. Mary I believe said that she played the part of Cousin Nettie Flower in a production of one of my favorite musicals back in the early part of the decade. REALLY! WHERE WAS I when they staged it?! Then, we popped in some Josh Groban and by that time we were very close. So... we let “Vera” guide us the rest of the way. Little to no traffic. Surprisingly, very little construction on our side of the highway. A very fun, easy trip.

Coming back, Megan joined us on the return trip. We made a slight detour to South Bend and took a drive-by tour of the perimeter of Notre Dame. Since it was rather rainy and a home football game, a more close up tour was out of the question. We did get a glimpse of the golden dome and Touchdown Jesus.

Very fun!

One of the most interesting music selections in Mare's catalog was a CD of [Beatles](#) hits recorded by some interesting actors. Imagine Robin Williams and Jim Carey giving voice to "Come Together" and "I am the Walrus". There were lots of very interesting Beatles classics including a strangely bluesy rendition of "Hard Day's Night" by an even more interesting actress choice who none of us could figure out was Goldie Hawn. But no recording of the classic William Shatner take on "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds." A very fun if at times a bit strange tribute.

All in all, a very fun trip on the road. Stay tuned for my take on the big fun in the city.

The final selection on the Beatles tribute was by the best Bond that seemed a bit odd because he stated his dislike of the Fab Four in *Goldfinger*.

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## Westward, H0!

OK... Mare and I will soon be on our way to the state of ILL in America Country. I have Vera loaded up with directions along with mapquest printed directions, hotel check in sheet, and printed tickets (Justin Case), and cell phone. Mare had to work last night and just called and told me she would be here soon! WHH0 HHH0000!

Last night's audition went well. I listed all the male roles I could think of (the adult ones, anyway ). I still think I could pass as one of the Bailey children. I did forget another role, that of Mr. Martini who is an Italian immigrant who has a traveled to America with his a wife. That a could a

be fun!

Lots of people came out. LOTS of kids. Squirmy and his daughter came up and he read well. But Jade... OMG... if ever there was a heartwarming, scene stealer... I think it would be very hard to find a more adorable Zuzu. Results Sunday night. Read-through hopefully next Thursday.

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## **If You Are A Happy Green Grape And You Know It**

This morning, after she got out of preschool, my four-year old niece brought home a song to sing called "I Wish I Were A Juicy Green Grape." Sydney ran to me and asked me to sing it.

It is set to the tune of "If You're Happy And You Know It." Really, the exercise in song parody was not an easy one. My dad kept trying and sounded like he was singing The Oscar Meyer weiner song. See if you can make the melody fit the words"

OH, I wish I were a juicy green grape.

OH, I wish I were a juicy green grape.

When squeeze me

I will squirty

Onto everyone's shirty

Oh, I wish I were a juicy green grape.

Of course, this presupposes that you know the tune and words of "If You're Happy and You Know It." In elementary school, I

remember having such an exercise in which I came up with a parody of “White Christmas” entitled “(I’m Dreaming of a) Cheese Pizza.” How adorable.

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## Partially immersed

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If the characters above got rendered properly in your browser you should see Japanese writing. The proper response for me would be, say what? Of course, if I knew what that said the real response should be:

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Sorry, I guess you probably don’t know Japanese either. The first question was, “Do you speak Japanese?” The response was, “No, I do not speak Japanese.” When encountering a Spanish-speaking classroom, I always start with, “No hablo español, solamente inglés.” (I don’t speak Spanish, only English). It’s fun to see the kids’ reaction, especially if I add a little bit more from my severely limited Spanish vocabulary. With Japanese, I can’t even begin. Three times in the space of two weeks I found myself in dual language classrooms- twice for Japanese, once for Spanish. What kind of class is this you may ask? I will answer. Once upon a time the way to teach kids a foreign language was to offer it as an elective in high school. Then, someone learned that the best time to learn new languages was as a young child, so they added the classes to the junior high curriculum (in some cases making kids take five different ones in sixth grade!). This trickled down to intermediate grades with one language twice a week like gym. Still not happy, the powers-that-be started dual-language classes allowing children as young as six to start learning a different language, and that is where we are today. In such a class, the younger grades slowly learn the language, and then they start instructing in that language as

they get older for a sort of immersion experience. In the Japanese class, this means that for the entire afternoon teachers and students use only Japanese. The teaching assistant took over this duty of course since I would be unable to converse in or even understand Japanese. It was an experience not unlike working in a deaf classroom as I have done before, but knowing that I could converse with the students in English when necessary. This was sixth grade, so they were on their sixth year of this. They seemed pretty proficient to me- having read Japanese books for starters and giving a book report in Japanese. When it came time for me to instruct, however, we all went back to English.

The Spanish class was 4th grade, so they weren't as proficient in their second language as 6th grade was in theirs. There were no book reports or the like in Spanish, though of course it could have just been the day. When trying to read the Spanish social studies book, it became clear many did not understand very well. Unfortunately I did not have a Spanish-speaking assistant at this time as I did for Japanese. When math time rolled around, the Spanish-speaking assistant finally arrived and I expected she might take over for a bit, but she didn't so we did the subject in English as I could do little more than the numbers and operations in Spanish. As it turned out it was probably a good thing we did it in English as they had a difficult enough time with the topic in their primary language.

So what's next, dual language French? Italian? I guess I may find out. It's odd that this is the first year I have been in this sort of classroom in all my years of subbing. Bilingual and regular foreign language classes yes, but not dual-language. This may mean then that the chances of doing it again are somewhat remote, so we'll see.

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## **Rain, rain, go away**



Winter I'm told is the hardest part about this car job, but after this last month I'm really starting to wonder. Was there this much rain last year? I mean, day after day for the last five weeks with only a few days rest from it. I can only hope that this gets the precipitation over with so I don't have to brush off cars so much this winter, but I know that's just a pipe dream. Some more days like yesterday would be nice, but unfortunately the forecast for the next few days calls for more of you-know-what. Sigh. Fortunately by evening the chance currently shows about 30% so just maybe our haunted house hopping event won't be too soggy.

Today just really got me down. First was the slow trip east toward the city to a dealer where I had a whole two cars for my 40-min. trip. Took me two hours too due to having to drive the cars to the warehouse- something only this dealer requires, along with the garage where some of the lights don't work so I have to take more pictures just to get good ones. Additionally I had to wipe down the wet cars before I could take pictures of them. \$7 an hour- isn't that below minimum wage? Next stop, two cars again but at least it went much quicker. As I approached my final destination, the rain decided to fall without a break until after dark so I ended up taking pictures with an umbrella in the other hand (this place doesn't mind the cars being wet in the photos). I only got to three of the cars before I had to quit. Actually, I did the other half of the job with entering the car data and making stickers for all seven I had to do while waiting in vain for a break in the rain, but since I didn't do the photos yet I couldn't charge them yet. I may be able to get to them Monday when I'm there next, but only if they don't sell them.

Oh yes, to top it all off, I forgot to return a key to one of the other dealers so I had to stop back there on the way home. At least it was the closer one, not the further heavy-traffic one. I don't think I would generally use this outdated phrase, but it's starting to look like this job is



I have to admit though, one of the most exciting parts for me is going with [my wife](#) and friends to some Illinois haunted houses!! I love being scared (\*when it isn't REAL) and I love spending time with my friends. So I am just totally psyched! I wish my friend [John](#) could make it, but I will **make him come** NEXT TIME!!

Anyway, this post is not about my trip. It is about being scared. And I saw a movie on Tuesday that totally freaked me out!

My wife and I went to see [Paranormal Activity](#), the SUPER-HYPED low budget horror film that has been causing people to lose sleep at night. We also saw [Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs](#); the kid's flick.

*Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs* FREAKED ME OUT!

Paranormal Activity was umm... Baby-Diapie-Smell-Like-Poopy! It stunk bad. I have never been so disappointed in a movie in my life. I was really hoping to get a good scare but ended up being something I rarely ever am in a movie – BORED! This movie is all hype, no bite. I think some teens convinced each-other this was real or something (ala Blair Witch) but... The hour and a half running time of this movie felt like 3 hours! I was never once held in much suspense nor was I worried for the main characters. I was just bored. I give this an IMDB rating of 2.3 – AWFUL!

Now... I have weird food phobia. I freak out at the thought of food on skin. Yes, I know – weird. But when gobs of eggs, meatballs, and nacho sauce (yes, a guy was BATHING IN IT!) fall from the sky – YAAAHHH!!! This was a scary, scary, scary and disturbing movie. I do NOT want to go to the ketchup-and-mustard haunted house!!!!

So Cloudy = Cute for Kids – Scary for Food Phobics

Activity = You be Better Off Playing Monopoly VS. Yourself

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# A time to watch the night

This weekend seems to be a big astronomy shindig. The event is called [Galilean Nights](#). This is in honor of Galileo. Sidewalk astronomers around the world will be out letting people look through their scopes to see the Moon, Jupiter or some other bright evening object.

The site above has a link to find some sidewalk astronomy locations. The closest places to this neck of the woods will be Bowling Green Ohio, Sylvania Ohio and Fort Wayne Indiana. If my youngest agrees, I may be in Fort Wayne.

In case you wondered, a sidewalk astronomer is somebody who sets his/her telescope out on the sidewalk. They hope people will stop and share the evening sky with them.

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# Switching Planets

This year, I've decided to join my local MOPs group (Mothers Of Preschoolers). We've only had two meetings, but so far, I really like it. At this last meeting, we had a video speaker who discussed the move between "Planet Me" and "Planet Mom". It was discussed how important it is for moms to maintain some of their personality traits and hobbies, even though time might be lacking. After all, as the video pointed out, the word "Mommy" sounds like "Mom" and "me" put together. After the video, one of the discussion questions was "What are some of the activities you gave up when you moved from Planet Me to Planet Mom?" Most of the women at my table agreed that we can

no longer do our crafts, but we didn't really have time to be more specific. The crafts I used to enjoy before I really lost the time for them were oil painting and Legos. True, I don't really have a natural artistic knack, but I would get those paint-by-number kits (back when they were a little bit higher quality than they seem to be nowadays); I would complete them and they'd turn out so pretty that I'd hate to have to tell people that I painted-by-number.

Another thing I enjoyed before I had kids was sorting and building with my extensive Lego collection I amassed over the years. It took just one curious toddler to make me abort that hobby, and the Legos got packed away years ago when my oldest began to toddle. Little pieces are the most fun part of the collection, and we couldn't risk her putting those little pieces into her mouth or who-knows-where-else. So I packed away the Legos, and somehow the entire collection followed me throughout our moves around the midwest and resides with me today, albeit packed away in the basement. There hasn't been a shortage (blessfully) of little ones in our house for the past 10 years, so the Legos probably won't see the light of day for at least a few more years – gotta wait until the little dude is old enough to play rather than destroy or get hurt with them. So let it be known that I miss my Legos, but I am thankful to still have them and even to be adding to the collection whenever I can catch a cool set on a great sale – usually after Christmas. Many empty-nesters turn their kids' bedrooms into something of their choosing when the kids grow up and move away, like a gym, an office, or a rec room, but I already have plans for a Lego studio, where I hope to one day be able to build super-cool things like this:



I'd also like to build a replica of my house as well as a local historic building:



Now that would be cool, but very difficult. But if I had more time, the sky is the limit! My favorite sets are house or city-themed sets, and I also really like vintage Lego sets. Does anyone remember [Fabuland](#)? It was a series of more colorful Lego sets that featured animals as characters rather than the popular and better known Lego "mini-figs".

Just because I don't have the room now to be able to spread out and work with my Lego collection, doesn't mean that I can't look at cool things other people have built online, especially now that I've officially and publicly declared myself a dork on my blog!