

Strange Thing Mystifying

We have recently become even more technologically advanced at work. We have just installed check readers. Instead of needing to completely fill out the check, all the customer has to do is sign their name. The check is then run through the reader for approval. NOW comes the drawback: each time the customer uses the check reader, they MUST show their ID. This seems like a hassle even to me. Having worked at wM for 7 years, the readers there only checked ID periodically.

Tonight, I had a visit from someone who remembered me from at least 18 years ago. I previously related my tale of waiting on Professeur Peters (my high school French teacher). Tonight, I waited on her daughter. "I remember you. You were in my mom's French or Spanish class." Then she told me that she remembered seeing me as Rooster. WOW! Even with a little less hair.

Later, I had a heartbreak. A customer whom I know quite well approached me and informed me that he had a little accident. "OH, GREAT! What did you break now :)" Then I came to the accident. His little daughter had a little accident and was totally embarrassed. I felt so bad for her. I told him to run up to the restroom to clean her up while I took care of the puddle on the floor.

AH... such as life during a nine hour day.

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Best winter retreat ever! I had so much fun that nothing could possibly compare. I wish I could say that was this

weekend but that wouldn't be honest of me. For sure, many can say that and completely mean it as it really was a good retreat. The reason will become clear, and you may even find it foreshadowed before I come out with it. From the beginning:

Friday

6PM: Arrived shortly before this time, late for the 5:45 call time. I thought I was ready, but of course remembered a few more things before I left. At least I did remember everything. In the past I have been left with no pillow, no deodorant, or similar mishaps. Was given a gift bag at the meeting containing essentials- sugar, water, t-shirt, hand-warmers... The latter was most likely due to last year's bitter cold retreat- something that was blessedly not repeated this year, at least for this group (high school suffered just a couple of weekends ago). Oh, anyone for some gum? I got a box, but I don't chew it. Just send me a self-addressed, stamped envelope and I will ship it off. ☐ Meeting ended, we took our posts for check-in which began at 6:15. I was a greeter by the boy's area. For awhile I was a little nervous as I only had two arrivals for my "cabin" (room) while others had four or five, but I needn't have worried- in the end every camper (retreater?) of mine showed up- others weren't so lucky. I think about ten boys failed to show up- the fairer section fared about the same.

7PM: Check-in starts to die down. Did I mention all of my campers showed up? Actually, I did lose one. There are two mentally disabled 4th-graders at my church and their dads (who stayed with them) wanted to be in the same cabin. While changing cabin assignments was generally not allowed, we made

an exception for them. In fact, neither of them wound up in their original cabin as ours were pretty full, but in one that had lost two boys who didn't make it. Anyway, throughout this time, after letting them drop off their things, we sent them down to watch [Jonah](#) until the arrivals trickled down. Jonah would be the theme of the retreat. At about 7:25, the last of us headed to the movie area where the intro was made and we were sent off to start the first big game of the weekend.

8PM: My assignment- auditor. I stood by an opposing team's drop-off bin, where the kids would drop off all their treasures. Oh? I never mentioned the teams? Well, there are four teams, following the theme from summer camp which was a medical theme this year. I was a Mr. Yuk over the summer but this time was a Red Cross. The cabins were actually given names. Do you remember when [Sly](#) mouthed "You're the disease- I'm the cure" (paraphrased) in a movie 20ish years ago? Well, the boys were the diseases with cabin names like H1N1, TB, and Mad Cow Disease and the girls were the cures (Neosporin, Aspirin, etc.). My cabin was SARS. So back to the game, auditors made sure the kids were following the rules. This may be church, but you know some kids- suddenly forgetful of the rules when it could gain an advantage if you know what I mean. Here's what the game was- in pairs, the kids would link up (hold hands or arms) and search for little plastic ducks and reflectors strewn all over the church. When they found one, they had to get to their team bin. Throughout this, there were over a dozen leaders going after the kids with dodge-balls in hand trying to "infect" them. That may sound like a lot of leaders, but we're talking about 150 kids! If infected, they had to drop whatever they might have been holding and hightail it to the medic to be "cured." There were a few hundred of these things strewn about so the game lasted for awhile.

9PM: Pizza! Well, maybe I should have left that exclamation point off- we're talking Papa John's here. If you're not familiar with them, think mass pizza chains in the style of Pizza Hut or Domino's and you will know what I'm talking about. We chugged down pizza and pop and got ready for the first session, which started shortly after 9:45 with an upfront game followed by worship. What is an upfront game? Well, one camper (sometimes two) from each team was called up to play a silly or disgusting game- pure fun, though not always for the contestants... Tonight was licking names off of a tray. The catch? Part of what was used in the writing was sardines- eww. That's apparently what the contestants thought too as none of them accomplished much in the allotted time. Then worship began with singing.

10PM: The session continued. Four worship songs later, Dr. John came out to teach (medical theme remember). You know how busy doctors get, so Drs. Brian and Steve would round out the retreat the next day. Starting in Jonah, we traversed chapters one and two alongside Jonah, teaching the kids about consequences of trying to ignore God and how God always pursues His children. After the lesson we broke off into our cabins. We were running late, so we kept the large group of ten kids and two leaders together and discussed the lesson, including a reading from Psalm 139:

7 Where shall I go from your Spirit?

Or where shall I flee from your presence?

8 If I ascend to heaven, you are there!

If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!

*9 If I take the wings of the morning
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,*

*10 even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me.*

*11 If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light about me be night,"*

*12 even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is bright as the day,
for darkness is as light with you.*

11PM: Set up beds, get ready, and lights out. Another leader, the game leader of the week joined us- his son was in our cabin. He and I, the "old guys," naturally brought air mattresses to go with our sleeping bags... A little chaotic as expected, but by 20 minutes after lights-out time we finally got the boys laying in bed if not asleep yet. Someone came in with a ladder to unscrew the emergency light bulbs- you know, one of those lights that stays on 24/7 even if the room switches are turned off. This still left a flashing blue light from the router mounted in the ceiling unfortunately. I hope it didn't keep anyone awake. I got this bright idea that I would just leave my contacts in all night since they are extended wear after all. Up to this point I had done naps safely, so I figured why not? I had drops to put in my eyes in the morning.

Midnight: Finally asleep, or at least sometime before the next hour.

Saturday

Midnight-7AM: Z-z-z-z-wake up-z-z-z-z-wake up-z-z-z-z-you get the picture-z-z-z-z

(to be continued)

Those Crazy Kids

Well, it's not a full moon tonight, but you could have fooled me. My kids are acting completely nuts today; I just had to get away from them for a few minutes for some "me" time to vent and blog this out. Ok, it's not really "me" time; the kids are right here, they just happen to not be needy at this moment – first time all morning. I actually just checked the moon's forecast, and we are only 2 days away from a full moon. Oh, my – does that mean I have 2 more days of this? My [blogging teacher friend](#) wrote about how she used to be able to predict her students' daily behavior by the way a herd of Clydesdales were acting when she passed their farm on the way to school each morning. If the horses were running around, there was a good chance the kids were going to be crazy. I'm betting that if I had a herd of Clydesdales in my backyard, they would be running around. And that would be cool – I've always wanted a bunch of animals. But hopefully I'm wrong about something crazy being in the air and the chaos is just localized to only our house because I have to teach youth group tonight, and I don't know what I'll do with crazy teenage girls if I have to deal with crazy little kids all day!

Sammie, my Kindergartner is still sleeping, and it's almost lunch time. I can't complain about her behavior because for the past 3 days now (knocking on the wood floor), she's been good as gold. Yes, I am counting the days of her goodness because we just endured an incredibly bad phase of hers that lasted a few months – it was really bad. Why dwell on the negative, though? Today she was playing with her little brother without even being asked, and they were so cute together! They played tag, and she read books to him – I

would have taken a picture, but I was busy meeting the demands of my 3-year-old, Disney. She was always the one I could count on to be good; she's always been a sweetheart. But lately, she's been in a really intense phase, and it's hard to handle. She has a very loud, shrill little voice, and she's always using it to yell "MOM", and you wouldn't believe how often she needs something – hungry, thirsty, help with something... we starting heavily potty training; I'm talking no more diapers during the day, so of course that makes her even more needy. By the way, the potty training is not going very well.

Well, I'd better wrap up; I'm sick of all the interruptions – I've found it's better when I don't really try to blog or work while the kids are around because it causes more frustration than productivity. But it's amazing how positive things look when our Kindergartner is in a "good" phase! And her older sister has been completely awesome lately too, so that makes 3 of my 4 kids in good phases. And Disney's bad phase can't even be called "bad" when you compare it to one of Sammie's bad phases. It's funny how our family dynamics are constantly changing as the kids go in and out of phases – kind of like the moon!

Lab Rat

Mostly, it was worse than I thought it was going to be, but I survived. I spent the night at the hospital last night undergoing a sleep study. These are becoming increasingly common, and many people experience anxiety beforehand, so perhaps I can help by describing it to someone who doesn't know what to expect. Then again, maybe you shouldn't read this post if you're looking to be reassured...

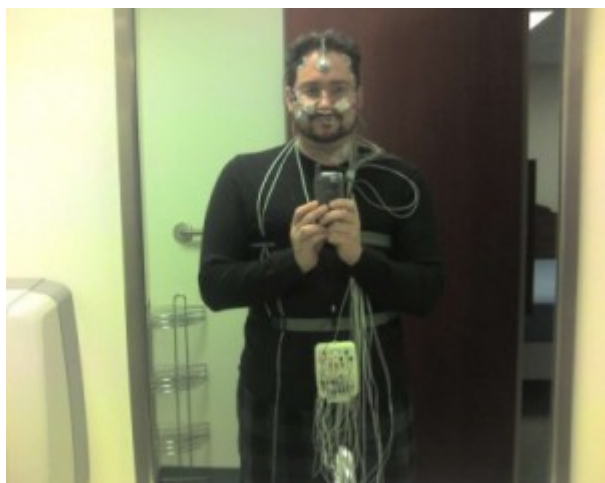
First, I got a prescription for a sleep study from my kids' pediatrician, who is also the local sleep expert doctor – I had mentioned to him that I never feel rested. So I arrived for my sleep study last night around 8 pm; usually they have you come earlier, but they wanted to mimic my bedtime schedule, and I rarely go to bed before midnight. That's funny – mimic my bedtime schedule, yet the 4 rowdy kids who usually keep me up past midnight were nowhere in sight, hmmm, not much mimicry there. So I waited in the lounge for a little bit for the nurse to do paperwork, which is more like a little living room that I luckily had to myself – didn't really feel like being social. Soon it was time to "hook me up" (which sounds better than it is, believe me) and we went into this little room off the lounge. I would not be exaggerating to say it was reminiscent of a clinical torture chamber. There was a simple chair bolted down in the middle of the small room, and various medical apparatuses and who-knows-what bolted to the walls, along with extra wires and electrical looking boxes and things – is this where they interrogated Saddam?

Not that I was nervous or anything because I really wasn't. I didn't like being away from my family, but I made the best of it by telling myself that I was going to enjoy the few hours away from the chaos; I had brought piles of old newspapers to catch up on and 3 hardcover books to read. And as far as the medical stuff goes, it didn't really seem like a big deal after the 9 mos. of poking and prodding I've endured as a pregnant woman – times 4.

So I get all wired up, and after I sat in the lounge alternating between reading and watching tv (I had no idea what was even ON tv, which shows how little I watch it now), I decided that it was time for bed, and this is where things take a turn for the worse. As if the millions of electrodes the nurse had glued to various parts of my body weren't enough, she added two belts and also shoved something up my

nose. That's right – they **glue** electrodes to you, disregarding your hair and everything. My kids today had fun playing with my stiff “glue hair”, but I quickly took a shower and washed it out before anyone got any ideas that “glue hair” is cool – that is one mess I don't need to clean up today or ever!

So I'm fully wired, and the nurse plugs me in, and then she leaves the room and comes over the intercom. She makes me do a series of silly actions – she said she wanted to “test the sensors”, but I was starting to think that her having me roll my eyes around in my head and demonstrate fake snoring might have just been cheap entertainment for the hospital's 3rd shift. When we were finished “testing the sensors”, the nurse turned off my light and I was expected to fall asleep, but I had lots of trouble. First of all, imagine trying to sleep while looking like this:



Not only that, but the bed was just awful, hard as a rock – I have a crick in my back today. And don't forget there is a camera and microphone on you at all times; it's a bit daunting to relax in this situation. And when they said that I could “bring my own pillow if I wish”, I thought that was implying I should bring my pillow if I have some sort of special attachment to it. What they really meant was “You might wish to bring your own pillow because we only have little slabs of rubber we cover with pillowcases.” Maybe they figured that if

they put a pillowcase on it, they could call it a pillow, but after spending 8 hours with it, I strongly disagree.

So I had trouble falling asleep, big surprise. Not only was I so wired I felt like I could help E.T. phone home, but the bed and pillow were awful, there was a camera and a microphone on me, and the room was dark and quiet (that NEVER happens at home!). I was alone with my thoughts, and that's never a good thing ☐ It didn't help that I could occasionally hear the wind howling outside, and it reminded me of when the lights were on and the nurse was "checking" my fake snores – the lights had been flickering slightly. What if the power goes out, and there is a sudden electrical surge? Would I get shocked? Would I burst into flame? Would I disappear? Might I come away with some sort of obscure superpower? Hey, that might be kind of cool... I guess I finally drifted off, because the next thing I know, I'm waking up, even though it felt like I hadn't fallen asleep yet, and that's how I knew I still had hours left in my sleep study. Still uncomfortable, still cold, still not liking being both seen and heard while I'm asleep. And then I wake up again. Still uncomfortable, still cold... you get the picture. I must have woken up about 5 times during the night, tossing and turning each time, hoping for comfort until I passed out for good all tangled up in wires like a fly caught in a spider's web. Then I had a nightmare, and I wonder how that appeared on the charts? Finally, I hear a voice from above say "Lisa, the sleep study is over." Even though that was the best news I had heard in hours, it was a bit unsettling to be woken up by an intercom saying my name.

Overall, it wasn't that bad, even though I was disappointed because I had been under the impression that I would be able to fall asleep easily, and that I would be in a comfy bed and stay asleep until the morning. Instead, I returned to real life very poorly rested early this morning with 3 kids to look after all day. But at least today, unlike yesterday, I can have all the coffee I can brew, and tonight I get to sleep in

my own bed! Well, providing the coffee doesn't keep me up all night anyway!

IT

Last Saturday night, because the temperature wasn't too bad, we went for an evening family walk and took the kids to Walgreens for milk. Even at just 6:00, it was already completely dark outside, and a dense fog was starting to settle in, so Hubby and I decided it was a perfect night to watch a scary movie. The only thing is that we watch A LOT of horror movies, and most of them just aren't scary anymore. Call it desensitization to the horror, or maybe it's the fact that we have 4 kids and it's difficult to find something scarier than say, 3 of them being wide awake at midnight or someone taking off their dirty diaper and making a mess with it. But whatever the reason, it's hard to find a movie that will actually scare either of us.

While we were trying to choose a suitable scary movie, we came across Stephen King's IT. My husband was skeptical, but I was certain it would be terrifying, so we gave it a try. And I was right, well partially right anyway – the first time Pennywise the horror clown was shown on the screen, it was so creepily done that my husband grabbed ME and not the other way around – which was only actually because I couldn't even watch it; it was so scary! Unfortunatley, my husband was no longer scared once Pennywise began to talk, but I was creeped out by the entire movie... well, at least until the end, when the big showdown scene completely disappointed me and took away my fear – that's all I'll say, don't want to spoil it if you haven't seen IT.



I like to research movies that I watch; I look them up on imdb.com to see if I'm correct when I recognize actors from other movies. When I looked up IT, I came across information that pointed to the theatrical release of an IT remake in the near future – I'm there!!

I think I might want to read Stephen King's IT the novel first before I see the remake maybe; I've been thinking about what to read after I finish the 2nd Harry Potter book, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*. It's going kind of slowly for me; I think I'm ready for a break from Hogwarts – some Stephen King should do the trick! Then again, maybe not, I've been having enough trouble sleeping as it is – matter of fact, I go in for a sleep study later today. That's all I need is to get my sleep problems under control and then give myself nightmares by reading scary books... But anyway, wish me luck – I'm a little nervous about the study (I don't know what I do in my sleep, and I don't know how I feel about **strangers** knowing what I do when I sleep – that's kind of personal! Plus I'm going to miss my family like crazy and worry about them. I hate sleeping in hospitals, but at least in the past, I've had a newborn baby to cuddle!).

[Click here](#) if you want to do more reading about the IT remake – but keep in mind that this article complains about the same spoiler at the end of IT that I hated, so if you don't want to know what happens, don't read it! And one more thing... I thought Tim Curry was just excellent in IT. He was

unrecognizable, which was probably part of the charm!

Staycation

Even if my plans for travel fell through, I was sooooo not at all disappointed in my time off. It began last Sunday when I was invited to attend services at my friends' church. I thought the service was very well done. A timely sermon (even if the pastor attempted to parallel it with an hour in the life of Jack Bauer).

Monday, I visited the zoo with the same friends... minus admin who was stuck working. But [taylhis](#) and company had a great time, as always. I then went to auditions for the dinner theatre that I will be part of Valentine's Day weekend. I hope by now that the cast has been set as the director was lacking a few key roles. As I previously mentioned, the play involves improvisation... just the word alone scares me. But after learning who my character is... I am so ready for my new challenge.

Tuesday night, I introduced my friends to the cinematic adventures of Harry Potter. I am pleased to say that all enjoyed the movie. I agree, that while the movie does take a certain amount of liberties, as a whole the movies are really entertaining.

Friday night, I watched *Mystery, Alaska* for the first time. I really enjoyed the "adult take on *The Mighty Ducks*."

Saturday and Sunday nights were spent with some of my new friends of the Village Players. Megan and I went to Mary's and played Disney Scene-It, Movie Scene-It, more Trivial Pursuit, and Megan and I stayed and played cutthroat Scrabble

with Mare and Trav.

And the climax... [Mary](#), Travis, Jen, Megan, and I went to see *Sherlock Holmes* on the huge Rave screen with Digital Sound and Picture. I must say that the ads for the movie do not do the movie justice. THANK GOODNESS it was not all Robert Downey, Jr. with his shirt off... and very little of it actually was. What we did get was a superb mystery, action thriller in the finest tradition of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's characters. The chemistry between Downey and Jude Law (as Dr. Watson) was great. Irene Adler and Inspector Lestrade (two other Doyle creations) were also instrumental elements of the movie. The way definitely paved the way for a return to late 19th Century London. We definitely left the movie pleased and (myself, at least) am ready for the sequel.

So sometimes, the best vacations are spent right here in the backyard.

My Favorite Amphibian

Recently, a friend and fellow tangents blogger wrote a [blog post regarding her bucket list](#) – for those who haven't seen nor heard about the movie of said title, a bucket list is comprised of things you want to do before you die. Her post got me to thinking about my bucket list, and maybe I'll post it in the future. For now, I know that one of the items on my bucket list – or many items, depending upon how I write it – will involve seeing certain species of animals; many of them endangered and rare. If seeing rare animals is on my bucket list, then I can cross off one item – last week I got to see several specimens of the [Kihansi Spray Toad](#) – an animal that is considered *extinct* in the wild!



Given my intense fear of them, I never thought that a frog or a toad would be on my list of animals to see – but the Kihansi Spray Toad is actually kinda cute! For me, it seems that the more brown and dry the amphibian, the more it creeps me out – not including salamanders, which I don't have a problem with at all. I'm not at all frightened by the beautiful blue Poison Dart frogs or other colorful species, which is strange since those are the ones that tend to be poisonous and harmful to humans. Weird. So anyway, I think the Kihansi Spray Toad is both extremely fascinating and very cute!

The Toledo Zoo is the only place in the entire world where people can view these special little toads who were first recognized as a species as recently as 1996. Not only that, it is estimated that over half of the earth's entire population of the toads live in Toledo. I am so glad I decided to venture over to the Museum of Science in the Toledo Zoo last week to see the spray toad! It was the highlight of my zoo visit; all of the other animals were kinda lethargic. Oh, there is one more thing – my 10-year-old daughter got pooped on by a bird in aviary! She was a really good sport about it, and it just **plucked** right out of her hair – no harm, no **fowl**. My daughter's unfortunate accident:



It was neat to see the local wildlife congregating in the unused Hippo-quarium. It's too cold for the hippos to be outside, but the ducks have a nice place to swim – who would have thought about what a group of ducks look like from under the water?



My 3 daughters fit into one giant egg!



This was taken on a different day, but I had to put in this

cute picture of my 2 youngest. My little guy is learning to say "CHEESE!" for the camera ☐



In Development?

My sister just informed me of some trailers she just saw on youtube. Some fake and others I knew about already. The reboot of *A Nightmare on Elm Street* is due this Spring. I had to laugh when she swore that she saw an official preview for *Jaws V*. Even more telling was the fact that she said that Roy Scheider and Richard Dreyfuss were going to reprise their characters from the original. Hilarious, because Sheriff Brody was killed sometime between *Jaws 2* and *Jaws 3-D*. And once again, following the debacle that was *Jaws: The Revenge* (tagline: "This time, it's personal."), I ask: **WHY?!** Especially when it's been a good 25 years since the last one.

Finally, [Spider-Man 4](#) is about to get underway. Something very strange: after only 3 films in the last decade, we are getting a re-haul of the franchise. A new director is taking over which will probably mean a new cast. But why reintroduce the series when it has only been a few years since the last film was released. While by far the worst of the trilogy,

Spider-Man 3 still had moments of fun and it did have a lot to live up to following the phenomenal second installment.

What was I thinking?

I'm in another play. Tryouts were just before Christmas. Rehearsals started the week of Christmas (I think). I'm trying to memorize my lines and get the character down.

I shouldn't have tried out. I shouldn't have taken the part. I knew better, but I did it anyway. It was the only show of the season that I even wanted to be a part of.

It wasn't that I just finished one show and rushed into a second. That is no problem at all. I usually like rehearsals and getting the part down. No, it was the timing of the show. It is the time of year and the days that surround it. I'm only doing half the work I need to do to get the character down. I'm actually doing less than that to get the lines memorized. My mind is unable to focus once I get home.

Maybe it will get better in the coming week or two (it better, the show is only 2 weeks away). I really hope so.

I have a handle on the why and the when. I am making a promise to myself to really limit my selection of shows to do in the early part of the year. Too many other things on my mind.

I remember the last thing we watched together. I remember our last meal together. I remember that damn oxygen machine. I remember sitting and holding your hand while you were going in and out of a fitful slumber. I remember walking you down the hall, you holding me for support. I remember the last time I tucked you in. I remember your last words. I remember my last words to you. I remember that first New Years Eve without you. I remember the memorial service and the people there. I

remember that first anniversary without you.

Those are the thoughts that fill my head at this time of year. The inconsequential needs of a play find very little room in my head. Even after six years, the thoughts of you are one with me and I with them. I remember love.

Wish Lists For The Separated

I suppose there had to come a time for this. Stores have registries for bany gifts, bridal gifts, even kiosks for people to make their annual appeal to Santa. A store in Great Britain has come up with the next step: [DIVORCE REGISTRY](#). It's not bad enough that the divorce rate is so high (40% for newlyweds and 60% for repeaters), but this seems to almost help it along. So, apparently, those who end up with the short end of the stick following the distribution of wealth, can now ease their hardship by visiting Debenhams and sharing their list with whatever friends and family they have retained. They can replace that wrought-iron grill that was used in domestic disputes. So much for monogrammed dishtowels. Hollywood couples... take notice.

I wonder how long it will take for Divorce Registry to make its way the USA. Any suggestions for the next great registry idea? How about Unemployed Worker Registry?

I think this qualifies for a News of the Absurd column.