

Alpha Dog

Saw the movie [Alpha Dog](#) last night. It wasn't really my kind of movie, and the only reason I really enjoyed it is because it's based on a true story... and unlike many movies which claim to be based upon true stories, this one was actually pretty accurate.

It's about a spoiled rich kid named Johnny Truelove (based upon the real-life story of Jesse James Hollywood which is his real name, believe it or not) who is a drug dealer but because of his small size and tremendous influence, entices his friends to do his bidding for him. A former childhood friend of his owes him money for drugs, and they are now enemies because of this and some other incidents. So, Johnny happens across his nemesis' younger brother, and he kidnaps him for ransom of the drug money owed. Something goes awry, and the innocent teenager ends up dead, and after four years on the run and a few appearances on America's Most Wanted, Truelove/Hollywood is captured and now awaiting trial.

So-so action movie, lots of violence and graphic language, especially from the mouth of Justin Timberlake who is surprisingly not a bad actor. But I cringe for the little girls and their parents if there are any who watched this movie just because he was in it because some of the things that came out of his mouth... whew!

And both my husband and I found it hard to believe that there is this kind of culture going on, whether in California or elsewhere, where entire families are caught up in the drug culture, parents and kids alike. At one point in the movie, a teenage girl goes to her mom for help because she is upset about the kidnapped "stolen boy" as they call him, and the mother turns her away, saying that she is x-ing (on the drug ecstasy) right now and can't even understand what she's saying if she wanted to. Does this really happen? Probably... but

it's probably not as widespread or as well-masked as this film would have you believe.

Hubby and I agreed that the movie was entertaining, but it wouldn't be a re-watcher for us. And the only reason either one of us really enjoyed it is because it was so closely based on the true crime story what happened to the innocent 15-year-old victim Nick Markowitz.

Hunger and Boredom

Took my 3-hour glucose "challenge" today, and since it was SO fun for me (sarcasm adundant), I thought I would spread some of the 'cheer' by giving you a run-down of what this medical test entails.

First, why do they call it a glucose challenge? To provide extra motivation, maybe? Whatever the reason, I think they should change the name because glucose challenge makes it sound like I was there to run a relay or something. But the glucose challenge is quite the opposite. It requires that you sit at the medical office for 3 hours and do nothing. Literally. Sure, you can read or sew or Sudoku, but you are not supposed to get out of your chair with the exception of donating a vial of blood every hour. The test is given to pregnant women to determine whether or not they have gestational diabetes, which is when the pregnancy hormones block the body's production of insulin, which will make blood sugar skyrocket and potentially lead to a large baby. Since I've had the condition for 2 of my previous pregnancies, I just might be a glucose challenge expert by now. My husband wanted to know why couldn't I just skip the one hour test and go right for the 3 hour test since we both knew that I would

fail it since I am craving sweets and I've failed my last two 1-hour tests. (MAJOR chocolate malt craving the other night, by the way. If I do have the diabetes, it will stink to have to fend off one of those cravings with sugar-free chocolate... somehow it's just not the same.) The Dr. wasn't down with skipping right to the 3 hour test though, so lucky me, I've had to do them both.

Sure enough, I failed my 1 hour, which is why I got to spend my whole day at the doctor's office waiting to get poked with a needle today. And that's not even the funnest part. They make you fast from 10pm the night before until whenever your test is over, which for me wasn't until 1:30 this afternoon! They were a little late on my last blood draw, and I was on the verge of wreaking havoc in the office when they finally called me in. Luckily, my daughter had gone to school with the nurse's daughter a few years ago, so she recognized me and noticed the desperate look in my eyes, otherwise I think they might have forgotten about me. One more minute, and I was going to carry out my plan to go to my car and scavenge for crumbs my kids left behind on the road trip to Illinois. Luckily, it didn't come to that, but asking a pregnant lady to go without food for over 12 hours is a pretty brave thing to do!

I forgot to mention that for 3 days prior to the test, they put you on a special diet. I was like, oh great, here we go, but when I got the diet paper home and looked at it, the diet actually turned out to be the best part! For 3 days, I was under *doctor's orders* to load up on carbs, eat anything I wanted, and to *make sure* that I ate dessert with both lunch and dinner. No problem, mission accomplished!

And a final note, before I take a nap, since they literally drained the energy from my body today in 3 separate installments... they have a new flavor of the glucose drink you have to drink. It used to be just orange, which tasted like orange pop, but today I was offered a cola flavored one also.

So I chose the new one because, what the heck, you only live once, and I've had the orange one more than a few times by now. Which brings me to a question I have: if there is 50g of dextrose in these little drinks, why don't they taste better? It's not like they taste bad (the orange ones anyway), but shouldn't something that is basically liquid sugar taste a little better? I can think of probably about 50 things that would taste much better and have lots of sugar in them. Why don't they let me binge on candy and desserts before the glucose test instead of downing that drink? And if I do have gestational diabetes, is it really the best thing for my body to be ingesting all this sugar just for them to test me? And what do they need a whole vial of blood for every hour? I am beginning to feel like someone's science project! I guess doctors know best, even though sometimes it's hard (downright impossible for people like my husband!) to put your trust in them. But back to my point... if you ever have to take this test, I would stay away from the cola flavored glucose drink. It's not very good, and every time I think about drinking it, I feel nauseous! It reminds me of the 'flat cola' remedy my mom recommended one time when I was sick as a kid. I felt like I was going to throw up, even though I hadn't, so she had heard somewhere that I should drink flat cola. We just happened to have some in the house, so I tried it, promptly vomited everything up, and couldn't look at cola for months. And I still remember it. Sorry Mom... that one just didn't work ☐

Preparing students for middle

school?

When subbing for a regular classroom teacher in an elementary school one would expect to have the same class for at least *most* of the day, granting of course switching for math which is common in the intermediate grades. Aside from the start of the day and a very short time in the morning for snack, I did not have the same class until after 2:30 PM! They had a special in the morning so that accounted for part of it, but then they came back, had snack time, and left just 15 minutes later to go to another classroom for science while another class came in for social studies. Following that was math, which of course all four 5th grade classes mixed up according to ability which as mentioned is pretty standard. After lunch they came up, I took afternoon attendance, and then they split for reading- and I don't mean a few students left for resource while the majority stayed. I mean just the opposite: most left while only a few stayed. The students were doing a [Roald Dahl](#) unit and the students who came in were reading [The BFG](#). Other classes were reading different books. Finally, after reading the class came back together again... and promptly left for recess. **Finally** I had the class together, working together for language arts. I don't know why I bothered making a seating chart when I came in. ☐

I have heard of preparing students for middle school, but I have never seen it to this extent. The closest I had seen before was a school where they actually had a set of lockers which the fifth-graders would take turns using to practice for middle school, but even there I don't think they switched classes so much. I know I never did when I was in fifth grade. At least I don't remember doing so aside from specials. But that was the early eighties we're talking about, somewhat removed from today's teaching methods.

By the way, [The BFG](#) reading assignment included making a comic strip based on the chapters they read. So, to make a

connection here I will give you a couple of links for your reading enjoyment. Of course since this blog is primarily about education these won't be your regular comics.com (hah! You thought I would give [a link](#), not just the name! Uh, whoops... ☹) newspaper comics. On both sites they have links to purchase their 'toons, but they are free to view on the web so you don't need to bother. Well, enjoy!

[Cartoons by Randy Glasbergen](#)

[EDUCATION CARTOONS](#)

Another new look

I changed my shorts, erm, **theme** again. I *really* didn't like that last one. I think this one should last awhile, unless I find an annoying bug. I really liked that first theme, even with the no-italics bug, but I couldn't find it again. Well, this one looks pretty good.

Last couple days

My last post on my actual experiences with the kids was last week, so I guess it's past time to write about it again. I finished last week as a traveling social studies teacher on Friday. That's right, this district has a separate teacher do social studies for 1st-3rd grades. I'm not sure why. To get started, when I accepted the job online it showed what school the teacher works at of course. The school is located at the

far end of one of the further districts from me (read: at least a half hour drive), but this was the school one of the kids in my church group attends so I thought I might see him, and so I accepted it. As it turned out, the system I believe lists the school at which a traveling teacher works at the beginning of the week. However, this was Friday so all bets were off. I actually wasn't aware it was a traveling job when I signed up, so I didn't think anything about it. Now, I was at my Thursday job when I accepted this job (no, I wasn't looking when I was supposed to be teaching so just take those fingers off the keyboard and read on! ☐). By the time I got home there was a message waiting for me from the teacher telling me that I would be at a different school in the morning, and yet a *third* school in the afternoon. I wouldn't be at the listed school at all. I am glad I listened to the message and didn't go to the original school. We all know I have gone to the wrong school before...

To make things short to move on to this week, the day went okay. Second grade was working on tourist booklets for their town, with an attractive front, facts about the town on the first inside flap, and pictures on the rest. Being second grade, they needed help on the spelling of course. Also ideas for facts and pictures. Being the town that had the first store ever in a major restaurant chain, that was prominent on several projects. 1st grade listened to a story on safety. Dinosaur boys and girls were featured in this story. Hmm- so **that's** why dinosaurs became extinct- they broke all of the safety rules! ☐ 3rd grade were learning about Chicago history and we worked on a timeline of major events in Chicago history.

Monday was one of those days of subbing for a teacher who was still in the building. She is a resource teacher for grades 1-4. Of course this was just one day so for all I know she may have 5th and 6th grade students on other days. She had to do some testing so that's why I was subbing for her. There

was one first grader who was pulled out three times for this this teacher, and apparently at least once more for another. It would seem he doesn't spend much time in his classroom, at least on Mondays. He was pretty unhappy when I pulled him once right after the other teacher brought him back. I really hope this level of disruption is actually helping him. The morning was spent with three reading groups of different grades, and a push-in where I went to the classroom and worked with small groups of students. They were reading plays (leveled for their reading level of course). Drama can often be favorite moments in teaching and today was no different. In the afternoon I had one pull-out (the first-grader) for math and other than that I was helping out in classrooms as needed. They started the fourth-graders on algebra, using hands-on equations. This is a program using manipulatives on a "scale" to solve equations by balancing the two sides. I didn't have any algebra until I was in junior high...

Today as I mentioned last post was a half day for me. Fortunately it gave me time to get assignments for later in the week in my downtime. I had PE at a school that I have had many problems at. It's an all-year school that actually has classes from 8AM to 4PM. This long day probably contributes to the problems I have had. The first two classes were 4th/5th grade classes. The first class had a new teacher. Actually, the teacher started the year as a first grade teacher (had been one for at least the few years I have known of her). Apparently the 4th/5th grade teacher moved a couple months ago and the school switched the 1st grade teacher and hired a student teacher to replace the 1st grade teacher. I compared two class lists, and it looked like two of the more "lively" students were gone as well, but they might have been moved to another class for all I know. We played speedball in the three classes I had (40 min classes by the way, not 30 min). The two 4th/5th grade classes did very well. The 3rd grade class was a different story. They played like everyone wanted the ball rather than just wanting to play to win. Once

one student had possession of the ball, most of the rest of the class surrounded him or her, pretty much preventing the student from doing anything other than handing the ball off to a teammate. After awhile some students just quit playing- this wasn't a game of good sportsmanship. I actually had to stop the game and have the kids spend the last five minutes sitting down. The nurse came in and yelled at them too (one of the students had run out of the gym to her office toward the end- he had pulled a girl's hair and then she tried to get him back. Sigh. When I told the gym teacher about the morning (he arrived before I left) he knew right away who that student was...

So, that was my last few days. If you're still awake, now is the time to leave comments (hint, hint!). Until tomorrow then.

Save Me From Reality

I know that the transplanting of television series from one country to another is nothing new. However, I just found out today that one of the most popular reality series is not actually American based. Apparently, "Survivor" is a Swedish import (based on the series "Expedition Robinson" from the classic novel *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe) and had its initial run in 1997 before becoming Americanized and thus creating yet another series that needs no writers nor professional actors. Only people crazy enough to eat live scorpions, brains, intestines and attempt dangerous stunts. How many seasons has this been on the air and how many versions on how many different continents? If Jeff Probst took his teams to Antarctica, I would possibly watch. However, it seems you have to be placed in a more tropical locale to

survive.

Whatever happened to the plot-driven series of the past? It seems that for every "The Office" there is another hideous flesh-peddling "Bachelor" (which is not available on DVD, thank you very much) which at times seems reminiscent of the by-gone nighttime soaps of the 80s that were full of catfights, padded dresses, and rich, boozing business people. "Three's Company," "[All in the Family](#)," and "[Too Close for Comfort](#)" are three shows from the past that were based on shows from other countries that are not reality based. But, I guess as long as producers find it more economical to keep rolling out new and improved reality series they will continue.

The half-day gamble

I am not really a gambling person, at least where money is concerned. I always tend to lose and it just seems like a waste of money to me. However, when it comes to subbing I do take some gambles. Unfortunately, it hasn't worked out well for me this year. In the past I have had a reasonable ratio of half days turned into full days compared with those I haven't. This year I am on the low side of things. Whenever I get a half day I always try to get a second job for the other half of the day if possible. I think this may have succeeded maybe once this year. To make matters worse, when it's too late to cancel an assignment only *then* do I see full-day assignments show up to mock me. Today was such a day. Think I saw no less than half a dozen such jobs show up this morning. I even saw a half-day assignment for the morning posted. Too bad this was the half of the day I was already assigned.

I tried a few times today even at work. Nothing. Then finally before I came home I came across an afternoon at a nearby school. Yes! Wait, no. It turned out to be a half day for Thursday. Sigh.

What was work today? Or yesterday for that matter since I didn't get around to posting... Well, that's something for another post. Stay tuned.

It just doesn't make any sense

Yesterday I was talking with my friend, Rachel, about Star Wars, which is reall weird, since for the longest time she didn't even like having it mentioned. But yesterday, she was willing to listen and participate in my talking about Mara and how I didn't think that a poison dart should have been able to kill her. She was the Emperor's Hand for goodness sake! She was one of his personal assassin and knew so many tricks to the Sith, though she never was one herself. She didn't fall for Jacen's trick that he tried to pull when she had the roof fall on top of him. Why should she be kiled by something as simple as a poison dart? If the Karen Traviss insisted that Mara had to die, than couldn't she have thought of a way to do so that was fitting to the character?

Rachel and I have decided that Mara really wasn't killed, because in the Legacy of the Force series, Mara wasn't acting like herself at all. She was all passive and not willing to believe Luke when he tried to tell her that Jacen was turning to the Dark Side. Mara had seen the Emperor, had known Vader, she should have been the first one to believe Luke on this,

and yet, for some reason, she wasn't. She didn't believe him until six books into the series. How can Mara change so suddenly in the books, from the woman that Timothy Zahn had created, to some different kind of woman, that someone else made her? Sure, she had a son, and yes, I agree that Mara would be protective of him, but the way I have seen Timothy Zahn write about Mara, she wouldn't become passive and almost scared to do things. She would be active, ready to do whatever necessary to protect him. She had sent him off while he was just born to safety and continued fighting against the Yuuzhan Vong, to keep the galaxy safe. With all this, Rachel and I came up with the clone idea, though of course Tony doesn't believe me. ☐ Just because they had her funeral and she became a force ghost! Though we have been talking, and his friend said that we could bring her back with a Dark Jedi turning to the Light Side and sacrificing himself to bring her back, using the Force. That would be really nice. I could always write a fanfic and put it on one of those Star Wars fanfiction sites. I wouldn't get money from it, but at least I would feel like I had some say in the way the authors are writing. Timothy Zahn wasn't even told by Del Rey that Mara was going to be killed off. Talk about a shock when he read it.

Fun With Animals

Came across a few really cute animal-themed emails lately, so I thought I'd share. The first one is for people who don't have a dog or just have a very disobedient one. Enter a command in the text box and the cute doggie will do it. Try 'kiss'.

[swf]https://www.idodogtricks.com/site_template_v10.swf[/swf]

Then there's this video, which features the winning combo of a baby and a dog, awww... [Click here](#) to see "Childproof Drawer".

Finally, I got these really cute pictures in an email a few weeks ago... Seems a mommy tiger lost her cubs and "adopted" these piglets to take care of. See the 'pork chops':



Widowers in the Movies

***** Movie Spoiler Alert *****

I took my girls to see "Nim's Island" last week. Good movie overall, but I can't help to think of how they portray widowers and their families. (something personal here). This is the second recent movie that I've seen that has a widower as one of the main characters, the other was "Enchanted". By the end of both movies the widower dads were attached/married. Hmm, if only real life was that easy.

In "Nim's Island", the father hooked up with his daughter's favorite author. A dad and daughter out in the middle of the ocean, and an agoraphobic author from San Fransisco meet. Wow, that was easy. This was computer dating at its very best (worst?). The daughter seems to set them up too. (Come on girls get your acts in gear... ☐)

Now all I have to do is set up some sort of research on a south sea island (doesn't sound too bad), and I will be able to find a future Mrs. Somehow I don't think things are ever

that easy.

And on to "Enchanted". I enjoyed this movie, and all the ins to other "Disney" shows. Cartoon characters come to life in New York. Of course the beautiful princess meets up with the widower, thanks to his daughter (again, girls, you aren't working things right!!!). Singing and Dancing ensue. At the end through many trials and of course defeating the "Evil Stepmother", the widower and princess are together. One happy little family.

Then of course there is another widower meets girl picture. Can anyone say "Sleepless in Seattle"? This time the son of the widower calls up a radio talk show to get dad a wife. Cross country trips occur, and they walk off to what is assumed another happy family, Hollywood style.

I will admit that "Sleepless in Seattle" did a admirable job of actually portraying what a widower goes through, at least if you have enough money to pull up roots, and have the luck and or skill to get another high paying job in another city. Yes, there were many a night that I didn't sleep, even less than my normal sleepless patterns. Yes, I've daydreamed about talking with my late wife. Yes, I had to get up every morning and remind myself to breath. I don't normally need to remind myself of that anymore, but it was there. There were many things I have gone through that were in that movie. This in itself gets my vote for a good movie. Most movies I've seen with widower or widows don't even touch the problems with losing a spouse. It is for good reason that losing a spouse is on the top of most lists of traumatic life events.

My last question. Why are a lot of movies about hooking up widowers? Doesn't that fly in the face of all the "Evil Stepmothers" of fairy tale fame?