



ABOUT

Friday Night updates

Monday Matchbook

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 02

on NOVEMBER 2, 2009 · 49 COMMENTS · in DOMESTIC LIFE

This is as good as it will get for a while:

RECENT COMMENTS

- polymathamy on [06.14.12 Bleat](#)
- Amanda from Michigan on [Boo. Hiss](#)
- Julie on [Testing the new RSS feed idea](#)
- shesnailie on [Autobots and Bruckner](#)
- Wagner von Drupen- Sachs on [Autobots and Bruckner](#)

140 OR SO

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A BOOK I RECOMMEND



The wind took half the scenery away that afternoon, and the scythe of fall will harvest the rest. It's like watching the Hand of God move the Saturation slider to the left. But even while the leaves expire, there's odd late-comers to the party:



THE PAST AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

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THE DISTANT PAST

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Big juicy berries, ready to ferment and endrunkenate the squirrels.

Took down the Halloween decorations Sunday. Of course. Nothing is deader than Halloween the day after. No “Twelve Days of Halloween” with another holiday a week later – just bleak November, implacable and enormous. When I was a kid “taking down the Halloween decorations” meant removing the jointed cardboard Ben Franklin skeleton from the window; now it’s like striking the set of an Andrew Lloyd Webber play.

It was a nice night, though. Not as raw as advertised, so the outdoor party wasn’t a trial. Everyone huddled around the fire, trying to strike the balance between bone-warming heat and flesh-singing flames. Took daughter and friend up and down the streets, and the houses looked magnificent in the twilight. The leaves, the bare limbs – most trees are empty, but a quarter still have their costumes – the pumpkins and spooky Target animatronic decorations, the shouts and whoops from kids up and down the block: magic. We even had an escaped puppy to bring drama to the night. A peppy Pekinese bolted out of someone’s door and shot down the street like black mercury, delighted with itself and the world. For a while it seemed it would never be caught, but eventually I heard a YIPE that indicated someone had gotten a handful of fur or flesh.

Over the fire I chatted with a neighbor who’s working on the “Red Dawn” remake. Get this: in the new version, China and Russia invade the US – to put a stop to our greed. There are times you wish you had a mouthful of kerosene so you could do a flaming spit take. If this is how the film turns out, it’ll be hilarious; it’s as if the filmmakers were a bit ambivalent about all the horrible jingoism that such a film might unleash, so they had to temper it with a bit of theoretical altruism that could be true, you know, in a sense. I almost expect the Russians and Chinese to invade to enforce Copenhagen protocols, and the brave Americans fight back for a modified rollout of carbon emission

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HOST WITH THE MOST

standards that will allow domestic industry to perfect the new HydroWind Energy System, which the Chinese don't want because they just signed a UN agreement to respect patents of other countries.

Well, it can't be worse than Transformers, unless it includes transforming Russian soldiers that turn into liquor bottles. I did watch Transformers 2: the Fall of the Revenging or something; I expected kinetic nonsense, and got it, but I really missed the heartfelt contemplative tone of the first one. Really. Sort of. Compared to the sequel, the first one was a Merchant-Ivory version of a Turgenev short story. I know, I know, it's a stupid movie about robots, and you're just supposed to sit back and let it pummel you bloody, but I still have trouble with the concept: these robot-creatures have rockets for feet and can travel great distances by walking or running or flying. So naturally, when they want to go somewhere, they turn into cars. Interesting to see the great ruins of Egypt destroyed; interesting also to note that no modern scientist ever noticed the presence of a giant dense machine in the center of the pyramids. Amosbot and Andybot were as appalling as advertised; John Turtorro acted like a man who got repetitive stress injuries from flushing his thespian credentials down the toilet, but hey: it's a living, and can't begrudge him that.

Put up some Christmas lights Sunday afternoon. In response to a tweet announcing that fact, someone responded "oh, you're one of THOSE people." No, I am married to one of those people. She pointed out that the weather was fine and it would only get colder; did I want to stand outside with numb digits trying to fit cold stiff plastic around dead trees? No. So I got out the survivors from last year, made sure they worked (Chinese factories embed strands with nanotermites that eat away the wires over time), then wound them around a hedgerow. Problem: they have multiple twinkle settings, or MTS. Each strand has a controller box with 12 settings, and I remembered straight away that last year's strands were uncoordinated. One was Steady Flash, the other was Flashing Chasing, or Twinkle Glow, or Burning Stream, or whatever. So I clicked the controller switch until I got both strands reading from the same script, and considered calling it a day.

No: the red lights could go up on the tree. The one with the berries above. The big ripe berries. The big red prone-to-burst berries. More than twice I managed to get whipped in the head by a branch, which not only scraped my cheek but smushed blood-berries in my face. Language of an impolite and uncivil nature was deployed. With gusto.

Enthused by my newfound initiative, I drove to the hardware store for more lights. One look at the early-season prices told me I was an idiot, and should stand down immediately. But I was here! At the discount store! Can't waste a trip, so . . . okay, batteries. Peanuts. Feed for the new bird feeder. (Bought some "Cracked corn," thinking, I am, in a sense, Jimmy, and I do care.) Handwarmers for the emergency kit. While I was considering some windshield de-icer, a man spoke up in a loud voice in an Indian accent:

"They have plenty of bird feed but not enough fertilizer."



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I turned around, and noted that they did, indeed, have lots of bird feed, and hardly any fertilizer.

He waved at a clerk, and asked where it would be that he could find the fertilizer.

“That’s it,” said the clerk.”

“That is it? And all this bird feed?”

The clerk said he was sorry but it was a seasonal thing.

The customer scoffed and gave off a great cloud of huff over the idiocy of a store not carrying sufficient quantities of fertilizer.

I examined the bird feed display, and the fellow had a point: it was enormous. I realized I could buy a lot of bird feed in a bulk bag for the price of my Cracked Corn. Suddenly Jimmy cared. On the other hand, the price included a mail-in rebate, which for me is like saying “Thirteen dollars off with coupon, and a fragment of the Dead Sea Scrolls (subject to verification.)” I never mail in rebates. I know myself.

It’s just not going to happen.

So that was the weekend. It was good. I spent little time on the Internet, but I did slap together a nice batch of updates for this week. Natalie said she missed watching the Rolie Polie Olie Halloween special with me – she had a sleepover that night – and I sad I did too. She wants to watch it tomorrow, which is fine; part of childhood is the ability to draw out holidays a day or two beyond their legal conclusion. Why, Halloween had passed, and I went outside around 1 AM to put out the pumpkin light, and heard a disco-trickle from down the street: the party was still going on. Well, let’s go join it, then. Fire, beer, companionship. I opened the gate to head out, and the music cut off. Party was over.

I blew out the pumpkins, saluted the moon, and went to bed. A good Halloween is a small thing, but if the day that follows is sunny and mild, it gives a man some spine. If there’s ever a month that needed to be punched in the nose just to show it who’s boss, it’s November.

Pass it along, if you wish



49 RESPONSES TO *monday, november 02*



Michael Rittenhouse says:
November 2, 2009 at 6:32 am

I can’t be alone in thinking most squirrels could use a cocktail.

**Joe Dickerson** says:

November 2, 2009 at 6:49 am

Never put up lights, because the abundance of Christmas-related tchotchkes we usually put out throughout house would make Ebenezer Scrooge, pre-ghostly visit, blanch and scream like a man possessed by... well, ghostly spirits.

**PersonFromPorlock** says:

November 2, 2009 at 6:56 am

For a few weeks after the trees lose their leaves, there's a small-scale show of color in the underbrush that few ever notice.

**MikeH** says:

November 2, 2009 at 7:48 am

We still have some lingering color here in Maine, though most of it is out on the ground thanks to the high winds, but it still looks pretty. A few people piled the up on the curbside in the street nice little piles which I was glad to drive through and make a mess again (as far as I know the police can't cite me for it)

**grayhackle** says:

November 2, 2009 at 8:36 am

Leaves just now peaking in North Georgia. Beautiful... the best color in years. Some of the old coots will say you need a dry Fall for a good show. Others, no, no, you need a wet one with mild nights, etc.

It's been the wet and cold so who knows. Just enjoy it while I can.

**John** says:

November 2, 2009 at 8:40 am

Cold weather, and the mention of feed for the birds: these bring up a couple of small ideas, the first being, "You give cracked corn to birds?" I give that to squirrels; the birds get sunflower seed. Except for the goldfinches, who have done their anecdotal-evidence best to contradict global-warming rumors by arriving in Texas in winter and then hanging around for months, *because the Texas winters have been cold*: they get something called Nyjer. Well, it used to be called Niger thistle, but then a couple of years ago merchants renamed it, without explanation. I suppose to save somebody the embarrassment of mispronouncing it. I believe this could have been avoided if the country in Africa renamed itself Gotwunjee.

**hpoulter** says:

November 2, 2009 at 8:51 am

That "nyjer" seed has gotten too dam' expensive. I mix it with "finch blends" or sunflower chips (which are none too cheap either).

I doubt the goldfinches in Texas are migratory. The ones here in Virginia are not – they just lose their yellow feathers for the winter and look like sparrows.

I used to feed them in the front yard, so I could see them from my home office window, but a black bear kept pulling down the feeders, and I had to give it up.

**teach5** says:

November 2, 2009 at 8:56 am

So true about the “Andrew Lloyd Weber” set. I’m taking down skull lights, spider webs, yada, yada...
 Have to ask everyone: Is it just me, or don’t kids know to say, “Trick or Treat!” when they come to the door??? Our trick or treaters would come up, look at our pumpkins, etc., then stand there staring at us. They had all the enthusiasm of cold pizza! What’s the deal?

**PatchtheBun** says:

November 2, 2009 at 9:14 am

teach5: I got a couple who said trick or treat. They were under 5, and their parents were prompting them. The older kids just held our their bags expectantly. Hardly any thank-yous, too.

I was sad when our trees stayed green for way too long, then turned beautiful shades of gold and red for 5 minutes before dying and dropping off the trees. Then it rained for 3 days straight.

**Beth** says:

November 2, 2009 at 9:30 am

About ten times a year your writing makes me laugh out loud, (rather than the usual mute amusement). Today’s Bleat did just that with your Jimmy cracked corn comment. Thanks!

**daveinaZ** says:

November 2, 2009 at 9:42 am

When we first moved to AZ seven years ago in September, we met the neighbors across the street for about 10 minutes. Weeks later, on Halloween, Barb the Neighbor set up a lawn chair at the end of her driveway. When I asked why, she explained that she didn’t want the little monsters walking across their newly planted shrubs and cactus, so she’d decided to meet them at sidewalk level. My wife and I joined her and her husband in a couple of folding chairs, and by the end of the evening, we had half a dozen new neighbors join us.

The next year, we moved the little party to our own driveway to take advantage of the streetlight over our property. This year – six years later – we had thirty neighbors on our driveway, eight buckets of candy. (“Take just one from each bucket, kid! Except you, ‘cuz your costume is really great!”) We’re the WalMart of Halloween candy. Neighbors from a mile away drive their kids over to our house.

The adults sit behind the candy with wine, chili and pumpkin beer until 9 PM when the true adult beverages come out. Skeletons, bats, tiki torches, pumpkins, ghosts hanging from the tree, and discussion of really scary things like the HOA, property values and the neighbors who have left. Visits from other neighbors who left years ago, and return annually just for this occasion. We’ve developed a block party that we hadn’t expected, and Halloween has become a great day here.

Of course, it didn’t hurt that it was 72 degrees.

**Al Federber** says:

November 2, 2009 at 9:50 am

We have saved the Russians and Chinese the trouble and expense of invading us.



Mark says:

November 2, 2009 at 10:06 am

Thank you for the Diner!



Cyn says:

November 2, 2009 at 10:09 am

Words of advice: Don't buy lights from Target. They have the prettiest lights, but the darn things don't work. Half the time they die on the tree. I keep hoping they'll improve their lights, but I have thrice been burned hoping they've addressed the problem. I have strings of lovely patio and Christmas lights that don't work. Wrote the company, too again and again. Never even got a form e-mail back.



juanito - John Davey says:

November 2, 2009 at 10:22 am

Problem: they have multiple twinkle settings, or MTS. Each strand has a controller box with 12 settings, and I remembered straight away that last year's strands were uncoordinated. One was Steady Flash, the other was Flashing Chasing, or Twinkle Glow, or Burning Stream, or whatever.

I have a few strands that seemingly have only one setting: *Auto-Self-Destruct-Sequence-Enabled*.

We have a wrecking crew that we escort through our neighborhood of 200 houses. All of our other friends live either on Horse property, or in similarly rural areas. Trick or Treating there is like calling the Donner Party a Three Hour Tour. So, even though we lack sidewalks, we're the designated Halloween Rally Point. One 9 year old, three 8 year olds, one 6 year old, two 5 year olds, and one 4 year old. We frequently encounter similar sized groups 'in the streets'. In the back of my mind I always think of the 'Gang Fight' scene from *Anchorman*. It makes me giggle.

Noted the past two years (second & third grades) that kids recognize each other with amazement – "Hey, its Megan!". Typical lot sizes here are about a third of an acre, so while there are 200 houses, school children are quite spread out. They run into each other in the store more often than in the neighborhood.

As far as starting the rural electrification project that is Christmas Lights, I thought about getting the gear down. All 13 boxes of it. Eh, that was about as far as I got. Need to feel the spirit before I make that commitment. Need a bit of Elmer Gantry I guess.



Lulu says:

November 2, 2009 at 10:47 am

I didn't know someone was doing a Red Dawn remake. Googling it just now, it looks as if the Russians and Chinese invade the U.S. and SAY they're doing it in order to "repair our [the U.S.'s] reputation," but that's obviously propaganda. Though I think it's reasonable to assume that the Dirty Vicious Reds vs. Patriotic Wholesome Americans theme of the original will be modified somewhat for the 'naughties.



bgbear (roger h) says:

November 2, 2009 at 10:49 am

Greaddy huh, So the Chinese want to us to stop buying stuff from them. Hmm, sounds like a flimsy excuse. I suspect the real reason was an effective “tea party” type protest and boycott of cheap Christmas lights that threatened to destabilize China’s precarious economy.

It is good to attract birds and squirrels to your yard, if we are invaded or struck by some other man-made or natural disaster, think of these critters as your emergency food supply. That is why when I fill the feeder I always refer to the seed as “bait.” I believe the cat see it this way as well.



bgbear (roger h) says:

November 2, 2009 at 10:56 am

oops, greaddy=greedy, damn tennis elbow. . .

@Lulu

I suspect even if they go with “dirty reds” they will temper it with several domestic traitors most likely from the business world and not likely politicians representing the California 8th, 9th, or 30th congressional districts.



Matt says:

November 2, 2009 at 11:02 am

Tsk. At the mention of “fertilizer” I anticipated a Lilekian/Sisyphusian struggle to fertilize the multi-tiered plots of Jasperwood. Another time, perhaps?

There is a similar vicious red berry tree in front of my abode, and I always manage to find the rawest, coldest, grey New England day to string the lights on the nasty tree. Squished red berries end up on the step ladder treads, front hall foyer and stairs, and of course my shoes.



John Robinson says:

November 2, 2009 at 11:05 am

So the Ruskies and the Chicoms invade us to spank us for our greed. And somewhere Michael Moore is grinning like a raccoon eating fish guts. And having himself another pizza or two.



GardenStater says:

November 2, 2009 at 11:09 am

People feed squirrels? I send my 30-pound dog with the killer instinct and speed of a cheetah to chase them away!

In the 5 months since we adopted him, he’s managed to kill two chickens, three squirrels, a bird, and a young possum. I was walking him in the pre-dawn darkness for this last one. He suddenly pounced on something I couldn’t see, and I immediately yanked the leash and pulled him back. Too late for brer possum–Fido snapped his neck with lightning speed.

Law of the Jungle, I suppose. Or in this case, the Law of the Suburb.



swschrads says:

November 2, 2009 at 11:17 am

wonderful, glorious weekend... which I spent in company of the latter two sons installing a new patio door onto the deck. good news is, it's done, it's solid, the lock sort of works, it's all caulked up with the exception of the gap under the sill.

someplace on the ocean, a Navy fleet is stopped dead in the water because the chief petty officers heard a few of Son #2's energetic expositions at the door, and the house wall, and tool this and nail that, and Yo'Momma, and keeled over in shock.

missed all the creepy critters, though. our sole decoration was a pumpkin with a Disney-ish face and an electro-candle.

second the notion about the T-botique's holiday lights leaving something unmet. we bought 8 strands of LED mini-globes last year for the deck, and they started dying like clockwork in about 6 months. 5000 hour life, my speckled behind.

Oh, Dutch conglomerate that rented its name to some island above the water once a month for the marketing of holiday lights, go back to vacuum tubes. those worked great. I might need some 27s if I get to that old radio project in the garage this winter.



hgbear (roger h) says:

November 2, 2009 at 11:18 am

[@GardenStater](#)

Feeding skwerls is a by-product of feeding birds.

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Drew says:

November 2, 2009 at 11:35 am

My four-year-old is finally saying "Squirrel" instead of "Skwerlo" . . . and I am sad. I'm going to keep calling them "Skwerlos" until I die.



hgbear (roger h) says:

November 2, 2009 at 11:43 am

[@Drew](#)

I am just glad I am not French and have to pronounce *écureuil*

(btw, darn cute baby talk)



browniejr says:

November 2, 2009 at 11:44 am

[@teach5](#)

Most of the smaller kids needed prompting, but got out the "Trick or Treat" and "Thank you" (with the smaller kids it was "Twick o

Tweet” and “Tank you,” but that just made it better.

The worst was the group of 4 teenage/ high school boys that couldn't even be bothered- just held out their bags expecting a handout. These louts will be voting in a few years! One of them, couldn't even get his bag open because he was too busy talking on his cell phone. I just stood there and told him, “You really need to decide what you are trying to do, and FOCUS on it...” I gave him a candy and sent him on his way, rather than deal with the TP on my house/ eggs on the windows later.

Drew- (Boris Badenoff voice)- “Get moose and squirrel!”



Margaret says:

November 2, 2009 at 11:58 am

Too late for fertilizer. Fertilizer is an April-May and September-October product in MN. November 1 is too late, he'd be wasting his money when it ran off with the snow melt.



Spud says:

November 2, 2009 at 12:00 pm

@GardenStater

“... smiling like a raccoon eating fish guts.” That's near Lilexian and inspired a real laugh-out-loud (no acronyms please).

They don't have to bother with a remake of “Red Dawn”, as the Chinese are already doing something about American greed. Those folks from the Orient are buying up commodities as fast as they can get their hands on them, and Uncle Sam's credit card is maxed out. I don't see how the Chinese would want anything to do with the Russians, except use them for their air force. Until the Chinese can figure out how to assemble an effective air force, they won't be invading anytime soon.



juanito - John Davey says:

November 2, 2009 at 12:13 pm

bgbear (roger h) :

oops, greaddy=greedy, damn tennis elbow. . .

@Lulu

I suspect even if they go with “dirty reds” they will temper it with several domestic traitors most likely from the business world and not likely politicians representing the California 8th, 9th, or 30th congressional districts.

And likely, soon the California 10th. Two words that I have to spit out:

John. Garamendi.



swschrads says:

November 2, 2009 at 12:16 pm

lots of fertilizer left in the right places. hardware stores, menards, etc.

limited number of elections tomorrow, prime fertilizer still available for the hauling... .

**Patrick** says:

November 2, 2009 at 1:06 pm

We had a few tricks-or-treaters show up. I think the group that annoyed me the most was a group of teens who showed up, one held out a bag, another held out his hands. The one with the bag had a costume, so I gave him a handful. The one holding out his hands? No costume, he got one piece. He then chucks it into the same bag, until a girl behind him produced another bag, more like a pillowcase, and said, I'm not lying here, "We're all in one bag." Socialism at its best, or worst. Take your pick. Their friendship probably ended late that night or early the next morning. Five teens arguing over one bag of Halloween candy would instigate the start of the next Civil War, and would split the country into 10 sections. China and Russia would then step in, "heal us", with Nigeria handling the financial sector.

We didn't do a whole lot when it came to decorating. We never did. My parents bought a plastic skull that has one of those 3-color LED lights mounted in at the Great Wall of China, because they didn't want to mess with carving a pumpkin. I set up my strobe light in the spare bedroom and had it going. We actually had two kids get freaked out by the pumpkin. The mother was scolding the oldest for being scared because he had gotten his younger brother started up. The oldest was probably 5 or 6; the youngest 3 or 4. They wouldn't get anywhere near the door, since we had the skull right there at the door. I stepped out onto the wet pavement to hand out the candy, and the mother said "See?! Making him come out in his socks in this wet weather! We'll find a bathroom soon!" I thought the oldest one had already done so.

I told my mom that next year's decorating should involve that skull, a plastic black cauldron, a PVC pipe painted black, some dry ice, and some glow sticks. Perhaps some green-dyed water as well. She liked the idea. She thought of dressing up as a corpse sitting in a lawn chair, with the candy dish in her lap, and when kids came to grab the candy, she'd jump up and scare them. I told her that'd be too much: that little boy might actually wet himself, or worse.

**Grebmar** says:

November 2, 2009 at 1:21 pm

@Spud: Perhaps I am missing something, but Wikipedia ranks the Chinese Air Force as the third largest in the world, behind the US and Russia. Of course, "largest" doesn't necessarily mean "effective,"

The Chinese don't need to invade the US to do damage. They just need to stop making stuff for us in their factories. Bring us to our knees in a week, it would

**rbj** says:

November 2, 2009 at 1:33 pm

I only give the squirrels the heels of my bread — good bread made at The Fresh Market and not stuff like Wonderbread. I do it only to keep the squirrels hanging around as the dog loves to chase them even when they're up on the telephone wires. Good exercise for the dog.

Even though most of the leaves had turned color and fallen off in the two weeks before Halloween, the ones that were still on the trees seemed vibrant on Oct. 31. Then I took the dog to the park on Sunday, and the leaves all just looked a dull brown, as if they could

now quit their job of being brightly colored for Halloween.

And now we get two full months of the holiday it is too soon to mention.



browniejr says:

November 2, 2009 at 1:34 pm

Grebmar :

...

The Chinese don't need to invade the US to do damage. They just need to stop making stuff for us in their factories. Bring us to our knees in a week, it would

Alternatively, the Chinese could also just KEEP making stuff...

Lead Paint on Toys;

Poisoned Pet Food;

Chinese Drywall (extra sulphur for eating the plumbing, wiring, etc.);

I think John Garamendi supports all these.



Lulu says:

November 2, 2009 at 2:08 pm

@rbj

Sadly, I found out Fresh Market doesn't bake ANY of its stuff on the premises. It's baked somewhere else, frozen and trucked to the stores. Also, read the ingredients on that bread. Really good bread doesn't usually have a paragraph of ingredients, most of which end in -ose or -itol.

Don't get me wrong...I still like walking through Fresh Market's softly-lit, wood-paneled aisles while listening to classical music, but I'm cured of the notion that they actually are selling superior food.



Chris says:

November 2, 2009 at 2:16 pm

Nuclear attack? Maybe. Invasion? I doubt it. That's why we have a fleet of ballistic-missile carrying submarines, just in case. On the Red Dawn remake, it is already making me cringe, just thinking about it. At least in the original, which produced in the era of Reagan, the Soviets, Cubans and Nicaraguans were clearly the bad guys. I'm surprised that in this new version, the Russkies and Chicoms aren't invading to stop all of the horrible global-warming inducing pollution that we greedy Americans are churning out.



juanito - John Davey says:

November 2, 2009 at 2:35 pm

browniejr :

Alternatively, the Chinese could also just KEEP making stuff...

Lead Paint on Toys;

Poisoned Pet Food;

Chinese Drywall (extra sulphur for eating the plumbing, wiring, etc.);

I think *John Garamendi* supports all these.

When it comes to [Running Man](#) John Garamendi, there can be no doubt.



swschrads says:

November 2, 2009 at 2:43 pm

I am shocked, *shocked*, to think anybody could accuse Long March People's Red Army Consumer and Baby Food Factory Complex #32 of having a plan.



bgbear (roger h) says:

November 2, 2009 at 3:18 pm

I know, the new Red Dawn is not really an Invasion but, a clever hoax used to whip us up into a patriotic fervor (in Kurt Vonnegut's *Siren of Titan*, they kidnapped people and brainwashed them to be the invading "Martian" army that was easily defeated and gave the planet a sense of unity or something like that).

I wonder how many Chinese or Russians you could kidnap before they would notice?



John Robinson says:

November 2, 2009 at 3:28 pm

Apropos of nothing, the "grinning like a raccoon eating fish guts" line I stole from P.J. O'Rourke. Just for full disclosure.



Kevin says:

November 2, 2009 at 3:34 pm

'endrunkenate'– such a cromulent word!!



juanito - John Davey says:

November 2, 2009 at 3:53 pm

bgbear (roger h) :

I know, the new Red Dawn is not really an Invasion but, a clever hoax used to whip us up into a patriotic fervor (in Kurt Vonnegut's Siren of Titan, they kidnapped people and brainwashed them to be the invading "Martian" army that was easily defeated and gave the planet a sense of unity or something like that).

Hey – kind of like *The Watchmen*. I hope Rorschach makes it in this one though...



Elise says:

November 2, 2009 at 4:21 pm

"John Turtorro acted like a man who got repetitive stress injuries from flushing his thespian credentials down the toilet" – I love you James!

**lanczos** says:

November 2, 2009 at 6:56 pm

Here in The Glorious Peoples' Heroic Revolutionary Soviet Of Austin, the only plants that have *really* changed leaf-color – green to blood-red – and dropped their leaves and seed pods are the Poison Ivy plants.

**MikeH** says:

November 2, 2009 at 7:49 pm

I think the goal of the movie studios is to remake every movie that has come out between 1965 and 2001. I am surprised that Spielberg is not planning a remake of 2001: A Space Odyssey, Quentin Tarantino remaking ET: The Extra Terrestrial or Michael Mann remaking Pulp Fiction.

It's been a long day for me

**Greifer** says:

November 2, 2009 at 9:57 pm

Didn't you go to Target once this weekend? Didn't you see the Post Cereal retro boxes???? My Gosh, Man, I'm dumbstruck. Go to the cereal aisle and see for yourself!

**grs** says:

November 3, 2009 at 12:07 am

teach5 :

Have to ask everyone: Is it just me, or don't kids know to say, "Trick or Treat!" when they come to the door??? Our trick or treaters would come up, look at our pumpkins, etc., then stand there staring at us. They had all the enthusiasm of cold pizza! What's the deal?

I've been noticing this, but if the kids just stand there when I open the door, so do I. They eventually figure it out. Also, some kids are saying "Happy Halloween" instead of "Trick or treat." That's insufficient for a treat as far as I'm concerned. Gotta keep the traditions alive.

**rbj** says:

November 3, 2009 at 7:50 am

Lulu — thanks. Sign. The bread is still better tasting than the normal grocery store type. I've only been able to find once place that has only a sentence of ingredients. And that was in Poughkeepsie, NY. circa 1989.

**Lardlad** says:

November 3, 2009 at 12:16 pm

My new desktop wallpaper, hope you don't mind!

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Thanks for dropping by! Feel free to join the discussion by leaving comments, and stay updated by subscribing to the RSS feed. That's the default copy from the developers! I'm just adding this, and will add something more, later. Who cares? You're reading this? Really?

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ABOUT

Monday Matchbook

Comic Sins

TUESDAY, NOV. 03

on NOVEMBER 3, 2009 · 66 COMMENTS · in DOMESTIC LIFE, THE SEVENTIES

Interesting evening with our financial advisor. He dropped by for the annual chat. He's also family, so it's a social occasion. Somehow he had ginned the books to make it look like we didn't lose everything in the Crash, which is nice. Had some interesting recommendations for investment strategies, and I was a bit surprised when he said "precious metals." But I realized I'd misunderstood when he got out an attractive mahogany case, and showed us these lovely medals – not the real thing, but collectibles struck by the Franklin Mint, with certificates of authenticity that said they were authentic reproductions. I guess they're only making 500,000 of them, and then the molds will be destroyed. We need to act *soon*.

I said I'd think about it. Otherwise, it was the usual tweaking and rejiggering, shifting money from one blobby bucket to another. Fie to this sector! We are reducing our position in Emerging Markets by 1.2%, and shifting it to Moonwalking Markets (they look like they're going forward but they're actually retreating; it's a short-sell position) and we are moving cash into something called "fire," which promises to consume 100% of our contributions. Usually you need to be in a bear market for a long time to achieve that rate, but he knows a guy.

In all seriousness – hah, I've been kidding, in my inimitable way – we got the Reassuring Brochure, which they give you when things have really headed into the crapper at Mach 2. It reassures you that stocks, like shingles and Elton John, always come back over time, and you can't time the market.

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140 OR SO

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A BOOK I RECOMMEND

Correction: you shouldn't time the market. Because it might be just a correction. Actually, I think I can time the market. I have an internal Froth Detector that aahh-oooh-gaaah when I sense the peak of the boom. When someone somewhere builds the world's tallest building, it's time to cash out. (This does not include proposed buildings – if you'd quit the market when they announced the [Larkin Tower](#), you would have missed half the boom of the 20s.) When retail hits the point where 80% of the stores are operating on the assumption that you have hundreds of dollars to spend on things like organic dog food treats and saffron-scented candles, you might want to eye the exits.

It helps to be contrary, I guess. Things are never as bad as they seem. Things are never as good as they seem. Except for the times when they are – but those are either wonderful moments in your own life or horrible macro-scale moments. Even so: someone fell in love on 9/11. Maybe even more than usual.

I've been watching "They Shoot Horses, Don't They?" over the last few nights. Stupid title for a movie. I don't know, *do they?* How should I emphasize the words? There are several possibilities:

THEY shoot horses, which suggests there are evil anti-horse forces abroad in the land

They **SHOOT** horses, which means horses really get the business, unlike other animals, which are slapped or kicked or given a Dutch rub

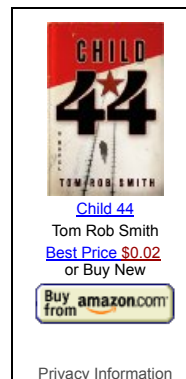
They shoot **HORSES**, which would either reassure you, because you're not a horse or have a horse or exist anyplace in that "first they came for the X demographic, but I said nothing" moral construction

THEY SHOOT HORSES, which suggests you're a soldier in an army that has been attacked by forces wielding enormous cannons that hurl dead horses vast distances

And then there's the Don't They? It's either flat and sarcastic, or nervous and questioning. It only takes about half an hour to realize that the title will probably end up in the mouth of the hard-headed, bitter, cynical, nasty, unfriendly biatch played by Jane Fonda; if someone says something nice about horses, she will respond, *well, they shoot horses, don't they.* Because she's just that kind of gal. The Depression did it to her.

If you haven't seen the movie, it's about a [dance marathon](#): couples drag each other around the floor for days, hoping to be the last ones standing. I'm half-way through the movie, and since it's a product of the late sixties – a period that would stretch well into the seventies, really – it drapes the tale with the heavy musty caul of Metaphor. Not sure you could do it differently, really; Pollack was an excellent director, and it's an almost faultless film. You just suspect that the same story told straight would be just as good. Perhaps even better in its own way.

Later today: Comic Sins. Busy-as-hellacious-hell today. But whaddyagonna



THE PAST AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

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do. Sit home? Polish your medals?

Pass it along, if you wish



66 RESPONSES TO *tuesday, nov. 03*



Dick Hassing says:
November 3, 2009 at 2:47 pm

All the talk about horses and the mention of Richard Harris prompted me to go a list of “Nonviolent Westerns” by Theodore Koutz at mcsweeneys.net that I found “printer worthy” a few years ago. The list of Nonviolent Westerns goes like this:

- “A Man Called My Little Pony”
- “A Fist Full of Arthritis”
- “High Plains Skee-Ball”
- “The Metaphorical Gunfighter”
- “The Aggressive Panhandler of Malt Liquor Junction”
- “The Affordable Tract Housing of Sheetrock Flats”
- “El Doritos”

I love the reworking of “A Man Called Horse”.



browniejr says:
November 3, 2009 at 2:52 pm

@John
Maribor: Strelnim ranam je v bolnišnici podlegla tudi 31-letna natarica =
Maribor: bullet wounds in the hospital, succumbing to a 31-year-old waitress

per the Google’s Translator on iGoogle: http://www.google.com/ig?hl=en&referrer=ign_n
(Slovenian to English)- perhaps the cat belonged to the 31-year old waitress, and it is going out to seek revenge? (For all that Corporatism that is rampant in Yugoslavia?)

Meanwhile, back in the thread: Dern’s career actually jumped the shark during Silent Running when he taught the robots how to play poker...



hgbear (roger h) says:
November 3, 2009 at 2:56 pm

@Dick Hassing
hee hee



hgbear (roger h) says:
November 3, 2009 at 3:09 pm

browniejr :

Meanwhile, back in the thread: Dern’s career actually jumped the shark during Silent Running when he taught the robots how to play poker...

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HOST WITH THE MOST

Loved that film as a kid so, I forgave Bruce Dern for shooting the Duke.

Talk about jumping the shark, I did not realize that the site "JumptheShark.com" had been bought by TV Guide which itself "jumped the shark" long before it changed the size of the publication.

Also jumping the shark is TV shows that make self aware references to jumping the shark.

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 **HostingMatters**



gemartini says:
November 3, 2009 at 3:38 pm

How do you say..... The Big Red One? Years and years ago I heard a local TV reporter giving a blurb on this movie, but he inflected 'Red' instead of 'One' so it came out 'the big RED one'. Apparently he had no clue as to what the basis of the movie was.



Leslie in AZ says:
November 3, 2009 at 4:35 pm

I am picturing giving assorted animals a dutch rub....ha!



Trogdor says:
November 3, 2009 at 4:57 pm

I glanced at this and read bear as bar. "Usually you need to be in a bear market for a long time to achieve that rate"

So a bar market is what we are in now, invest in cocktails. He knows a guy's sister's second cousin who made a killing.



Baby M says:
November 3, 2009 at 5:00 pm

[@Al Federber](#)
Or, as Mussolini famously put it:

"Everything within the State, nothing outside the State, nothing opposed to the State." *See also, e.g.,* North Korea, Venezuela, Cuba, single-payer health care systems. Don't think you can make a fair case that the United States as a whole is an example, though the General Motors bailout is a step in the corporatist direction.

But don't dog *Silent Running*. I kinda liked that one, back in the day.



Lou Shumaker says:
November 3, 2009 at 5:20 pm

"and he gave us Laura to boot."

She never booted me, darn it.



claire says:
November 3, 2009 at 7:19 pm

Didn't he die in True Grit?

UNTOLD RICHES AWAIT YOU

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**Borderman** says:

November 3, 2009 at 9:13 pm

*claire :**Didn't he die in True Grit?*

No. In True Grit, U.S. Marshal Rooster Cogburn (John Wayne) is last seen in a freeze frame jumping a horse over a fence on his ranch. Not only did he survive the freeze frame, he was very much alive for the sequel six years later, "Rooster Cogburn" which co-starred Katherine Hepburn.

**Bob W.** says:

November 3, 2009 at 11:57 pm

Speaking of Silent Running, as much as I enjoyed that movie in '72, I'd like to have seen it made according to the original script:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silent_Running

(scroll down to the paragraph under "Production".

**Lileks** says:

November 4, 2009 at 1:05 am

The original script sounds awesome. The filmed version: sigh.

**Ross** says:

November 4, 2009 at 3:40 am

First, I just knew there be Bruce McCall fans amongst the Bleatniks(my favorite collection is "Zany Afternoons": 'Where Quality Is A Slogan').

Second, what is all this nonsense about Dern's career being over? The man has worked pretty much non-stop for 50 years. That's a career, whether you or I watch that actor's work or not. The people doing the casting know he's a master character actor. I think the confusion comes from the fact that one of Wayne's policies(once he had Batjack up & making movies) was to always have an up-and-coming male actor(or a popular young celeb trying to be an actor) in the cast, usually as the juvenile lead(Ricky Nelson, James Caan, Christopher George, Roman Gabriel—even Dennis Hopper, the one he regretted hiring). That's kinda where Dern was when he accepted the role in "The Cowboys"; that he stayed the same craftsman he always was & didn't become the next Redford or DeNiro is irrelevant.

**Ross** says:

November 4, 2009 at 4:10 am

I offer two fairly-recent examples of Dern's supposedly dead career: a fine turn as the perfect antagonist-you-love-to-hate in "Down Periscope" and a nice job as a TX cop in a police procedural from a couple years ago with David Keith & Kelly McGillis, "Perfect Prey"(a movie I find almost uncomfortable watching, given the plot and McGillis' harrowing personal history).



Borderman says:

November 4, 2009 at 12:38 pm

Ross :

what_is_ all this nonsense about Dern's career being over? that he stayed the same craftsman he always was & didn't become the next Redford or DeNiro is irrelevant.

Maybe it's because he's just really good at playing moody-psycho-losers, as is his latter day spiritual brethren Sean Penn, but I just don't even like to even *look* at the guy (Dern or Penn). I still smile when I think of his character in "The Cowboys" dragged behind a horse down a stony river bed. Revenge is a dish best served cold after all.

Long before "The Cowboys," I saw "The King of Marvin Gardens" with Dern and Jack Nicholson. Terrific little movie, but I remember walking home from the theater that night thinking, "That guy Bruce Dern really gives me the creeps." Perhaps that's the very reason why Dern was cast as the heavy in "The Cowboys," because the producer or casting director or Duke himself recognized Dern could deliver the requisite amount of moody-psycho-loser mojo, a very necessary quality in an actor who will portray the sadistic murder of a screen legend.

Whether he has 50 years of a brilliant craftsman's career or not, it's a preference thing. I do not care for what he brings to the table (or the screen). As far as I'm concerned, as well as another Bleater or two in this thread, Bruce Dern's career ended when he blasted John Wayne to pieces. It was already on short notice with me after "The King of Marvin Gardens." Watch him all you want. You are as free to do that as I am to avoid his work. To paraphrase Zappa, "I, for one, care less for [him]."

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updated by subscribing
to the RSS feed. That's the
default copy from the
developers! I'm just
adding this, and will add
something more, later.
Who cares? You're
reading this? Really?

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ABOUT

Comic Sins

Out of Context Ad Challenge

WEDNESDAY, NOV. 4

on NOVEMBER 4, 2009 · 29 COMMENTS · in DOMESTIC LIFE, WOOF

This was a stem-to-stern, rock ‘em / sock ‘em day. Here’s an example, ripped from the breathless annals of daily life: I’m tweeting something terribly important on my iPhone, standing outside, enjoying a tiny stub of a post-lunch cigar, and no matter how many times I backspace, I cannot delete a period. I figure something is wonky. I shake the phone to undo. This is the modern version of pounding a fist on the top of the TV, except that it’s supposed to work. Nothing. I close the text-entry field. I close the program. I restart the program. I hit the “add tweet” button. The period is still there. Waiting for me.

Unless . . . no, it’s too crazy. But maybe, just *maybe*, it’s something on the screen.

And so it was! The whole day was like that. Crisis after crisis.

Well, no. As the military vet described war: long stretches of boredom punctuated by terriers. I managed to end up at the animal hospital with my dog, who was not at all happy to be here, and expected needles. How many treats does it take to get a dog’s mind off needles? The world may never know, but I’m going to go out on a limb and say 17.

Back up: after this morning’s news show, for which I performed only TeLeProMpTeR duty, I headed off to shoot a video about the discounts stores in the neighborhood gave you for wearing the “I Voted” sticker. I have this argument every year with people, and always manage to sound like a

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140 OR SO

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CLICK - AND SAVE!

A BOOK I RECOMMEND

churlish killjoy, but I don't like those stickers. They seem a bit smug and self-contented, but that's just me being smug and self-contented for different reasons. Of course, no one had any discounts this year. Last year Ben & Jerry's gave you ice cream; this year, nada. The problem with these shoots is getting permission, since most store employees have a natural freak-out when cameras come into the store. No one ever got fired for not letting camera people film something in their store, after all, and given the cinched-shut rectal apertures of many managers, fearful that a camera crew might DESTROY THE BRAND FOREVER, go into lock-down mode. So.

At the video store, I asked for the usual manager. I've had fine dealings with her before; she's a great film fan, and we always have great conversations.

"She was fired," said the clerk. Oh. Well. Crap. She gave me a sheet with the District Managers' phone numbers – but I had to give it back before I left, lest it fall into enemy hands. Sigh. Shot the Off to a dry cleaners; I'd cleared it before, but now they were having Second Thoughts. What is this for? What's this about? Where will it be? What is the velocity of a fully-laden Tuskan Swallow? Again, I understand their trepidation, and it goes against my Nature to foist myself into these situations. But duty, etc. So we did that, ran across the street, and tried to do it at a liquor store. The managers were in a meeting. Could they be interrupted? I know one of them. Say it's James from around the way.

No: the door was *locked*.

Locked? What are they doing in there, coordinating a liquor delivery for SPECTRE?

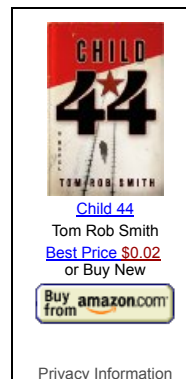
The sub-manager grinned and said "I'm going to make an executive decision here. Because there's no publicity like free publicity." Bless you. We did a bit, and I bought a bottle. Next: the coffee shop. No manager.

Said the clerk, a good guy, with very large holes in his ears: *we're like all kind of managers*.

Perfect. How about it? *Sure*. So we shot another sequence. Then I got Natalie from the bus stop, and had an idea: see if I can get a discount at the vet for the dog, by putting an "I Voted" sticker on Jasper. Loaded the dog and child into the car, returned to the neighborhood where we were shooting, and dealt with a very unsure and nervous canine. This is the Place of Poking, after all, the house that smells like fellow-dog-fear. Usually he gets out of the car, but this time he planted. I had to stand on the street with my arse hanging into traffic, in the rain, pushing him out while daughter pulled the leash.

This is my job, and I do it well.

Once inside we plied him with enough treats to take his mind off the sticking he wasn't going to get. I even ate one. Not bad. If you marketed them as whole-grain multivitamins with a saucy beef top-note and sold them at hunting goods stores, you could make a million. *Bond with your dog. Eat the*



THE PAST AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

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same treat.

Done.

[HERE IS THE VIDEO](#). Click [HERE](#) for all the doggy joy.

Home. Out again. Drop off kid at choir. Home. Twenty-seven minutes of concentrated nap – it was so dense I was in REM within 5 seconds of opening the box of pre-nap happy glide-path thoughts – then up for the second shift. Wrote three pieces for various places tonight; took a break and tweaked the site while I listened to a “Gunsmoke.” Matt Dillon had to kill a man, but he needed killing. Shot a woman in the face. He did not, however, kill the man’s son, who rode into town looking for vengeance. Also, Chester said “My goodness, Mister Dillon” and Doc was cynical. It amazes me that they got seven seasons of radio out of the most elemental Western concepts in the book, and each show is different.

So that’s it: stem to stern. More of the same tomorrow, then an interview with some author named “Steve King” – we have half an hour, and Lord knows what we’ll talk about. It will all culminate in a glorious Friday, as they always do.

For now: The Day of the Hump. Out of Context Ad Challenge en route around 10:30 or so. See you soon.

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Pass it along, if you wish



29 RESPONSES TO *wednesday, nov. 4*



hpoulter says:
November 4, 2009 at 5:21 am

Good punchline – “I’m going to Chicago”. Two links to the video, too. Musta wanted to make extra sure we saw it.



Denise says:
November 4, 2009 at 8:13 am

Did you ever get your coffee?
From a Jasper fan from way back, thanks for including him in this video. 😊



rbj says:
November 4, 2009 at 8:29 am

My dog is weird in that he actually eagerly goes into the vet’s office. It’s only when he’s finally on the table that he gets nervous. But then again he’s on a special diet so sometimes I take him just to go get a twenty pound bag of kibble.

HOST WITH THE MOST



Jeff says:
November 4, 2009 at 8:32 am

As long as that King guy isn't running for office, it should be interesting (and if he offers you a winter break with your family watching a big old house he has up in the mountains, say no).



Mark O'Polo says:
November 4, 2009 at 8:51 am

At the station where I work, the person on TeLeProMpTeR duty is called the promptologist. Lends an air of class to the thing.



Mark O'Polo says:
November 4, 2009 at 8:52 am

er, make that promptologist.



Julia says:
November 4, 2009 at 8:55 am

Vote early, vote often!
Thanks for including Jasper – he is looking very well.
Please put up a link to the King interview when you have it. I am a fan of both of you as writers and look forward to hearing you converse!



teach5 says:
November 4, 2009 at 8:57 am

Love the sticker on Jasper's head. Poor baby, being forced into movies like that. Exploitation at its worst..('Can't get rid of that extra period...)



Jon says:
November 4, 2009 at 9:00 am

Well in Chicago, Jasper could have voted.



hpoulter says:
November 4, 2009 at 9:17 am

I got rid of the permanent periods on my screen (but all that white-out is driving me crazy)



juanito - John Davey says:
November 4, 2009 at 10:03 am

Jon :
Well in Chicago, Jasper could have voted.

Twice.



juanito - John Davey says:
November 4, 2009 at 10:09 am

What is the velocity of a fully-laden Tuskan Swallow?

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I don't think a day goes by where I don't hear some Monty Python reference. But... its *Air Speed* velocity. African or European varieties will suffice, and either laden or unladen will do.

Now if only an occasion ever presented itself where I could throw in 'moistened bint' I'd experience Python Nirvana. Rapture.



Al Federber says:

November 4, 2009 at 10:09 am

Note to businesses from inquiring media: If you are innocent, you have nothing to fear.



bob lipton says:

November 4, 2009 at 10:11 am

@Jon

juanito – John Davey :

Jon :

Well in Chicago, Jasper could have voted.

Twice.

Nonsense. Jasper isn't dead.

Bob



Dr Alice says:

November 4, 2009 at 10:26 am

That video was a hoot, James. Nice work and it was nice to see Jasper. Looking forward to your interview with Stephen King.



hpoulter says:

November 4, 2009 at 10:28 am

But why a "Tuskan" swallow? The only bell that rings for me is "Tusken" raiders, from Tatooine ("They ride single file to hide their numbers").

The Host is free-associating again.

OT, looks like the Diner archives are repaired. I didn't find any busted links. Yay.



Trogdor says:

November 4, 2009 at 11:04 am

I have this argument every year with people, and always manage to sound like a churlish killjoy, but I don't like those stickers.

Pros and Cons to everything. I've worn them with the thought that people might think, "hey that idiot voted, maybe I should too". I've also not liked them because you think people will say, "Oh, mister

high and mighty voter you, I bet you voted for change". Either way you can't win, narcissism is after you, because really, nobody thinks about you – that's what I try to tell my son when he doesn't like his haircut.



hgbear says:

November 4, 2009 at 11:22 am

James is much kinder looking than Mike Wallace, what's to fear?



Stjohnsmythe says:

November 4, 2009 at 11:37 am

@Jon

Curious if Jasper ever received a pre-approved credit card offer.

Got my "I Voted" sticker, all for picking three of the six unknowns for the board of trustees at my local community college. Not even a millage this year.



Spud says:

November 4, 2009 at 12:24 pm

I started to wonder if a killjoy could be perceived as anything but "churlish" (pleasant? noncondescending?) but me 'ead started to 'urt.

Where I vote they hand out the "I Voted" stickers as you exit the polling place, from the guy who watches the ballot box. Kids love 'em! I did not get one (sticker, not kid!) yesterday as I live a half mile outside of the city limits, so no voting for me.



Preptile says:

November 4, 2009 at 12:36 pm

Woof indeed.

Did anyone ever point out that SPCA is an acronymn?

If Jasper felt in need of sprinkling the upholstery of your

Frankenmobile

it would serve you right.

Incontinence would be inconsequential in the greater scheme of things.

It would also Karmalize your sadistic misbehaviour.

My pup wasn't pleased to find himself parked at the vet once, and when I went inside

to borrow a leash ,he hid in another car.

Hating it as he did, I only took him when I had to.



Dave (in MA) says:

November 4, 2009 at 12:41 pm

Interesting how in the Age of ACORN nobody bats an eye at the idea of a dog voting–hell, they even offer material rewards for it.



fizzbin says:

November 4, 2009 at 12:57 pm

Re: doggie treats – one should ask a vet what becomes of all the dead doggies and kitties in the freezer out back. Was that a saucy "beef"

top-note? Or was it essence of Fido with a hint of PweciousKitty?
Bwah-ha-ha-ha!!



Pam-EL says:

November 4, 2009 at 4:04 pm

“long stretches of boredom punctuated by terriers.”

James, you write so damned well. Never stop.

I am also of the small number who will admit to have tasted their doggy's treats, just for the hell of it. Seriously crunchy, but not bad. I draw the line at pig ears, though.



curtsnide says:

November 4, 2009 at 5:59 pm

“long stretches of boredom punctuated by terriers” is good. I could see it working in a Burns and Allen sketch with Gracie thinking that's what she heard or that's the saying....



Greta says:

November 4, 2009 at 9:32 pm

This afternoon, the link was about voting (but videos are blocked at work so I couldn't see it). Now that I am home, I want to see Jasper in all his doggy glory, but the link goes to Prep Football?



Greifer says:

November 5, 2009 at 12:02 am

I hate the I Voted sticker, but not because it's smug. I hate them because I have no interest in reminding people that would not otherwise know there was an election in which to vote, to vote. Less voter turnout, please. That's my motto.



Ross says:

November 5, 2009 at 2:47 am

Speaking of being “punctuated(or, rather, punctured) by terriers”, our schnauzer when I was a kid hated when we'd have one of her treats; they used to make these miniature crunchy, slightly sweet donuts in jewel-tone colors that we kinda liked & Horlick's Malt tablets('course, she never noticed that we _didn't_ get peeved when she'd get some of Mom's chop suey, spaghetti, et al.). My experience with management tells me the real reason chain/franchise places don't want their stores/staff on film is they fully expect you to inadvertently document some brain-dead action or utterance by those employees(or the less-than-perfect condition of the place). Given our experiences w/the service industry, you gotta admit the fear is justified.



Fred says:

November 19, 2009 at 11:18 pm

So the link appears only to be good until they post a new video. Since I'm behind and only slowly catching up I had to hunt it down...

<http://www.startribune.com/video/?vid=69007167&c=y&page=5&f=n&elr=KArks5PhDcU9PhDcU9PhDcU5PhDco8P77jyPhU>

I suppose I should look into how that do that 'tinyurl' thing but then I've seen a lot of those that don't link to nuttin...

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THURSDAY, NOV. 05: STREAM O' CONSCIOUSNESS

on NOVEMBER 5, 2009 · [79 COMMENTS](#) · in [DOMESTIC LIFE](#), [POP CULTURE](#), [THE SEVENTIES](#)

Flotsam and jetsam today; big work night and even more to come tomorrow. I'd feel guilty about this if I was running a pay site, AND there wasn't an enormous update over in Black and White World that features some of the wildest, most striking sets in any movie, ever – let alone a small B-picture. But patience.

Speaking of paysites – new piece on the pleasures of small-town boneyards up at [theqor.com](#) – but more on that as the week goes on.

Link: Rather old site – at least I hope so – but has some [heartbreaking postwar California postcards](#). Lots of architecture that will appeal to Mad Men fans, even though MM's period was the start of the age of diseased, confused modernism. (One of the many things the show gets right is the cluttered, fussy domestic interiors; all you have to do is look at the faux-rococo Frenchy infestations in the early 60s hotel brochures, and you know it's spot-on. For some reason lamps were particularly hit hard. The period between 1962 and 19...oh, I don't know, 1988? was a nadir of lamp style. Big ceramic monsters with puffy shades, crappy plastic inverted bowls – ugh. It took the rise of the drafting-table lamp, with its utilitarian industrial design, to bring some clarity back to the Lamp Genre. But I don't know what I'm

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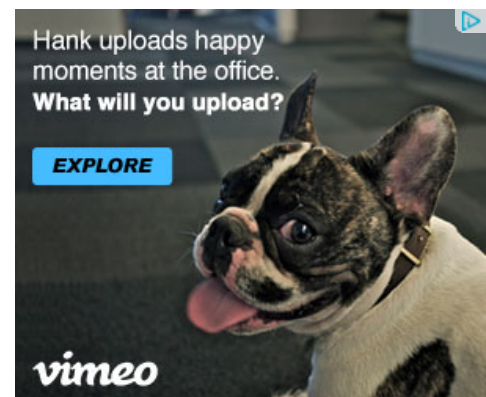
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A BOOK I RECOMMEND

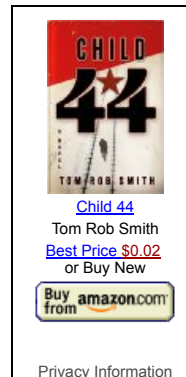
talking about. I just know I bought a lamp in 1989, and I'd buy it again today, and build an entire room around it – if I went modern, which I won't.)

Driving to work this morning I heard “Crazy on You” by Heart for the 493,934th time, but this time I listened to it, having previously just thought “Oh, right, change the station.” Wasn't like I had my hands full; there's a button on the steering wheel for jumping off to the next well-chewed piece of pop cud. Perhaps because I came in on something other than the chorus, which is the most pedestrian part of the song. The rest is rather good. The chord progressions have the knack of sounding new and inevitable, which is no small trick, and it has the sheen and canny mix 70s songs often did quite well.

That always reminds me of a guy I worked with in a Pizza Hut, who loved “Smoke From a Distant Fire” for its production, not its actual musical quality. I hated that song – eyes have a mist! From a smoke from a dist! Yes your eyes have a mist! From a smoke from a dist! But listen to how the instruments are seperated, he'd say. Stuff like this was invariably described as “tasty,” and invariably played by thin California studio musicians with close-cropped beards, aviator glasses – smoked, of course, perhaps by a fire in closer proximity – and stupid Chuck Mangione hats. Oh, the twaddle that filled the jukeboxes then. The banality of the radio. It was lamp-bad.

Don't get me started on TV of the era. But do get me started on TV today: I forgot to record “V” the other night, and if I'd had a TiVo it might have realized I wanted to see it. My new DVR couldn't care less what I want. I don't ask it to record, it doesn't. Hey, I just work here, don't ask me. I found myself looking for it on iTunes – nope – or Hulu – not yet – and this almost brought back the era of childhood TV, where you got one shot, and there wasn't any pausing it for a phone call or a bathroom break or to get another shot of salt for the popcorn. Records you could play over right away; a movie you could see if you sat in your chair and waited for the next showing. TV happened in real time. No cliffhangers, either; no “story arcs.” Each ep was a self-contained tale to which few other episodes would ever refer. Exceptions: Star Trek, which may explain why it was so popular and seemed so different. Characters didn't return, except for Harcourt Fenton Etcetera, but entire species did, bringing with them backstories and characteristics around which the fanboy could build all sorts of giddy nerdy speculation. Some of the shows had recurring villains – Dr. Loveless, on the great “Wild Wild West,” and the best heavy of them all, Wo Fat, in “Hawaii 5-0.” Courtly, merciless, worldly: perfect ChiCom foil. By then the Russian agents were either Commubots without emotion, or a fanciful projection of our own hopes: they were Russians in the classic Romantic, soulful sense, in Europe but not of it. They always loved to quote poetry. Take away the liquor and the lit, and the longing to be regarded as the inheritors of the Enlightenment, and you had the Chinese Communists – the real Red Menace, because those dudes were *cold*.

I'd love to see a study of the way Russian Communists were portrayed after, oh, 1963, 64. At the height of the Peril they were hard, hard mofos – listen to some old radio shows like “I Was a Communist for the FBI,” and you'll hear



THE PAST AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

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THE DISTANT PAST

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what I mean. It's not quite Borees and Natasha territory, but close; anyone allied with the cause was a heartless SOB, ruled by fear and cruelty. The shows seem quaint now, but of course we're not living an era where half of Europe is occupied by an illiberal clique of oligarchical collectivists. Anyway: somewhere in the 60s we invented the concept of the Cuddly Commie, someone who was either amusingly harmless, a blowhard with a bagful of reheated cliches, or the world-weary literate fellow who was really just as free as us, in a way, and thus an argument for the fatuity of a bipolar world. This idea took a long time to expire, and was last seen in a Star Trek: Next Gen episode, where Picard says "can you believe that people once went to war for different economic systems." As if that was the small sticking point.

They never quite explain how Roddenberry's vision of a future without money or religion evolved, or worked, or managed to fill the needs in the human spirit that find manifestation in, oh, things like money, or religion. Trek characters were allowed religion if was based on a non-divine dead guy, be he Surak or Ka'less, but eventually they got old-time religion X 10 with the Bajorans – who started out as sorta-kinda Palestinian stand-ins, but turned into your basic New-Age guys with a priest class and a doctrine built around omniscient, distant god-types who lived in a wormhole and could make anything happen, except granting Avery Brooks the power of personal warmth. And I say that as someone who loved, loved "Deep Space Nine," and consider it the best of the post original-series shows. Better characters, better plots, better battles. Ronald D. Moore FTW, as the kids say.

So anyway. That's it. Now: [Black and White World](#). Enjoy!

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Pass it along, if you wish



79 RESPONSES TO *thursday, nov. 05: stream o' consciousness*



juanito - John Davey says:
November 5, 2009 at 2:48 pm

Say, the electric chair in *Stranger On The Third Floor* appears to belong to Lily Thomlin's "Edith Ann".

And that's the truth.

It appears that the majority of that film's budget was spent on shadows. I imagine that the 5 gallon economy bucket o' shadows wasn't even close to enough, and they had to use a tanker truck. Clean up must of been a chore too.



Kurt says:
November 5, 2009 at 3:02 pm

Love, love, love those L.A. postcards – it really was the place to be during that era. One thing, though, that's missing: smog. It was pretty bad then, before the advent of unleaded gasoline, catalytic

HOST WITH THE MOST

converters and the other tools of early-era pollution control. But they did something about it; by the mid-'60s Detroit was building "California Emissions" versions of cars.

You can tell a '66-'67 Ford/Lincoln/Mercury built for California sale by its rudimentary air pump system, which injected air into the engine's exhaust stream.



ech says:

November 5, 2009 at 3:03 pm

They never quite explain how Roddenberry's vision of a future without money or religion evolved, or worked, or managed to fill the needs in the human spirit that find manifestation in, oh, things like money, or religion.

I thought this was a failing when I watched it in first run. But I loved it anyway. A much better take on what the future could be like was *Babylon 5*. I never warmed to DS9, Voyager, or Enterprise. But B5 grabbed me and didn't let go. Religion was handled well in B5, to the point that one episode that dealt with some Christian monks on the station was nominated for some awards for TV that handled religion well. The series creator and writer of that episode J. Michael Straczynski daid:

"If you look at the long history of human society, religion – whether you describe that as organized, disorganized, or the various degrees of accepted superstition – has always been present. And it will be present 200 years from now... To totally ignore that part of the human equation would be as false and wrong-headed as ignoring the fact that people get mad, or passionate, or strive for better lives."



Percy Dovetonsils says:

November 5, 2009 at 3:10 pm

That J. Michael Straczynski quote may be the shrewdest thing ever said by someone in the entertainment industry.

Once I thought more deeply about the sort of society that would have no sort of money or commerce, and yet could produce a massive fleet of star cruisers and an accompanying paramilitary force, TNG (indeed, the whole Star Trek world) became a far more ominous show.



swschrads says:

November 5, 2009 at 3:14 pm

good production and a good chart got a lot of blah music onto the charts. some of it "music."

I like good technicals, too. but there has to be some "there" there as well. I've kept for almost 40 years a radio-promo 45 with dynamite bones, great production, never drops below -7 on the meter, lovely interplay across the instrument field, a sure hit. on a label that should have guaranteed sales among the folks who admire everything the A&R guys from () ever turned up.

with loser lyric content on par with a basement-dwelling 7th grader who can't get kissed and is trying to upscale the experience so it sells to real kids who are developing a real life.

and that's the A side.

an object lesson in how much satin a pig really should wear.

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**Borderman** says:

November 5, 2009 at 3:46 pm

Rob :

These spies mostly weren't trying to steal atomic bomb secrets, they were working on "demoralization" projects. They worked to subvert minor politicians, writers, university profs and leading businessmen. They didn't try to make them into stalwart commies, they made them into "useful idiots" who would repeat "cuddly commie" blather, moral relativism and "you have to see it from their point of view" rhetoric...it certainly looks like they were pretty damned successful - we're still hip-deep in useful idiots.

No kidding they were successful. Look who's in charge!

http://rlv.zcache.com/barack_obama_socialism_joker_pink_sticker-p217597787856585415tdcj_525.jpg

I think that's the proof enough.

Thank you, Rob, for this post. I have tried, unsuccessfully, to make this case in conversation as you do so succinctly in so few words. Well done. Your Google references will supply much fodder next time I make the attempt.

What you outline is the basis of what shaped the present-day Democrat party, the personal philosophy of people like Barack Obama, and the prevalence of political correctness and the government-nanny culture. I'm not saying Obama, Pelosi, the Clintons, et al. are Soviet-era Communists. I'm saying they are the next best (or worst) thing.

I hope everyone checks out the Google references to "Boris Morros" and "Yuri Bezmenov".

**Borderman** says:

November 5, 2009 at 3:50 pm

I've tried to post a comment here several times today, but ix-nay. No prob posting earlier in the week. Maybe I'm doing something that is no-go for comments. Is there a FAQ or rules on how to post here?

**hgbear (roger h)** says:

November 5, 2009 at 3:50 pm

Those postcards are heart breaking, living in upper California, I often forget how much I love(d) LA.

In the SF bay area they expect you to hate LA for no good reason (I grew closer to LA). I can tell you right now, I think people are friendlier in LA than SF, and LA no one cares if you like SF.

**hgbear (roger h)** says:

November 5, 2009 at 3:53 pm

@Borderman

best I can tell there are certain tabu words related to spam that blocks posting and darned if I have all of them figured out.

I re-write hoping I accidentally discover "the word"



DryOwlTacos says:

November 5, 2009 at 4:03 pm

I liked Enterprise but didn't love it. I never bought Scott Bakula as Capt. Archer because he just can't do "tough." Smart, yes. Witty, yes. But every time he had to face down a villain, I always expected, after the villain slunk (slinked?) away, that he would slump and sigh, "Hoo boy." The Male Partner of my house shared the sentiment of many that Jolene Blalock was the hottest. vulcan. evar. and boy, could they—I mean she—act.

There was much to admire in all of the iterations of Star Trek to date, and I doubt I missed an episode of any of them. But I am here to tell ya right now that I am totally on board for the Chris Pine/Zachary Quinto/et al New Original Series! Can we have some moar, pls?



Ed Singel says:

November 5, 2009 at 4:06 pm

[@bgbear \(roger h\)](#)

I concur with this. I live in Redondo Beach, near LA. Many years ago I visited my brother who lived for a short time in Vallejo, near SF. During this visit I discovered that there is apparently an intense rivalry between LA and SF that nobody in LA is aware of. I have never met anyone in my 34 years here that considered SF to be a rival or hated it because of this rivalry, yet it apparently is real up there.



Borderman says:

November 5, 2009 at 4:09 pm

OK, problem solved. Thanks, **bgbear**. No URLs. At least for me.

What I wanted to post was...

Rob :

These spies mostly weren't trying to steal atomic bomb secrets, they were working on "demoralization" projects. They worked to subvert minor politicians, writers, university profs and leading businessmen. They didn't try to make them into stalwart commies, they made them into "useful idiots" who would repeat "cuddly commie" blather, moral relativism and "you have to see it from their point of view" rhetoric...it certainly looks like they were pretty damned successful – we're still hip-deep in useful idiots.

No kidding they were successful. Look who's in the White House! I think that's all the proof we need (all I need anyway) the demoralization projects were a rousing success.

What you outline is the basis of what shaped the present-day left wing of the Democrat party, the personal philosophy of people like Barack Obama, and the rise and dominance of political correctness and the government-nanny culture. I'm not saying Obama, Pelosi, the Clintons, et al. are Soviet-era Communists. No, no. I'm saying their disdain for the traditional values of this country are directly descended from the demoralization projects.

I hope everyone checks out the Google references to "Boris Morros" and "Yuri Bezmenov".

Thank you, Rob, for this post. I have tried, unsuccessfully, to make this case in conversation as you do so succinctly in so few words. Well done. I had no knowledge of these names until today. No doubt your Google references will supply much fodder for a better presentation next time I make the attempt.



Vader says:

November 5, 2009 at 5:28 pm

Roddenberry's universe wasn't a product of evolution. It was created ex nihilo.



Mike Walsh says:

November 5, 2009 at 5:28 pm

If I were Fritz Lang I'd have demanded the arrest of the cinematographer of your noir film for stealing all my lighting cues from *M*. To say nothing of using them all over again with Peter Lorre.



Chris says:

November 5, 2009 at 6:05 pm

"Maybe some day I'll run across another person who agrees with me that Enterprise was the best post-TOS Trek series."

I rank it second, behind TOS. Voyager was probably the worst of the bunch for me, though I did watch most of it, because any new Trek is good Trek, especially when there is no other new Trek to watch. I liked Enterprise because the ship had flat-panel monitors, and switches that had labels on them, and warning/caution labels, and stuff would sometimes not work correctly, or break down, just like in real life. Oh, and Captain Archer had a pet Beagle named Porthos (though Picard did have his fishtank, but goldfish don't even come close to owning a dog.) I read that a lot of the gadgets and controls on the NX-01 Enterprise's bridge were taken from junk aircraft.



juanito - John Davey says:

November 5, 2009 at 6:27 pm

[@Ed Singel](#)

It's an inadequacy thing. Just like people in Sacramento feel inadequate to those in San Francisco. It's like being a younger sibling in a big family. I've been all over our state, and everyplace has something incredible to offer.

San Francisco is beautiful – or it was. It still is if you squint. It has fifty-footer syndrome – it looks best from fifty feet away.

Los Angeles is so diverse, both geographically and in terms of Urban / Suburban.

San Diego is fabulous.

Driving though wide swaths of the farmland of the Central Valley is impressive, as is riding through the areas north, like Chico, Redding, and Eureka. The main impression of California for me is that it so closely resembles the Mediterranean. Yet we have the deserts in the south, and the alpine area near Lake Tahoe. It's all so impressive to look at.

Except Fresno.

But that's just because Sacramento needs a rivalry where we can actually hold some hope of winning. Maybe. Someday.



Kurt says:

November 5, 2009 at 6:35 pm

That's the impression I got when looking at those L.A. shots – a bit of sadness because it was much better back then. There is one of a billboard offering houses one block from Huntington Beach for \$12,500 to \$15,300!

My parents moved from back east to California in March, 1960. My mom says her first impression was like paradise (lovely and green in the springtime, with nice mild temperatures).



Bleepless says:

November 5, 2009 at 7:21 pm

“V” will be on the ABC website on Saturday, Nov. 7. Or so those sneaky little lizards claim.



Ed Singel says:

November 5, 2009 at 7:54 pm

[@juanito – John Davey](#)

Even Fresno is just a two hour scenic drive from Yosemite.

I've always found California to be an amazing conglomeration of geography and culture, full of interesting and friendly people.

Now, if we could only get a government worthy of it.



MDG14450 says:

November 5, 2009 at 8:08 pm

It's not there now (doesn't come up in search, either by title or under Peter Lorre, or Elisha Cook Jr). Also, the TCM site lists it as not available on DVD. I'm guessing the only way it is available is as a digital copy from an old VHS tape.

My mistake—saw it at George Eastman House.

dustbury.com » Don't turn around says:

November 5, 2009 at 10:14 pm

[...] Der Kommissar's in town, but not to worry too much: [S]omewhere in the 60s we invented the concept of the Cuddly Commie, someone who was either amusingly harmless, a blowhard with a bagful of reheated cliches, or the world-weary literate fellow who was really just as free as us, in a way, and thus an argument for the fatuity of a bipolar world. This idea took a long time to expire, and was last seen in a Star Trek: Next Gen episode, where Picard says “can you believe that people once went to war for different economic systems.” As if that was the small sticking point. [...]



juanito - John Davey says:

November 5, 2009 at 11:43 pm

@Ed Singel

Exactly. More-so a government worthy of *us*.

And I kid about Fresno, because when you're on the losing end of the Sacramento / San Francisco self-esteem tussle, you gotta take it where you can get it.

Really I should have said Bakersfield.



Lileks says:

November 6, 2009 at 12:31 am

There's weirdness in the spam-catcher – sometimes too-frequent attempts or lots of links, or both, get you put in the spam bin, and I usually check that at day's end. (Busy.) I'll make sure to look tonight to see if there's something that was unfairly deemed spamtastic. And thanks for commenting!



fizzbin says:

November 6, 2009 at 1:13 pm

I love those L.A. postcards. The vehicular cluster fluffs at the uncontrolled intersections are a hoot 😊

Cuddly Commies? I guess it's just me but I don't find the likes of The Obahmessiah, Mommy Pelosi, Harry "C C Boi" Reed, ad nauseam, very cuddable, heh heh 😊



Jeff Brokaw says:

November 6, 2009 at 3:56 pm

After reading this in the afternoon, guess the name of the first song I heard when I got home last night? Yep, "Smoke of a Distant Fire".

Yikes. I like my oldies, even some of the cheesier ones, but that one is pretty painful.



Jason says:

November 6, 2009 at 4:26 pm

I was C-Span last weekend and there was a guy giving a presentation about some journals written by the KGB Agent in charge of all the spies in the US. The infiltration ran deep in the academia, entertainment and news media circles. Many on the left, while not supporters of Communism, just didn't care. So when an agent would try to recruit them, they would decline, but they wouldn't report it either. As such, agents could move around rather freely in these circles without fear of being exposed, as nobody really saw them as a threat. A lot of the recruits were also just in it for the money, at least the ones that were actively transferring state secrets.



Ed Singel says:

November 6, 2009 at 9:34 pm

@juanito – John Davey

OK, I'll grant you Bakersfield. 😊



Mark E says:
November 7, 2009 at 4:33 pm

I heard "Smoke of a Distant Fire" in the grocery store today and now I've got the damned horn hook from it stuck in my head!



bubba says:
November 9, 2009 at 5:43 pm

If there's no money, why would I sign up for one of those really crummy jobs in the bowels of space ships?

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ABOUT

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Thursday, Nov. 05: Stream O' Consciousness

Monday Matchbook

FRIDAY! NOV. 06, MILLION-DOLLAR EDITION

on NOVEMBER 6, 2009 · [144 COMMENTS](#) · in [UNCATEGORIZED](#)

Nope. Bleatwise, it ain't happening.

Lest you think I'm thumb-twiddling, I did two videos today, two radio interviews, one interview with some guy named "Steve King," and then I had to work the transcript into a 32 inch story with a seven-inch sidebar. Apparently he's written some books. He's coming to town at the behest of the paper, and I got stuck with talking to him. Jeez: like we have to pimp every struggling author?

My colleague Neil Justin did the interview with the first person in the paper's "Talking Volumes" series, James Ellroy. I told King I was disappointed to draw him: aw crap, I got the normal guy.

If you're wondering: he's a cool guy. Gracious, funny, affable, effortlessly conversational. Spent the evening on the interview piece, which is due in the morning. Friday I have four videos to shoot and a column to write. That said:

There will be 100 Mysteries at the end of the day.

Until I return, a question for the comments: you are given a check for a million dollars, tax free. You have to spend it. You cannot use it on bills, or invest it, or just give it away. What would you do with it?

Me, I'd make a movie. And you?

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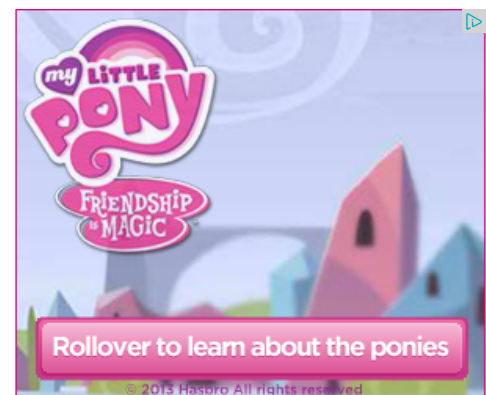
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A BOOK I RECOMMEND

Pass it along, if you wish



144 RESPONSES TO *friday! nov. 06, million-dollar edition*



rivlax says:
November 6, 2009 at 2:56 pm

Oh, forgot add...I'd buy a Bugatti Veyron:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jk1t6S737Cs>



Borderman says:
November 6, 2009 at 3:05 pm

swschrads :
I'd set up a "microloan" charity with it, 0 percent interest. you got five kids and the car dies so you can't get to your sorta-job, well, that would qualify. you pay back a buck or five bucks a week, because that's all somebody like that can squeeze out. the logistics are beyond Snap 'O' Fingers Business Plan, but it would have to be structured so it's tax-free, and most of the work is volunteer...but the million...goes back into the void whence it came, helping out a bit.

Yeah. Me too. What he said. Probably starting some kind of hostel/soup kitchen/language school for hapless souls who find themselves in my country without a clue or a peso or a way home. Until they could be helped down the legal path toward green cards, but along the lines of what **swschrads** describes above. **DIRECT, PRIVATE**, relief with nary a government fingerprint anywhere.

@bgbear (roger h):
Last Sunday at the sporting goods store near my house asked the guys behind the counter, who stood in front of a huge wall of ammo boxes reaching 20 feet toward the warehouse-style ceiling wearing huge smiles, white polos and permanent-press khakis, about said ammo shortage. They said, "Naw. Not here anyway. Sometimes .38 Special is hard to come by, but 9 mil, .45s, .40s, most of the rifle ammo is no problem."

This was in Texas. Maybe it's a regional thing?



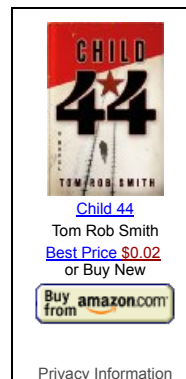
jenifersf says:
November 6, 2009 at 3:10 pm

I would open a world-class shoe museum.



MMW says:
November 6, 2009 at 3:12 pm

I would buy a modestly sized, solid gold bust of Barack Obama.
It's my loophole through the "non-investment clause."



THE PAST AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

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**Bonnie_** says:

November 6, 2009 at 3:25 pm

Late to the party, but what a fascinating party it is. There's a lot of quiet vacation cabins, boats, RVs, and travels to beautiful places in here. Consuming the entire amount without investment would actually be kind of tough, wouldn't it?

I have a similar question that I ask (and I'd love to see James ask this crowd). What if you won a huge lotto? Big enough so you wouldn't have any worries about money, ever again. Now, it's two years after you've won that. You've travelled, you have the RV, the cabin, the remodel, whatever. You wake up and it's Monday morning. What is your day like?

**Jay Amundson** says:

November 6, 2009 at 3:29 pm

I would buy some special cars, including a ZR-1 Corvette, an SRT Challenger, a Shelby GT500, 10,000 gals of gas and arrange to store them, maintain them, insure them for 20 years and spend the ballance on Fine Guitars and music equipment.

**MMW** says:

November 6, 2009 at 3:29 pm

Bonnie :

Now, it's two years after you've won that. You've travelled, you have the RV, the cabin, the remodel, whatever. You wake up and it's Monday morning. What is your day like?

I wouldn't be done with my land at every public airport in the Caribbean tour yet.

**grs** says:

November 6, 2009 at 3:37 pm

A million won't get you a Veyron. I'd buy an Aston Martin DB9 and have plenty of money left over to donate to MD Anderson, 'cause Preptile guilted me into feeling greedy about my make-believe money.

**Jay Amundson** says:

November 6, 2009 at 3:37 pm

I would wake up the monday after the splurging, my daughter and I would take the day off, go for a drive in each car, eat like royalty and play with our new toys all day. I suspect it would be a very pleasant day 😊

**EmGee** says:

November 6, 2009 at 3:41 pm

I'd get health insurance that covers more than just doctor visits (30% copay) and generic drugs, and find out what is causing the pain in my right leg and hip that keeps me awake most nights. Health care for me is an extravagance, so I think this counts as much as boats, cabins and Rvs.

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Other than that, I'd be content to paint my paintings. A million doesn't go that far these days anyhow.



bgbear (roger h) says:

November 6, 2009 at 4:07 pm

@Borderman

maybe Texas is an exception, did the Mexican drug cartels return some of the stuff they were allegedly buying?

I was looking more at the price than availability, that supply demand thing, 50 to 100% increase in last 2 years. However, some stores have purchase limits.



swschrads says:

November 6, 2009 at 4:19 pm

ammo shortage. there is seldom a shortage of anything if you can meet or beat the going price. there is also not much shortage if you stock up and serve your local clientele.

primers have been short since Desert Storm, IIRC. and anybody who wants to stock up at \$3-5 per round, for that is the rate at some stores in this area for the internationally-desired sizes, will be carrying quite the inventory.

but some folks had all the gas they wanted at \$4 a gallon, and if you have two deer tags and are headed out today after lunch or tonight after work, you're not going out with six shells, even if the kids eat mac and cheese next week, all week.



Jan says:

November 6, 2009 at 4:24 pm

I'd use it for piano and acoustic guitar lessons, and maybe voice. Yes, that would take a million dollars because to have a "tin ear" would actually be an improvement in my natural musical ability.



Shelley says:

November 6, 2009 at 4:36 pm

I'd pay off my house. I'm not considering that a bill. Why? Just because it's what I want damn it! I would also pay someone to fix the roof and prune the trees and buy a new couch and chair. We would get a new car and my daughter would get a nice used one. If there were any left we would take all the trips we've been wanting to take (Supai AZ, Deadwood S.D., Gold Country, Brown County Indiana and Maui).

I think it would easily fit into a million. I actually wouldn't want any more than that. With all that out of the way. I could give to charity in the amounts that I really want to. Sigh.



Shelley says:

November 6, 2009 at 4:45 pm

"I have a similar question that I ask (and I'd love to see James ask this crowd). What if you won a huge lotto? Big enough so you wouldn't have any worries about money, ever again. Now, it's two years after you've won that. You've travelled, you have the RV, the cabin, the remodel, whatever. You wake up and it's Monday

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Go [HERE](#) to join - for as little as you like. You'll get an email with your passwords. The page for your bonus-secret ultra links is [HERE!](#)

morning. What is your day like?"

Bonnie, I'd try to beat out Andrew Carnegie for philanthropy. I'd try to be like an anti-George Soros and actually try to make the world a better place. That said, I wouldn't want that to happen to me because I could never again just walk down the street. Could you do this gifting anonymously?



GardenStater says:

November 6, 2009 at 4:49 pm

***Bonnie** :What if you won a huge lotto? Big enough so you wouldn't have any worries about money, ever again. Now, it's two years after you've won that. You've travelled, you have the RV, the cabin, the remodel, whatever. You wake up and it's Monday morning. What is your day like?*

There's a run-down light industrial place not far from my house. It's next to a large pond (small lake?), and easily accessible from the highway about a half-mile down the road. I'd buy it, tear it down, and build a state-of-the-art theatre (but everything would appear as though the place was 100 years old, and either lovingly preserved or restored).

I'd hire my best pal, a guy with a solid track record of theatrical management, to run it. And I'd just sit back and enjoy the people of my town seeing great theatre. We would do shows with solid story lines, but no profanity. You'd be able to bring your 8-year-old daughter or your 80-year-old grandmother, and be confident that you wouldn't be embarrassed by anything you saw onstage.



hgbear (roger h) says:

November 6, 2009 at 4:58 pm

@GardenStater
no Equus huh?



swschrads says:

November 6, 2009 at 6:18 pm

@Capt. Queeg

so what DSL modem and router issues are you having at home? I could parlay this into two mill if my dart hits the right piece of wall... .



Lisa from MT says:

November 6, 2009 at 6:19 pm

I would spay or neuter all the cats and dogs in Montana and then buy a few shares of a few Congressional Reps and try to make puppy mills illegal.



lanczos says:

November 6, 2009 at 6:23 pm

WHAT?!?!? A Lousy \$1Mil?!?!? What A Piker!

I've already got \$28.5Mil coming from Mr. Brounillious Nbeka, personal attorney for the late Andrew Mzepa of Nigeria. Mr. Mzepa,

a widely known African oil entrepreneur, died with no relatives. As soon as that money shows up in my bank account, I'll Show You All How To Spend \$\$\$!



GardenStater says:

November 6, 2009 at 6:26 pm

***bgbear (roger h)** :@GardenStater no Equus huh?*

I might do "Equus," since it's a damn fine piece of writing. I'd just make sure there were plenty of "adult content" warnings. Mostly, though, it'd be Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, Rodgers and Hammerstein, etc. Oh, and "The Seven-Year Itch," which is way overdue for a stage revival.

When you think about all the fine entertainment that was done between the 30s and the early 60s, it's amazing that they did it without gratuitous sex, nudity, or coarse language...



Ellen says:

November 6, 2009 at 6:49 pm

I am a substitute teacher in elementary schools. I see lots of children who need new shoes or clothes. I would love to buy things they need and just leave surprises outside their front door. And I would buy books, lots of books, for everyone and for the classrooms.



Havelock Vetinari says:

November 6, 2009 at 6:54 pm

[@GardenStater](#)

Didn't that lad from "Harry Potter" do Equus?

Hmmm. Well, don't let me detain you.



shesnailie says:

November 6, 2009 at 8:57 pm

[_@_v](#) - if you had a million it'd be worth the equivalent of what \$153,000 was worth in 1964...



Mike Gebert says:

November 6, 2009 at 9:26 pm

I'd RESTORE a movie, or several. Making a good movie costs either more or less than a million... but almost never a million.



Dmath says:

November 6, 2009 at 9:27 pm

James, go very carefully with Mr. King. He said of the military that ". . . If you can read, you can walk into a job later on. If you don't, then you've got the Army, Iraq, I don't know, something like that. It's not as bright." When that was compared to what John Kerry had said, King shot back: " [that]a right-wing blog would impugn my patriotism because I said children should learn to read, and could get better jobs by doing so, is beneath contempt." No, they didn't impugn his patriotism, they compared his comments to those of

Kerry.

He then dug himself in deeper with this: “. . . I don’t support either the war or educational policies that limit the options of young men and women to any one career — military or otherwise.” And what policies would those be, exactly?



lindal says:

November 6, 2009 at 10:26 pm

I love the idea that someone is calling themselves “vetinari” on the bleat. I just finished reading “Guards, Guards”, and still have the Patrician’s scorpion pit on my mind.

A million dollars?
I’d pay for my mother and grandmother’s elder care up front, rather than incrementally



Joe Sixpack says:

November 6, 2009 at 10:33 pm

Buy a small house in Chapel Hill, NC.
Buy a new car for errands, etc.
The rest goes to my brother, father, and mother.

The End.

Anything anyone else says is bullsh*t.



Joe Sixpack says:

November 6, 2009 at 10:35 pm

Some real selfish douchebags on this site.



Seattle Dave says:

November 6, 2009 at 10:44 pm

[@Joe Sixpack](#)

And also some real illiterate ones. James said we couldn’t give it away. In other words, what would you buy if you could only spend it on yourself.



Greg VA says:

November 6, 2009 at 11:19 pm

I’d give it back. I have everything money could buy, the things I don’t have, money can’t buy.

The worst part about money is not the dollars, but the change.
Money is an illusion, too much is never enough.

I have the cure for the lottery. I buy one ticket and I never check it against the drawing. It sits in my wallet and if I want to fantasize, I look at it and say “maybe it won.” and then the feeling fades and I put it back, and it lasts me a year. Every week I don’t play, I am a winner.



jwm says:

November 7, 2009 at 12:20 am

I’d get a motorcycle, and spend the rest on dope.

Well, maybe a car, too.

JWM



chrisbriter says:

November 7, 2009 at 2:19 am

I'd fund the nascent project to build a flyable replica Boeing B-17C bomber – the prewar version, all sleek streamlining and mirror-polished aluminum. Since I can't donate the money I'd keep title to the plane and lease it to a flying museum for some token amount.

Or maybe just produce a carefully budgeted black-and-white movie version of "Joe Ohio".



hpoulter says:

November 7, 2009 at 6:39 am

***lindal** :I love the idea that someone is calling themselves "vetinari" on the bleat. I just finished reading "Guards, Guards", and still have the Patrician's scorpion pit on my mind. A million dollars?I'd pay for my mother and grandmother's elder care up front, rather than incrementally*

I was just trying out the Vetinari name, trying to flush out Pratchett fans. I am almost finished with the series (30+ books) and I wish there were thirty more. I'm reading his kids' and young adults' books now. What a great storyteller.



barreleh says:

November 7, 2009 at 8:14 am

Fix my fixer-upper, which was last renovated circa 1972, judging by the avocado carpet and the matching avocado and harvest gold wallpaper: new windows, doors, kitchen, bathroom, heating system, ...

Travel to Cali to research a book I'm planning to write

Donate a significant portion to The Spayed Club, which runs a low-cost spay/neuter program in the 5-county Philadelphia area.

Get lipo and a boob job, then advertise for a hot, hunky guy to be my personal fitness consultant.



Kev says:

November 7, 2009 at 11:08 am

***Bonnie_** :
I have a similar question that I ask (and I'd love to see James ask this crowd). What if you won a huge lotto? Big enough so you wouldn't have any worries about money, ever again. Now, it's two years after you've won that. You've travelled, you have the RV, the cabin, the remodel, whatever. You wake up and it's Monday morning. What is your day like?*

I'd do the same things I'm doing now, but on a smaller scale: As a musician and educator, I'd teach 5- or 7-hour days instead of 12- to 140-hour days. Practice more and write more. And I'd open up a

jazz club that paid bands better than average, while not having to worry so much about having the cash to keep the lights turned on.

And if I won either the Lotto or our host's theoretical million, I'd start a massive scholarship fund so that kids could have music lessons, as well as provide needy schools with instruments for deserving kids who can't afford their own (although the longevity of such things would be compromised by our host's restrictions on investment; these things would go a lot longer if the principal could stay socked away while the interest fed the program).



gmann63 says:

November 7, 2009 at 1:07 pm

Buy some guitars, mostly vintage Les Pauls and Fenders. Also buy some recording equipment – then take some guitar lessons. Buy a house on the Atlantic Ocean and a house on the Pacific Ocean. Buy a fully restored 1972 Chevelle Malibu, just like the one I had when I was 18. Spend whatever is left on high-end bourbon.



Pinny the Ziphead says:

November 7, 2009 at 7:18 pm

Well, assuming I play by the rules and have to spend it on memememe I'd buy a nice garage with a house attached and a 1971 Coupe deVille, a few station wagons, a 1956 Packard, and the odd Studebaker or two to keep my '66 Cadillac company. (Yes, I am aware that "odd Studebaker" is an oxymoron). I'd also point my wife at the kitchen remodeler and tell her to have at it while furnishing the rest of the house and acreage to her taste. My son likes old cars and station wagons so I'd carve out a slot in the garage for him and get a few vee-hickles for him to play with. I'd also slide a few bucks to my folks and my father in law for them to squander.

If I waited until Our Host is sleeping or otherwise occupied and snuck the checkbook out, I'd tell my wife to remodel our current house stem to stern (1200 SF can't be that expensive, right)? I'd also put aside enough to give my son the education he wants and pay off our mortgage and my student loans.

The rest I'd split 60-40. The forty would go to our local children's hospital and the Ronald McDonald House across the street from that hospital. The rest would be used to make anonymous COBRA payments, grocery bills, and mortgage payments for layoff victims hitting the end of their unemployment insurance allotments.



xrayguy says:

November 7, 2009 at 9:50 pm

Have that guy from 'Holmes on Homes' come in and redo my house-metal roof with rainwater cistern, strip the clapboard off, Tyvek the house, insulate and cementboard siding, replace all the windows with triple pane, underfloor heating. I dont really care about diamond studded counter tops or jacuzzis that seat 20, i just want that house tight and workin right.



lindal says:

November 8, 2009 at 12:37 am

Hpoulter, you made my day! I found Pratchett after reading Good Omens and blazing through most of Neil Gaiman's work. It's good to know I'm not the only fan here!

**Mr_Fastbucks** says:

November 8, 2009 at 4:17 am

I'd probably build a war memorial with a big cross on it so the ACLU can sue me.

**GardenStater** says:

November 8, 2009 at 12:33 pm

Oh, and I'd take ukulele lessons.

**ArganikMark** says:

November 8, 2009 at 10:58 pm

[@Nathan](#)

You can in Michigan. Michigan Education Trust. Bought a contract for my seemingly smart son when he was one (1988). \$6900 for four years tuition while we were living in a small apartment over a hot dog restaurant. This Spring he'll graduate from U of Mich. double major, Econ. and PoliSci. Minor in Czech. Good investment. As to the Imaginary \$1Mil. Upgrade our 970 sq.ft. house and my '02 Kia to 1500 sq.ft. with a recording studio and a Plug-in hybrid that can hold a stand-up bass. Get a passport and see Europe, New Zealand and Kashmir. Get Ween, Flaming Lips, Tony Bennett and Captain Beefheart to do house concerts.

**Patrick** says:

November 9, 2009 at 8:47 am

GardenStater :

Bonnie :What if you won a huge lotto? Big enough so you wouldn't have any worries about money, ever again. Now, it's two years after you've won that. You've travelled, you have the RV, the cabin, the remodel, whatever. You wake up and it's Monday morning. What is your day like?

There's a run-down light industrial place not far from my house. It's next to a large pond (small lake?), and easily accessible from the highway about a half-mile down the road. I'd buy it, tear it down, and build a state-of-the-art theatre (but everything would appear as though the place was 100 years old, and either lovingly preserved or restored).

I'd hire my best pal, a guy with a solid track record of theatrical management, to run it. And I'd just sit back and enjoy the people of my town seeing great theatre. We would do shows with solid story lines, but no profanity. You'd be able to bring your 8-year-old daughter or your 80-year-old grandmother, and be confident that you wouldn't be embarrassed by anything you saw onstage.

That would be a neat idea. One I had would be to take a few run-down former textile mills and factories in my town and convert them into apartments or condos. I wouldn't be cheap about it, either. I'd make sure they had the best in plumbing fixtures, kitchen appliances, and everything else. I'd make sure they could withstand some serious wear and tear. However, I'd be very strict as to whom I rented out to. I wouldn't rent to anyone under 30, who would be more prone to skipping out on rent or trying to get me to forgive them rent for a few months because they "can't make ends meet" or

“down on their luck”. They’d have to have a good, steady income. Children and pets would be permitted, but the former would require a higher security deposit than the latter. Children can do more damage than a dog or a couple of cats.

Or, I could take a page from GardenStater’s book and convert it into a theatre. Not just a stage theatre, but make it both a stage theatre and cinema. Some nights there would be stage productions; other nights, and during the day, movies. I would show primarily the classics, preempted by some of the classic shorts, like the old cartoons, 3 Stooges, news reels, and other things. I’d probably do a nightly midnight showing of some cult film, a different one each night. 50% discount to anyone who shows up dressed as a character from said film. It wouldn’t look all modern, either. Like GardenStater’s theatre, it would look like it’s been there for a long time. I would probably make amends with my biological father and ask him to manage it, since he’s an old theatre rat himself.

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ABOUT

Search

Monday Matchbook

Olie in different cultures

MONDAY, NOV. 09

on NOVEMBER 9, 2009 · [53 COMMENTS](#) · in [ADVERTISING](#), [DOMESTIC LIFE](#)

Today: the usual package reviews, the usual customer-service exchange, a sick child, and some videos. Let's begin:

Put up more lights on Sunday. Got out all the lights from last year, straightened them out, tested them, set aside the dead ones, plugged them in, and started the merry job of putting them on the tall tree with a pole. Standing on the edge of the garage, on tiptoe, holding the bottom six inches of the fabled ten foot pole, trying to swing a spiky plastic string onto a slender branch: not a time for a dizzy spell.

When it was done I stood back and put my hands on hips, the time-honored posture of a man well-satisfied with his labors, and it was then – right then! – that the entire tree went dark. Blink! Goodbye. Checked all the fuses, outlets; everything was fine. So it was the lights? Checked the first strand: dead. Replaced it with a good strand at considerable effort, since it was wound around branches. No sir. Checked second strand: dead. Replaced it with a good strand: yes sir. So now I know that the limit on the number of strands you can chain isn't theoretical. The upshot: having spent a warm 60-degree November day putting up the lights, I guaranteed myself the job of doing it over again when they die, and it's 10 below.

Friday: child had day off from school, so I took her to work. She had a great time – Pink, one of our video whizzes, showed her how to use the wipes on the switcher, so while I stood on the set and waited while the lighting was

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A BOOK I RECOMMEND

perfected, my daughter was amusing herself by applying every hokey stock wipe in the system. Leaves. Rainbows. Paintbrushes. We had lunch at the cafeteria, then I dropped her off at a friend's house. Wrote a column; picked her up; piano; pizza – and by this time, after a week of much duty, I was ready for an epic nap followed by six hours of Nazi-blasting on “Wolfenstein” and Maker’s Mark.

Not how it turned out; duty called, and I did all the work for this site for the rest of the week. Everything’s in the can. But I did defeat my share of Nazis, which made Friday just a little more special. I highly recommend Wolfenstein, although I wish they had included a bit more dialogue for the bad guys; the officers have one command, and that’s “SUPPRESSING FIRE!” Well, duh, herr genius. And here I was going to shoot intermittently into the air to permit the Amerikaner spy total freedom of movement.

Saturday: daughter sick. Fever, lethargy, sore throat, pasted to the coach, sleeping. At the end of the night my wife was going to sit on the coach with her and watch a Family Friendly movie, and the only PPV option was “Imagine That,” with Eddie Murphy. Imagine this: we’ve never used PPV. The next showing was 9:30 on channel 144, so she picked up the phone, talked to a robot, and ordered it. As she described it, the robot asked if there was anything else it could help her with, and she said “I’m done.”

“I’m sorry,” said the robot, “but I did not understand that. Is there anything else I can help you with?”

“No,” said my wife.

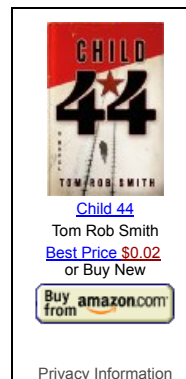
“You are done,” said the robot.

At 9:28 we turned to the channel, only to find . . . the movie had been moved to 10:30. Well, it was playing on 177. Tuned to that channel, and the DVR began recording it of its own free will – only to flash a message that we would have to pay to watch the movie. So I called DirecTV, and noted that things were amiss. I was also peeved by the recorded message that said I could save \$3.50 off my phone-originated order by using my computer to get a movie, since a charge for using the phone was news to me.

How nervous are the cable companies by the rise of alternative methods of media delivery? This nervous: the operator instantly comped me five bucks, then handed me off to someone in PPV Technical Support. Here I learned that DirecTV occasionally moved around start times to free up bandwidth if there was a particularly popular sports event, and I was the third complaint she’d gotten this shift. I cancelled the order, and said, quite nicely, that “if this call is indeed being monitored for quality assurance, as I keep hearing, then they should know that based on this, I’ll never order a pay-per-view movie again.”

“I understand,” she said. “Would you like three free months of Showtime, or three free months of Starz?”

Shopping yielded a few amusements. Here’s a side-by-side product redesign from Phillips, maker of viscous crab-based fluids:



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Nicely done. But while shopping for greens I noted that Dole has upgraded the hell out of its prefab lettuce sacks. Note the helpful counter-clockwise rotation of the item's name:



Best of all, it has metrics to help you calibrate your salad as finely as modern

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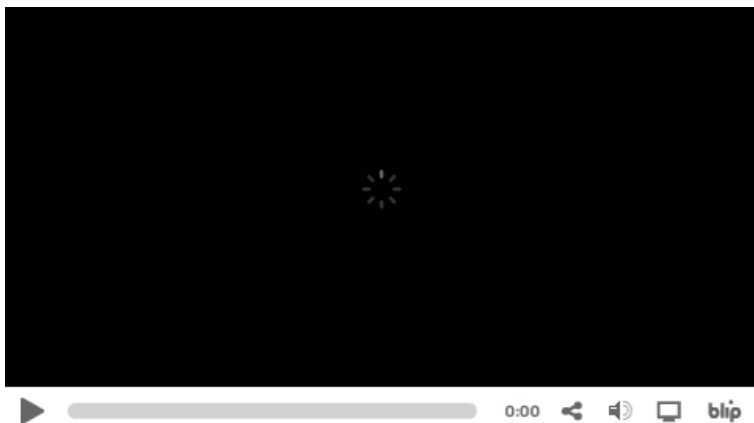
HOST WITH THE MOST

technology allows; I was unaware that salads could be BOLD, let alone be graded on a 5-point scale, but now I needn't worry that guests push away their bowls because they had expected Tender, and been rudely served Crunchy.

The days of getting the film back from the drugstore, threading it through the projector, getting out the screen, pulling down the thick shimmering sheet and hooking it on the latch, turning off the lights, and watching jerky, edited-in-camera movies once before putting them in a box and ignoring them for the rest of your mortal duration – well, those days are over. Now it's much more complex. You are expected to edit, and that means you find yourself annoyed because you forgot to get a master shot, or didn't think of how you'd end the sequence (oh, what the hell, fade it out) or because you moved the camera around too much. I have been working on the Trip to Rushmore video for weeks, on and off, and I finished it this weekend. Crunched it, transferred it, sat down to watch. Augh: saw all the flaws. For example: there's a sequence where Natalie, at Wall Drug, runs around the jets of water that shoot from the ground. I cut them all together without thinking about the audio; should have extracted the audio from a longer take and put it underneath.

Why? Because I can, and that's the glory and annoyance of these tools. Because you can, they should be good.

I have a few sequences to share. The first is the Invasion of the Bison on the grounds of our hotel. It's [here](#). Or you can see the smaller version right here:



The second one is much, much different – but that's later. Or tomorrow. Matchbook Museum in a while; see you around.

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Pass it along, if you wish



53 RESPONSES TO *monday, nov. 09*

**Larry says:**

November 9, 2009 at 11:37 pm

Minor illnesses and retail travails are the creme filing of the bleat. Tasty but needs the major chocolate disk issues to be complete.

**Cruel Comparisons says:**

November 10, 2009 at 1:25 am

I must be an over-sensitive health-talk crank or something. Can't stand the incessant wheedling from the health-obsessed body cultists out there. For instance, I can only tolerate FOX News for about 7 minutes, because that's about all you get of any show before they break for another bloody Health Moment. When did so many people become so neurotic about their health?

It's, it's, yes, it's sickening...

But fair enough, James, we'll disregard all those nearly pneumonias. This house is clean!

November 10 Morning Roundup « The Heavy Table says:

November 10, 2009 at 5:35 am

[...] Wisconsin for all your turkey needs, Bill Roehl writes up Suzie's Kitchen in Rosemount, Lileks weighs in on the aesthetics of mass-marketed food packaging, a mixed review for Kings Wine Bar (man, no two [...])

[← Older Comments](#)**LOOKING FOR SOMETHING?**

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A BOOK I RECOMMEND

TUESDAY, NOV. 10

on NOVEMBER 10, 2009 · 54 COMMENTS · in [DOMESTIC LIFE](#), [THE TWENTIES](#)



What I remember the most about the Teletubbies is wondering when the next attack would come. Natalie was a little over a year, and was temporarily interested in those ghastly creatures around the weeks after 9/11; I found it all creepy and a bit depressing, an artifact of the happy shiny world that was now OVER. Forever. Period. Plus, it annoyed me that they took three minutes to say goodbye every day. The only think I liked were the retro loudspeakers that rose from the

earth to question where the Teletubbies had gone or, alternately, announce that it was indeed time for Teletubbies, but they seemed like something out of 1984. The whole thing smacked of some sort of infantile strain in British culture never before seen, what with the plummy male voices prattering on about Teletubbies saying hello and goodbye. All the shows we watched back then seem like dispatches from a very clammy time.

Natalie was home sick today – H1N1, most likely – and she spent most of the time on the sofa, drawing. She’s taken to tracing some favorite pictures, and does so by creating a new layer in Photoshop. Didn’t teach her that one. When she rallied a bit around one I started trolling for old TV show intros, perhaps to revisit those ordinary days when we were housebound at

Jasperwood, together for the duration, watching a few morning shows before the daily TV ration ran out. The great Tiny Planets theme, the Wiggles doing “Fruit Salad” filtered through the Squeeze conventions, Elmo (she was never that excited by Elmo, and to this day remains completely unimpressed that I shook the hand of the voice of Elmo at a Toy Fair in New York), and a few great little shows that came and went, inevitably replaced by something lesser.

We had a good laugh over Dora the Explora, a show neither of us could stand. IT’S THE MAP IT’S THE MAP SWIPER STOP SWIPING IT’S THE MAP BACKPACK BACKPACK

“It was always creepy how she’d ask you what your favorite part was and then just look at you like she was really hearing you, and then say ME TOO or whatever.”

I agreed. I found some Rolie Polie Olie clips, and we actually laughed ourselves stupid over the translated versions. (You’ll find them below.) She decided she wanted to find her old Spot stuffed animal, which I got her for her second Christmas, and she went upstairs. A few minutes later she came down in tears: couldn’t find it. IT HAD BEEN GIVEN AWAY.

Oh, no, this couldn’t be. I went upstairs, searched through the baskets of stuffed animals, and found him at the bottom. The ears had lost their wires, his head was loose, but he was still Spot. He was clutched and hugged and stayed on the sofa the rest of the day.

If I can teach her to be respectful of the past, connected to it, but not its slave, well, mission accomplished. You can’t make sense of the future without it.

Anyway. As one commenter noted yesterday, it seems like we get sick a lot, but that’s just because I report every possible cold. I haven’t been laid low by anything since the pneu-monie in Ought-Two, and haven’t had a full-blown cold this year. Wife had the swiney-flu last month. My turn at the wheel soon enough, perhaps.

I’m sure there’s a long story here:



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The government, at some point, decided to tax playing cards. Perhaps this was meant as an assurance that a fresh deck was on the level, like the hooch that had a stamp on the neck to assure you it was legit, and wouldn't necessarily make you go blind, right away.

Anyone want to hazard a guess on the B & B? There's a local connection, to give a hint.

I found the stamp in a book of illustrations cut out of magazines – from the 20s. One of those things someone sent me, thinking I'd like it, or could put it to use. Right in both cases, but sometimes the heart just sinks when I think of putting up a site devoted to 1920s clip art. They're all sentimental vignettes, mostly in silhouette form, and have a certain fairytale / childhood quality that's out of favor today. The book was owned by Katherine Paulsen, and she lived at 1014 Sims Avenue in St. Paul. (To state the obvious, I wonder if anyone plays the Sims on Sims avenue.) She was either in college or dreamed of it, because half the clippings are horrible examples of "college humor," a genre of "wit" popular in the Jazz Age with Flaming Youth. He-She jokes abound. You know the genre:

He: shall we kiss?

She: I don't know, shall we?

I made that up, but that's the genre, more or less. Banter and repartee, with a hint of mock and a dash of sauce. Scandalous references to necking parties. (This was college, after all.) One cartoon has a co-ed and her mother:

Mother: You've been drinking!

Daughter: No, I've been kissing!

All that talk must have been terribly scandalous for someone coming to a big college from a small town – liberating to some, perhaps, mortifying to others. What interests me is the clipart. I've de-yellowed the pages to make them

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look like they did, once upon a time:

Blondie and the wild guy, smoking and doing Lord knows what else:



The snobby rich guy who would take a girl home to Mater and perhaps convince the family that he was ever so mad about her:

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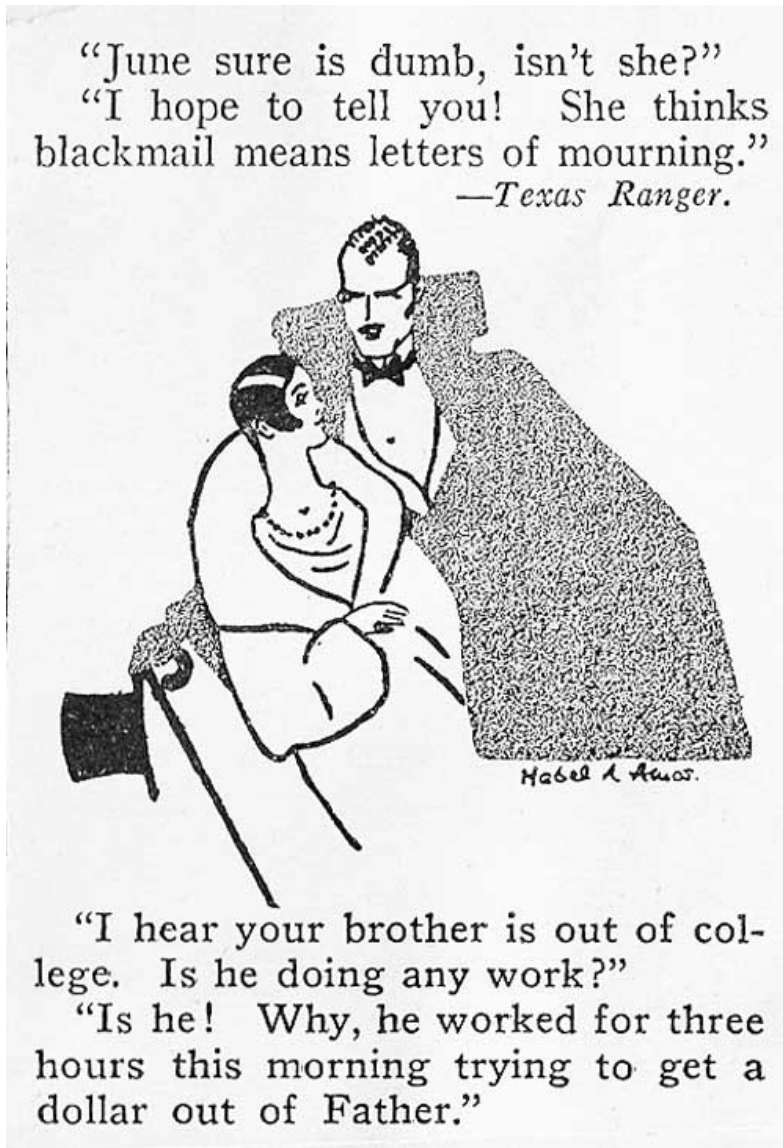
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Sophistication! Or vampirism:



Now where *did* they get that hairstyle? Not that I’m setting up today’s Black & White World, or anything. See you in a bit.

Oh: [here’s the Badlands video](#). Motion stabilization is a wonderful thing. Welcome to the Moon, South Dakota version. Large size recommended for full effect.

Pass it along, if you wish



54 RESPONSES TO *tuesday, nov. 10*



Greg VA says:

November 10, 2009 at 10:03 pm

The tax stamp was nothing new in the 20’s there have been tax stamps on hundreds of things (until some genius came up with the idea for sales tax), heck they even taxed photographs. Look here:

<http://videomartyr.blogspot.com/2009/02/ancestors-for-sale-envelope-post-part-3.html>

Oh, and hair-style is a “bob”, one of the many wonderful inventions of the 20’s.



Ross says:
November 11, 2009 at 2:32 am

Um, I’m nearly 100% sure I said nothing risque(socially or politically) in my comment last night. So why’d I get deleted? IIRC, all I said was that NYC in the ’20s might be fun, but Paris would’ve been more exciting, what with all the great jazz being created there, plus no Prohibition to make ordering a drink a gamble.
Genial Host(to quote a WB cartoon), “Whyfor you bury me inna cold, cold ground?”



Ross says:
November 11, 2009 at 2:37 am

Oh, and in the list of reasons to choose paris in the ’20s, let’s not forget the chance to see Josephine Baker shake her banana skirt on a tabletop live...
Hubba-hubba, indeed.



Dora Standpipe says:
November 11, 2009 at 2:11 pm

I found this link a few years back. It has some of the strips from the courtship between Blondie and Dagwood. What surprised me the most is how much Dagwood’s father looks like Mr. Dithers.

<http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/swann/blondie/courtship.html>

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ABOUT

B & W World: Lost Girl

Out of Context Ad Challenge

WEDNESDAY, NOV. 11

on NOVEMBER 11, 2009 · 56 COMMENTS · in [UNCATEGORIZED](#)

Natalie was fine today. Bored with the flu. Bored with sitting on the sofa. Bored with drawing cats. Bored. Dead bored. She's so over the flu – literally, as well. Since she had no fever, we went to her piano recital, with the understanding the instructor would wipe the keyboard after she was done. She'd been practicing her new composition for months, and had another new piece that was leagues above anything she was doing last year, so we weren't going to miss this – and it's not like she's sneezing or runny-nosed. We would hustle her in, have her play, then leave.

But first, the tradition of Perkins. Before every recital, we go to Perkins, and laugh over the games provided for the small fry. Always the same, with different themes. Same weird anthropomorphic desserts, lorded over by Jeff the Chef. This theme was "music," so "tic tac toe" was "mic tac toe." I explained this didn't work. That would be Maik-tac-toe, not mick-tac-toe. She agreed.

Examined the menu; looked for the patty melt. They did not have a patty melt. Well, they moved the patty melt to its own page, then: something that would honor its unique place in comestible lore. But there was no patty melt page. There was a new type of melt that had bacon and onion rings – and came with fries. Also sauce. This would not do.

"You didn't cancel the patty melt, did you?" I asked the waiter.

He said it was gone.

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A BOOK I RECOMMEND

They say you see the flash of the atom bomb before you feel the heat and the wind. This was like that.

“Gone?”

“Believe me, you’re not the only one,” he said.

“Gone?”

“It’s not on the menu,” he said, “but they can make you one.” He said this sotto voce, as if giving me the password that would get me to the Underground.

I said I would have one. I would show them the errors of their way. Perhaps someone back in the kitchen would say YES when the order came through: another one who’s not going to take it from the Man, man.

Another waiter came over.

“The patty melt will be on the next menu,” he said.

“So they realized their grave mistake?”

“Guess so.”

“We can still make one now,” said my waiter.

“Yes,” said the other waiter, adding: “we got the rye in today.”

So they got new rye but it’s not on the menu. Don’t you guys UNDERSTAND? They will use the low consumption rate on the rye to validate their decision to take it off the menu! WE’RE BEING PLAYED, ALL OF US!

Natalie had the breakfast, since she hadn’t eaten in days. I had the patty melt.

It was okay.

When the waiter came by to ask if we wanted anything else, I said nope, off to the piano recital. He said he used to play piano, but now played synths. Really? What kind of music? Trance, he said, his inflection apologizing in advance for using a word I probably didn’t know, me being, well, dad-demographic and all that. I said I loved trance. Really?

“Ever hear of [Armin Von Buuren](#)?”

Sure. Three clicks of the iPhone, call up the playlist. He whips out his iPhone and shows the wallpaper: Armin!

“I was this close in a concert.”

“Cool!”

He writes down his myspace page; it’s [here](#). Kid plays Christian Trance, a genre you probably haven’t heard. News to me. Anyway, nice guy; wish him well. He was very good with customers, especially the elder versions.



THE PAST AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

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Everyone should work in a restaurant when they're young. Nothing teaches you about people, workplaces, businesses, and the public, like a restaurant. I still think my entire professional outlook is predicated on getting a tip in 30 minutes. Ever work in a restaurant? Some people remember it as drudgery and hellishness defined; I suppose it depends. For me – two Pizza Hut stints, then the glorious run at the Valli – it was the best lesson in The World I'd had.

Later this morning: Out of Context Ad Challenge. I'll be back on NewsBreak, if you care. Was scheduled for Thu-Fri, but asked to be bumped up in case I get the flu.

Because I hear there's something going around.

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Pass it along, if you wish



56 RESPONSES TO *wednesday, nov. 11*



bellczar says:

November 11, 2009 at 7:40 pm

@Patrick

El Pollo Loco has flan.



canajuneh says:

November 11, 2009 at 10:36 pm

bellczar :@Patrick
El Pollo Loco has flan.

el pollo loco has flan the coop!



Dan Desch says:

November 11, 2009 at 11:29 pm

Keep an eye on Natalie's temperature. The pattern for this H1N1 flu seems to be an initial bout, followed by recovery—even fever free for a day or two—then relapse. The usual advice is that if you are fever free for 24 hours then you are not contagious anymore. That doesn't seem to be true with this flu.



zefal says:

November 12, 2009 at 1:22 am

I clicked on the Armin Von Buuren link, randomly picked on one to play, and started listening. I was about to click the close button on the browser window when a naked lady appeared and convinced me to "listen" to the rest of the piece.

ickclay ethay oneway amednay iverShay.

HOST WITH THE MOST



Natalie says:
November 12, 2009 at 10:55 am

[@Wramblin' Wreck](#)

Thanks for the clarification – that makes a lot more sense.



Fred says:
November 30, 2009 at 11:05 pm

Next time you order a burrito at Taco Bell tell them to hold the red sauce. The taste difference is amazing. It goes from being blech to being somewhat edible. Avoid the red sauce whenever you can and TB really improves...

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A lost cultural reference, alas. Plus: Listen! [...]

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developers! I'm just
adding this, and will add
something more, later.
Who cares? You're
reading this? Really?





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[Sears 1934: Latest Update](#)

THURSDAY (SOB) NOV. 11 (SNIFF)

on NOVEMBER 12, 2009 · [172 COMMENTS](#) · in [DOMESTIC LIFE](#), [POP CULTURE](#)

Ersatz anchormannery, empty violence, cheap emotion: another day. The first was the workaday part, and it was fun. Love my job, as I keep saying. Would like to keep my job, too; we're having more cutbacks. Went into the boss's office this morning, said I was just there to see my manager squirm trying to make reassurances he knew he couldn't back up, and had to qualify without depleting morale. (I like to say subtexts aloud.) The most enjoyable part of the day wasn't work, but planning work – we're going to do a shoot at the Mall of America, in the big rotunda, with an enormous video screen. It's about two stories tall, if I remember. How can I *not* love this job?

Empty violence – well, that would be Wolfenstein. (This is about gaming, so skip to the next bolded paragraph if you please.) There's apparently some controversy about the new Call of Duty game, where you have the opportunity to kill innocent civilians while you're in deep cover as part of a Russian terrorist cell. I've written a million times on the shoot-the-nurse demerit present in nearly every game of my 20s and 30s; the nurse was a character who ran from side to side while you were taking out Central American drug lords and their minions – yes, it was the 80s, and true to our Miami Vice roots, we named the boss "Calderone" – but if you hit the nurse, you paid a price. Same with Duke Nukem, which some ill-informed scolds knocked because it let you shoot up a strip club. No, no. You shot anyone but the alien-morphed pig-cops (don't ask) you paid a price. The games train you

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A BOOK I RECOMMEND

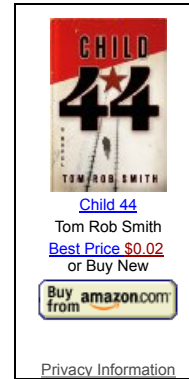
not to shoot civilians, or at least they did. This one is different, but knowing what i know about the franchise, it's not amoral. It's horrible, yes, and if it was an acclaimed television show there would be Serious Discussion about the moral complexities of engaging in a terrorist activity in order to protect your ability to stop the terrorists from nuking a city. Since it's a game, people think it's training sociopaths. (Grand Theft Auto is another issue.)

I had no such problems today, since I was up against supernaturally-enhanced Nazis. The game is also coded so you can't shoot civilians. It also has helpful Nazis who shout "I'm pinned down! I'm reloading!" so you know where they are. Anyway, I get in a half-hour of gaming every other day, for six weeks, once a year. If that. Not enough.

Cheap emotion. Or maybe not. Earlier today I shot a tweet into the air by mistake; it was supposed to be a DM, and it made it sound as though I did not cry when they played the bagpipes at Spock's funeral. I think you know me well enough by now to know that's simply not the case. Probably doesn't reflect well on me to say I tear up at sci-fi movies that have aliens fired into terraformed planets in a phaser casing, because that seems like a rather specific set of circumstances with few analogs in the real world. But all movies are fantasies; you identify with characters and situations because they embody things you've felt, or wish to. Doesn't matter if it's a Vulcan or a homely shopgirl in 1962 London, does it? It's not good if you can only find empathy in fictional situations, but it's not good if you find empathy in every real situation, because then you're overwhelmed. We filter, and we go to movies to disable the filters and purge the things that slosh around in our hearts and our heads. We give ourselves license to react to fictional particulars, if only to assure ourselves that our day-in-day-out distance from general realities doesn't make us dead-hearted people who walk around smothered in an emotional Snuggie. Which may or may not be the case; your mileage may vary, to stack up the cliches.

Anyway. The original tweet was in response to someone about to watch "Up," and I asked if she'd seen it in the theaters. The audience had been quiet during the first 20 minutes, and the scenes that set forth the backstory felt like a hammer to the sternum. And it was all make-believe, times two – not just a movie, but one conjured from bits and keystrokes. But that's the thing about Pixar movies; they're all the more real for being all the more artificial. Over the last three nights I picked away a "Wall-E," just to get ready to see "Up" again, and like many movies, I had it going on one screen while I did something else on the other. But each night I found myself stopping what I was doing, and just watching. This from a guy who'll play the "Andromeda Strain" movie as background music every year or so.

It holds up; in fact, it gets better. Its construction and pacing seem better every time I see it; the first 20 minutes are still genius. We've become so accustomed to digital trickery that the idea of making heroes – or villains – out of machines who speak but one or two words is taken for granted. We're so used to brilliant animation that the utter uniqueness of what we're seeing doesn't completely register. One more cool thing in a world of cool things. By



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then you're so trained in the language of this particular miracle you understand why the tilt of his eyes and the posture of his body means he's been re-infused with a soul – and it's only afterwards that you realize it's almost an analogy for the entire body of art computers have made possible.

I was talking about this with my wife, how I'm just a blubbery sucker for Pixar, and she said that there's a loneliness at the heart of their characters, sometimes. Indeed: Wall-E is plucky & cheerful, but horribly lonely; whoever figured out the little scene where he rocks himself to sleep at the end of his day should get laurels and a lifetime of champagne. "Up" puts it up front. "Toy Story 2" has that rip-out-your-heart song by the doll who was left under the bed when her girl grew up and forgot her. "Monsters Inc," less so – everyone's well-adjusted, except for the evil lizard – but Sully's scene at the end is pretty much every parent's dream, a trip back to toddlerhood.

Maybe that's why I don't mind that they're making "Cars 2." Slogan: "Because we don't need to rip your heart out every summer, do we?"

Well, it's late, and I've given up the evening's ration of TV to natter on about this. So: which movies made you tear up? Manly sniffles count.

See you soon.

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HOST WITH THE MOST

Pass it along, if you wish



172 RESPONSES TO *thursday (sob) nov. 11 (sniff)*



browniejr says:

November 12, 2009 at 7:47 pm

Crying movies:

Brian's Song and Saving Private Ryan, as others have noted.

There is an old Dragnet that gets me EVERY time: Friday and Gannon are approached by a concerned father whose daughter and son-in-law are smoking marijuana- he is concerned that his one and only granddaughter is being endangered. They go out and there is a ~15 minute discussion where the young couple knows everything, MJ is just like tobacco, all the usual shibboleths. Since no crime is being committed/ they have no evidence, Friday and Gannon just end up leaving. About a week passes, and Friday and Gannon are called back to the young couple's apartment due to a disturbance. The little granddaughter has been left in the bathtub, because the kids 'just want to get high.' You never see her in the tub, but she is drowned. Very powerful television, even though it is hard to believe that MJ would cause such idiocy.



grs says:

November 12, 2009 at 8:34 pm

Gosh, Al sure does have our number. He's so much more cosmopolitan and sophisticated than us rubes. I'm not falling for his

baiting, though. There are many more fine American painters than Kinkade or even Rockwell. The greatest of all time has to be the one who painted my velvet Elvis portrait.



Troy Z says:

November 12, 2009 at 9:03 pm

Additional nominees for films and scenes that make one well up with tears and emotion:

“Cinema Paradiso,” for when the character of the director returns to his hometown in the final ten minutes of the movie, in particular the final scenes.

“Babe: Pig In The City.” Ouch. Where does one start with this film? Do not be fooled by the poster and concept into thinking this one’s a bright, cheery, adventurous talking-animal kid’s movie, there are strata of hurt and pain going into and coming out of this one. For example, there’s one scene where a circus orangutang is being liberated from a medical research facility (oh, yes, the film goes there after you beg it not to do so) by our ragtag bunch of animal heroes. Even though time is short, there is a theatrically-lit scene of the orangutang calmly insisting that he dresses himself in clothes, as he always did before his lifetime of performance, before going out into the world. There is such a subtext of fractured dignity in its staging that invokes imagery of coping with senile dementia or the affliction of Alzheimer’s that would be uncomfortable to adults while perhaps passing over the heads of smaller children, thank God. No, I won’t tell you how the orangutang got to the lab in the first place, or of the brave little parapalegic terrier that tried to prevent the abduction of his friends. You can watch this movie, or take a punch to the ‘nads. The effect is similar.

“Unbreakable.” The wordless scene in which Bruce Willis’ character slides a newspaper across to his son at the breakfast table. The kid’s reaction and Willis’ response of a subtle nod actually caused spontaneous applause in the theater when I saw it.



hgbear says:

November 12, 2009 at 9:17 pm

@Troy Z

I usually refer to that as “Babe: Beyond Thunderdome”



Greg VA says:

November 12, 2009 at 10:02 pm

I have to do a shout out (or bawl out) to a MASH episode also, except it’s the one where Hawkeye decides to do a time capsule. The story the shot up soldier tells Hawk about the chopper pilot who had to keep landing to keep his chopper from over heating, then scout ahead for another landing site. When Hawkeye holds up that fan-belt in the end. I haven’t seen that episode in 10 years and.....
(whew)

For movie’s “Wonderful Life” – “To my big brother George, the richest man in town!”

Schindler’s List – When he is buying the freedom of his employees...
(man)

and for some reason, the final concert scene in “School of Rock” just a good emotional release (I felt it in my blood and GUTS!)

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and WALL-E gets me in places



Marjorie J. Birch says:

November 12, 2009 at 10:17 pm

oh man, forgot Allegro Non Troppo. Sums up why I walk out of movies the minute a cat shows up in the picture. I just know something terrible is going to happen to the cat.

Ditto "Iron Giant" That line "...Superman..." and he makes the fist. BUT! then there's that odd little hope-giving coda at the end of the movie... ain't tellin'



hgbear says:

November 12, 2009 at 11:08 pm

[@Marjorie J. Birch](#)

OK I like "Iron Giant" and they borrowed much from Giant Robo and Tetsujin 28 (Gigantor) as well as Miyazaki's "Laputa (Castle in the Sky)" all in tribute of course.



Todd says:

November 13, 2009 at 12:21 am

[@juanito – John Davey](#) The entire Beastmaster series was a sad perversion of an excellent little Sci-Fi novel – it would have been ten times better if they'd stayed even slightly with the plot...



cgm says:

November 13, 2009 at 12:24 am

"Toy Story 2," when the cowgirl doll is left at the garbage dump.

The 1955 British film "Dambusters," when during the attack on the Mohne Dam, Guy Gibson and his crew offer themselves as a decoy to keep the flak off the other planes. Actually happened, too.

"Apollo 13," when Jim Lovell lets himself daydream for a moment about what it would have been like to walk on the moon. And the moment when the parachutes open. Dammit.



Desmond says:

November 13, 2009 at 12:25 am

I would agree with many of the consensus films: It's A Wonderful Life, Up, Star Trek II, Glory, Field of Dreams, etc. I might add the ending(s) of Return of the King, at least the first time I saw it in the theater. A skillful blend of triumph and melancholy, even if repeated viewings have lessened the impact and now I find myself just wanting it to end already.

Also: Race For Your Life, Charlie Brown; it's not so much the movie itself that would set me off today, but my memory of how upset it made me as a child, especially when Snoopy and Woodstock get lost and separated. If you've never seen it, it's just another entry in the nightmarish Peanuts canon. When grown-ups conspire to give one child nothing but rocks for Halloween, why should we be surprised that kids are sent off on a days-long raft race with no adult supervision?

**lindal** says:

November 13, 2009 at 12:39 am

You know, I posted my comment and read just the page I posted on. I read everyone's comments about Saving Private Ryan and thought about "the Fighting Sullivans". I have six uncles and one dad and this movie really freaked me out when I was little. My uncles split up evenly between Marines and Navy, but my dad never went into the service.

**dcmatthews** says:

November 13, 2009 at 12:47 am

browniejr :

There is an old Dragnet that gets me EVERY time: Friday and Gannon are approached by a concerned father whose daughter and son-in-law are smoking marijuana- he is concerned that his one and only granddaughter is being endangered. They go out and there is a ~15 minute discussion where the young couple knows everything, MJ is just like tobacco, all the usual shibboleths. Since no crime is being committed/ they have no evidence, Friday and Gannon just end up leaving. About a week passes, and Friday and Gannon are called back to the young couple's apartment due to a disturbance. The little granddaughter has been left in the bathtub, because the kids 'just want to get high.' You never see her in the tub, but she is drowned. Very powerful television, even though it is hard to believe that MJ would cause such idiocy.

I think I remember that episode – isn't that the one that ends with Friday carrying the baggie of weed away from the traumatized couple and into the camera lens? For just a beat the whole screen is filled with the bag and the hands holding it, then the bag is ANGRILY wadded up!

**Troy Z** says:

November 13, 2009 at 12:48 am

[@Desmond](#)

Desmond, It sounds like Kindertrauma is a site for you <http://www.kindertrauma.com/>, in particular their entry on the horrors of "Snoopy, Come Home": <http://www.kindertrauma.com/?p=6026>

**Bill** says:

November 13, 2009 at 1:51 am

Cars has its scenes, too.

Given your love for the era, I can't believe you too didn't tear up a bit when the town was bypassed and the "Welcome Interstate Travelers" sign was shown to be pointless and the town fell into disrepair...

**Bill** says:

November 13, 2009 at 1:56 am

Forgot TV: For me there were two HUGE tear-inducers in Sci-Fi of the past few decades:

1) At the end of Quantum Leap when, after saving Al's first marriage, we were told as an epilogue Sam Beckett never returned home. 😞

2) When Rose and the Doctor were separated from each other – ostensibly forever – by the dimensional hole closing. I was a complete mess after that one.



Seattle Dave says:

November 13, 2009 at 3:55 am

“It’s a Wonderful Life” and “Billy Elliott” are my two perennial tearjerkers.



Vlad the Impala says:

November 13, 2009 at 7:02 am

My eyes still get misty at the thought of the almost-superhuman generosity and compassion exhibited when Vince says, “But wait—there’s more” at the end of the Sham-Wow commercials.

That man just gives and gives...



browniejr says:

November 13, 2009 at 9:44 am

[@dcmatthews](#)

That’s the one!



Metaphizzle says:

November 13, 2009 at 11:02 am

If you’ll permit me to really nerd it up here: “Toroko’s Theme” from the *Cave Story* soundtrack gets to me. (Video games and tearjerkers: better together!) The game itself isn’t too bad, and I suppose that the song itself wouldn’t be so sad had I heard it in isolation, but listening to the song *after* seeing what happened to the character it’s named for—that’s just too much.

Though I suppose that might just be my seasonal affective disorder talking.



Borderman says:

November 13, 2009 at 12:38 pm

Jumpin’ catfish. I can’t believe I forgot to mention “Shane.”

It was on Turner Classic Movies recently and I was howling, even though I’d seen it many, many times before. Howling was not so much at the end, although that *is* very powerful, but just before that when Shane decides to abandon his attempt to adopt the ranching life and return to what he does really, really, well. He realizes he can save the Starrett family he loves, which includes Mrs. Starrett, the woman who is of course *verboden* to him, but the cost is his exile. And what he does is really, really well is ride into town and blow the living ___ out of the bad guys. Blew me away as well, that such pure unadulterated power could have so few restrictions on its application directly to the source of the problem, a.k.a. frontier justice. Mythic heroism at its finest.

Forgive me Alan Ladd and George Stevens, wherever you are, for forgetting to mention your masterpiece on the first two passes yesterday.

~~~~~

As long as I am revisiting yesterday, I may not be a “regular,” I think the meter for that on this site is broken anyway, but I have to wonder what’s up with Al Federber. Merely a screw loose or *agent provocateur*? Shucks, everyone knows the greatest American painter of all time is C.M. Coolidge, creator of the 16 original dogs-playing-poker paintings in 1903. All the rest are pretenders to the throne. Sheesh. Rockwell and Kincaide, *hoch-tooeey!*

And speaking of pictures from the early 20th century, from a topic earlier this week, I have long thought that Louise Brooks, as she looked circa 1927, was so gorgeously beautiful she could melt butter at 1,000 yards, and probably me too had I been around then.



**Johnston** says:

November 14, 2009 at 4:55 pm

Tearjerkers:

Movie: “Harold and Maude” (Can’t believe no one mentioned it yet!)

TV: “The West Wing: In Excelsis Deo” (Christmas episode, season 1)



**camillofan** says:

November 14, 2009 at 6:11 pm

Two from 1946:

– When Harold Russell’s character (the young double amputee) in “The Best Years of Our Lives” lets his fiancée watch him remove his prosthetics (shoot; I’m tearing up now).

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yo60\\_ifvGgM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yo60_ifvGgM)

– The whole opening scene of “A Matter of Life and Death,” when David Niven faces certain death with such grace

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JSruSe\\_m8OI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JSruSe_m8OI)

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Sears 1934: Latest Update

Monday, November 16

## FRIDAY! NOVEMBER 15 – ER, NO. THE 13TH

on NOVEMBER 13, 2009 · 71 COMMENTS · in [ADVERTISING](#), [BLACK & WHITE WORLD](#)

**And so a strange week** – long, but brisk in tone – winds down to the hallowed Friday. In my world this means a few key traditions: after work, piano; after piano, pizza; after pizza, a nap in which I sink ten fathoms deep; then the pleasures of working all night on the website and watching movies and not having to write anything for the next day. Plus a wee nip of the bourbon. Or, after a week like this, six Golem fingers.

**Thursday** was a four-video day, but switch me with wet birch if I ever complain: it's just talking. The real work is done by the people who set it up, film it, light it, edit it, and all the rest. Talking is talking. I will be talking again on Sunday night, for the first Minnesota Youth Symphonies concert, and will have the inevitable report, indistinguishable from its 30 + predecessors. Thirty Orchestra Hall concerts MC'd! Again, I'd be more impressed if I did something like, you know, perform. But I talk.

Talking is the easy part. It's always been the easy part. Writing is also easy, but slightly less easy as talking. The difficult part of the day is not sinking into the Slough of Carelessness, and letting all the obligations and duties float past while I twirl in the eddies.

So, a couple of things.

**One:** I will be pushing this each week, perhaps on Friday: the Qor. It's a site

### RECENT COMMENTS

polymathamy on [06.14.12 Bleat](#)

[Amanda from Michigan](#) on [Boo. Hiss](#)

[Julie](#) on [Testing the new RSS feed idea](#)

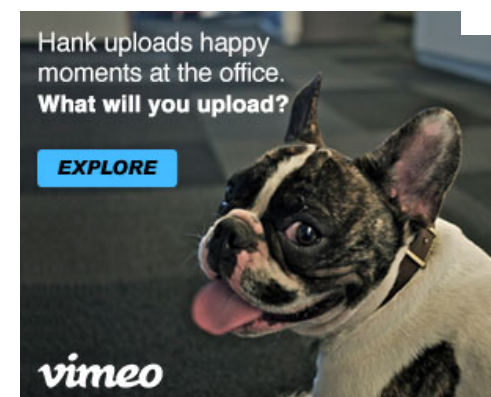
[shesnailie](#) on [Autobots and Bruckner](#)

[Wagner von Drupen- Sachs](#) on [Autobots and Bruckner](#)

### 140 OR SO

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### CLICK – AND SAVE!



### A BOOK I RECOMMEND

for which I write essays with pictures, with more to come. If you like the Bleat, you'll like this – but unlike the Bleat, you get lots of other professional writers as well. Yes, it costs money. You can try it for a month to see if you like it. The Qor is designed to appeal to people who want a civil place to enjoy quality writing, without trolls or polarizing polemics or the chattering visual distractions of pages that load with flash ads containing 50 blinking characters advising you about mortgage rates in your state. The purpose of the site is to pay writers for writing on the web – a novel concept in some quarters! Your patronage and subscriptions provide the money that goes to the writer. Everybody wins. [Give it a look!](#)

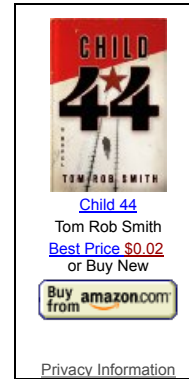
Feedback is appreciated, so the folks who run the site can serve you better.

I'll mention this once a week. I have three pieces up so far – the big conclusion of the Rushmore trip, a piece on country cemeteries, and one on parents and piano recitals. I like what I write for this site, and I hope you do too.

**Two:** I'm putting the updates in this post, because A) I have no time tonight to go on and on about this and that, since I have another column to do, and B) we're talking a big, big update. [Eleven pages, the first part of the Comic Sins ad section. This time: MUSCLE ADS.](#) I paid no attention to these as a kid, because I knew I was in the target market, being flabby and lazy. There was absolutely no way I would get to Atlas status by sending away for a book, and I didn't want to do it. Sounded like work. Later I would join a gym and start lifting, but that's another story – perhaps in my autobiographical account of how I wrecked a nerve in my right leg and scraped my elbow-bones against something-or-other to the point where it hurt to lift my voice, let alone a dish taken from the cupboard, but I'm all better now. I'm about four weeks away from a ruinous crash diet to get re-ripped but that's another matter. I still don't believe any of these ads. You may enjoy them as much as I enjoyed writing the overheated copy, though; if nothing else, it's a reassurance that the Comic Ads project is still a going concern. In 2010 weekly updates of miscellaneous ads will be a permanent Wednesday update.

Yes, I do plan this site that far in advance. As I have said, coyly, from time to time: you have *no idea* how much stuff I have in the pipeline.

**And** there's [100 Mysteries! Number 58 is here](#). So that ought to hold you. There's also a startribune.com column – check the front page – where the Patty Melt issue is beaten to death.



THE PAST AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

| NOVEMBER 2013 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
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THE DISTANT PAST

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Pass it along, if you wish



**71 RESPONSES TO *friday! november 15 – er, no. the 13th***

**bgbear (roger h)** says:

November 13, 2009 at 3:00 pm

bgbear: those ads are so gay

roger h:when you say "so gay," do you know what you say?

bgbear: in this case yes, yes I do.

roger h: NTTAWWT

bgbear: whatever

**DryOwlTacos** says:

November 13, 2009 at 3:10 pm

Sorry, James, I love you and all, and I agree that writers should be paid, but the price of Qor is too steep. Put your PayPal tip jar back out occasionally and point to it with modest self-deprecation, and watch it runneth over.

**swschrads** says:

November 13, 2009 at 3:13 pm

comic ads link.

I've had it with puny little pantywaist 6-pack abs! I'M GOING FOR THE WHOLE KEG! WHO'S WITH ME HERE !!?

**swschrads** says:

November 13, 2009 at 3:15 pm

(( he-men use all caps ))

**Tom Stiff** says:

November 13, 2009 at 3:33 pm

What? No Diner? Now \*that\* I'd pay for!

**Mike Walsh** says:

November 13, 2009 at 5:12 pm

What I found fascinating was that those ads ran unupdated for more than two decades. Some of your examples are from the early 40s, and I know I saw them in the late 60s. Of course, getting the skinny weakling's name and address was worth more than any booklets or muscle-springs you could sell them. If you replied it meant you were on the sucker list for every protein supplement and manliness- tonic they could brew up in the bathtub.

**jeischen** says:

November 13, 2009 at 5:40 pm

A few weeks ago I read a sports article about the University of Oklahoma's great football teams of the late 40s and 50s. One of the players said the head coach forbade them from lifting weights as he didn't want his players bulked up like "a bunch of beach muscle men." My how times have changed.

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**eric** says:

November 13, 2009 at 5:59 pm

“The difficult part of the day is not sinking into the Slough of Carelessness, and letting all the obligations and duties float past while I twirl in the eddies.”

What a statement.

and I'll second DryOwlTacos comments.

**juanito - John Davey** says:

November 13, 2009 at 6:03 pm

It occurs to me that George Jowett might very possibly be the trigger that lead us to steroids in baseball.

All those fellows, and fellers, and He-men...

Thanks for nothing there George.

**\*Di\*** says:

November 13, 2009 at 6:17 pm

*MikeH :It's one thing to get toned and a bit muscular, but why this huge? I also relate the more muscular you get, the more you suffer from permo shrinky dink syndrome. And the ladies don't like that much, no matter how your arms and chest is.*

Haha shrinkydink.

Skinny Sinatra never had any problem in getting the finest ladies 😊

**Ed Singel** says:

November 13, 2009 at 8:29 pm

The weird thing is, when I saw the second head shot photo in 100 Mysteries, my first reaction was “William Shatner?”

**Ed Singel** says:

November 13, 2009 at 8:30 pm

Sorry for the creative punctuation.

**jimrhoads** says:

November 13, 2009 at 9:11 pm

Jowett was not a steroid guy. He was born in 1891 and was in his prime in the 20s. Joe Bonomo another guy featured in James's adds this week was also the a marketer of Bonomo's Turkish Taffy. His dad and brother ran the company that invented Turkish candy makers and when the depression screwed up his fitness business, he returned to candy for a while. The rest is history.

<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0095145/bio>

**browniejr** says:

November 13, 2009 at 10:03 pm

[@jimrhoads](#)

From your link: “A pamphlet he wrote about drugs was entitled

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- unmetered disk space
- unmetered transfer
- unmetered resources

**\$10 per month**  
(we'll even help you move)

 **HostingMatters**

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#### UNTOLD RICHES AWAIT YOU

This is just a fragment of the site, you know. Head [HERE](#) for the full menu. Enjoy!

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#### BLEAT PREMIUM

Go [HERE](#) to join - for as little as you like. You'll get an email with your passwords. The page for your bonus-secret ultra links is [HERE!](#)

“Don’t Be A Dope”, and one entitled “What I Know About Women” contained 64 blank pages.”  
Funny because it’s true...



**Margaret** says:

November 14, 2009 at 12:20 am

Qor wants serious subscription cash, like \$20/month. That’s about what a two book/month subscription costs at audible. Still, I will cheer it on from the sidelines. Somebody’s got to get paid for writing on the internets.



**ms. docweasel** says:

November 14, 2009 at 7:06 am

Hi, saw your work on the Instapundit logo. Just a suggestion, I’d have manually tucked the “A” under the “T” just a bit. Sometimes normal kerning just doesn’t look right for all letters in all fonts. Just a suggestion.



**Paul in NJ** says:

November 14, 2009 at 11:32 am

“...flash ads containing 50 blinking characters advising you about mortgage rates in your state.”

Hey, you’re not talking about the place I work, are you?! ...um. Yeah, you might be. We used to have a nice website here until we were, let’s just say cryptically, assimilated. Resistance is futile. Hope you aren’t prone to epileptic fits.



**RJ** says:

November 14, 2009 at 11:36 am

Love your stuff, James, but the Qor price is dauntingly high at \$240/year. I think the closest analog I have would be a magazine subscription, and I’ve never spent more than a small fraction of that for content like Qor is offering.

It’s a lot more per month than I pay netflix, and I can’t see the value proposition for the web site at that rate.

That said, I hope it succeeds for you.



**CJrun** says:

November 14, 2009 at 4:36 pm

James, I don’t think this will succeed, at this price pont. There is no way I’ll pay more than twice what I contribute to people like Michael Yon, whom has extraordinary expenses, due to mobility and insurance.

You have crappy internet service, and complain about it, because you are cheap and go mobile on free service at coffeeshops. I pay double what you do and don’t have to worry about the quality of the coffee where I am getting my free service, and have not had to worry about that for years. Can you imagine what somebody like Yon pays for internet service?

This Qor pricing is insane. Please consider the Laffer Curve and the notion of increasing revenue, by decreasing the rate.



**Fred says:**  
December 3, 2009 at 10:13 am

That “free photo book of strong men” as a bonus is pretty subtle there...



**Fred says:**  
December 3, 2009 at 5:00 pm

70 comments and nothing about the delectable Quinn O’Hara on ad 23? What’s the deal?

[← Older Comments](#)

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Use the form below to search the site:

Still not finding what you're looking for?  
Drop a comment on a post or contact us so we can take care of it!

VISIT OUR FRIENDS!

A few highly recommended friends...

- 0: [Main Menu](#)
- 1: [Matchbook Museum](#)
- 2: [Comic Covers](#)
- 3: [Black & White World](#)
- 4: [Sears 1934](#)
- 5: [Comic ads](#)
- 6: [100 Mysteries](#)
- [Institute of Official Cheer](#)
- [Lint: the Institute Tumblr](#)
- [PopCrush](#)
- [Screedblog](#)
- [Shorpy.com](#)
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**WHY A STORK?**  
A lost cultural reference, alas. Plus: Listen! [...]

MORE  
**Thanks for dropping by!**  
Feel free to join the discussion by leaving comments, and stay updated by subscribing to the RSS feed. That's the default copy from the developers! I'm just adding this, and will add something more, later. Who cares? You're reading this? Really?

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ABOUT

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Friday! November 15 – er, no. The 13th

Monday Matchbook

## MONDAY, NOVEMBER 16

on NOVEMBER 16, 2009 · 66 COMMENTS · in [DOMESTIC LIFE](#), [POP CULTURE](#)

**Many years ago**, in the Mayan capital: a wealthy man is surveying his room of slave-scribes, all of whom have been calculating the calendar into the future. They have no idea why they have been set to this task, but their lot is not to question. It is tedious work, but full of mysteries; no one quite understands why their master wants a list of all the three-day weekends, for example. **SO I CAN PLAN A BARBEQUE**, he shouts. What does that mean? Today he strides around the room with his usual imperious swagger, peering at their work, correcting mistakes – one slave put “thanxsquvng” on the second week in November, whatever that was, and he was beheaded on the spot – and when he is done, he asks how far they’ve gotten. He does this every day.

“December 21, 2012” says Tectoquixtal, whose name means “Urine of Jaguar.”

The master nods, as if he expected nothing less, then turns and leaves the room. Tectoquixtal watches him cross the street – and can barely believe his eyes when his master is struck by a spear thrown from the nearby practice range. It catches him in the chest, and he drops without a sound.

Tectoquixtal looks down at his work, the date Dec. 21, 2012, and thinks, well, screw this, then.

That may be as good an explanation as any other, I suppose. I don’t care why the Mayan calendar ends, and have no anxieties. Had not intended to see “2012,” since Emmerich’s movies post- “Independence Day” have been

### RECENT COMMENTS

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Amanda from Michigan on [Boo. Hiss](#)

Julie on [Testing the new RSS feed idea](#)

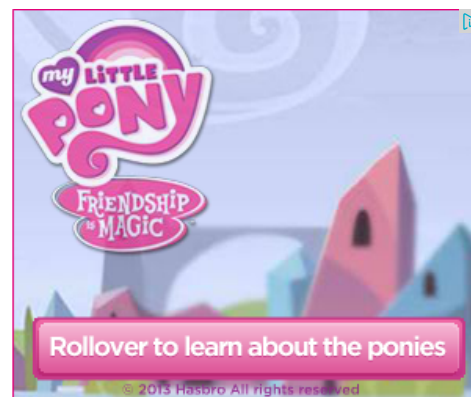
shesnailie on [Autobots and Bruckner](#)

Wagner von Drupen- Sachs on [Autobots and Bruckner](#)

### 140 OR SO

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### CLICK – AND SAVE!



### A BOOK I RECOMMEND

dumber and dumber. (“ID” was implausible enough, but as a big loud action thing, it was fun.) But the child was at a sleepover and my wife wanted to see it, so we went. I was dismayed beyond measure to find out it was 2 hours and 38 minutes long – when you add previews, you’re talking three hours. Sigh. Well.

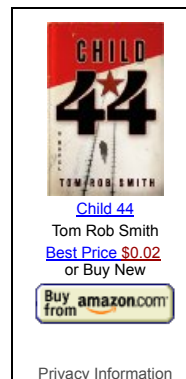
One of the previews made me cringe: Hugh Grant and either Sarah Jessica-Parker or John Kerry as a couple on the ropes who have to enter witness protection as a married couple. I would rather be tased in a bramblebush than see that. The other movie was “Avatar,” which of course looks great but smacks of another industrial-sophisticated-civilization mean, tree-dwelling dragon-riders noble. We’ll see.

Sensing that audience might have a limited attention span, and wanting to show the movie more than once a day, the theater had cut back on the previews, and that’s fine. Three’s about right. Four makes you annoyed with the fourth one. Five make you want to scream.

Oh, the movie? People are insulating themselves from snob-smack by saying “it’s actually not that bad,” and I understand; I thought the same thing. In retrospect I realize is it AWESOME even if it turns into “The Poseidon Adventure for the last three hours of its 47-hour running time. I don’t mind big noisy stupid things-blow-up movies; I liked the first Transformers, loathed the second, enjoyed ID4, wanted to take an ice pick to everyone involved in “The Day After Tomorrow,” loved the first half of “War of the Worlds,” and so on. “2012” is really “When Worlds Collide” without the other planet, for reasons that are obvious towards the end. The acting isn’t all ham and cheese; the editing isn’t cut-a-second Michael Bay-style retina-jackhammering, and the special effects – well, that’s what we go for. The end of LA is probably the most remarkable piece of urban destruction committed to the screen.

Okay, it’s not awesome. It relies on preposterous coincidences and fortuitous skills, it suffers from Danny Glover who manages to avoid both gravitas and intelligence as the President, it reprises the nail-biting “we’re flying away as the runway is destroyed” idea about three times to many, it wants you to believe that a fully-laden Russian cargo yet can drop into a shallow trench with an airspeed of 6, maybe 7 knots, but still pull up in time to carrying its precious cargo to the third act, and – worst of all – it’s full of moments where people make speeches, emotional speeches, about, you know, emotions, at a time when the clock says SEVEN SECONDS UNTIL AIRBORNE CHUNKS OF HAWAII FALL ON OUR HEADS. Most of the “real” people, the little folk who aren’t part of the government conspiracy, don’t react the way normal people would react. The end of the world has a rather small psychic footprint, it seems.

One of the more irritating things: John Cusack’s character is a sorta-failed guy whose hot wife divorced him and took up with a shallow boob-enhancement doctor, and they have two kids he takes on a camping trip. Anyone want to guess? You, in the back there.



THE PAST AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

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THE DISTANT PAST

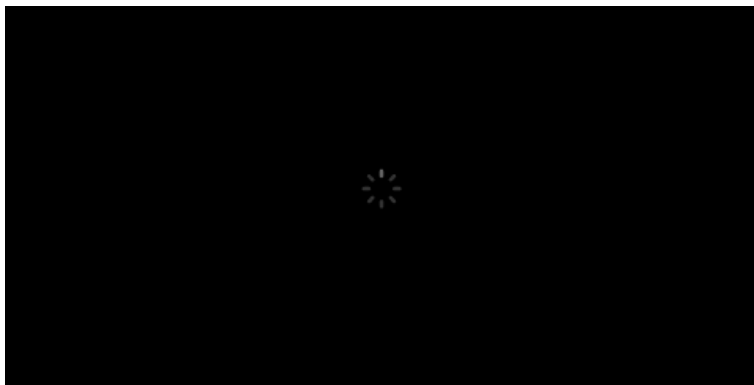
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“Uh, a winsome little girl who loves her dad, and a sullen older boy who acts distant and resentful?”

Very good! You’ve seen the movie. Or did you just see “War of the Worlds,” which had the same idea? It’ll be a movie that breaks all the rules when the heroes comprise an intact, stable, well-adjusted family. Could even be a family where dad goes to work at a job and mom stays home with the kids, because I’ve heard that actually happens. (If you’re joining this site late in the game, and want to take me to task for proposing such sexist tripe: I was a stay-at-home dad, and am still the primary bus-picker-upper / drive to karate-piano-choir / make the lunches / etc guy. So chill.) While we’re at it, we’ll know someone’s breaking all the rules when the President is a white guy. Your first thought upon seeing Danny Glover: that’s not the President. Morgan Freeman is the President.

That said, I grew up during the Golden Age of Disaster Movies, and this thing is state of the art. Rather amusing ending, too. Oh, that’s where we’re going? There? Cripes. You can drop me off here, thanks.

That was the weekend, more or less – Friday I did all the updates for the site while listening to old radio (finally found some of Jack Webb’s early comedy show; surprisingly anarchic and almost, err, post-modern in its ridicule of the medium’s conventions), then watched some of Sam Raimi’s “Drag Me to Hell.” Not a big horror fan, but I like Sam Raimi’s patented blend of shocks & gags, and supposedly this was a return to his roots. Perhaps it is; I lost interest. Saturday, the aforementioned movie. Sunday, I did the Minnesota Youth Symphonies concert at Orchestra Hall. Great show. So was the one outside the Hall:



One man sitting on a bucket, singing. Heard him from a block away. He was great.

Twenty-four second video. You can give him that, can’t you? If the video doesn’t play, go [HERE](#).

(Note to anyone using the low-light feature on the Kodak Zi8: turns any shot into ShakyCam.)

Later: Matchbook Monday, of course. See you soon.

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HOST WITH THE MOST

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## 66 RESPONSES TO *monday, november 16*



**JohnW** says:  
November 16, 2009 at 1:22 pm

*There was the 2- hour Prisoner premiere- any thoughts?*

I managed to stay awake through the first hour. The lighting was okay, and it seemed to be in focus – the photography, not the plot. That was all over like a mad woman's excrement...



**St. Chris** says:  
November 16, 2009 at 1:22 pm

James, if you post only one more update to the Bleat for the rest of your life, I beg you to make it a video of karate-piano-choir.

[@canajuneh](#): Homeschoolers aren't all Jesus Campers. Some quite the opposite.



**hgbear (roger h)** says:  
November 16, 2009 at 1:26 pm

**St. Chris :**  
*James, if you post only one more update to the Bleat for the rest of your life, I beg you to make it a video of **karate-piano-choir**.*

they put the chopin' in Chopin



**nightfly** says:  
November 16, 2009 at 1:46 pm

"It'll be a movie that breaks all the rules when the heroes comprise an intact, stable, well-adjusted family."

The Incredibles. Intact, stable, and compared to everything else on celluloid, in the 90th percentile or better on well-adjustment. Also, one of the best movies of the decade.

I've always thought that the final little section of the Mayan Calendar, properly translated, would say: "Be sure to order your 2013 Mayan Calendar!" Now THAT would be a kickin' finish to "2012".



**Bridey** says:  
November 16, 2009 at 1:54 pm

[@canajuneh](#)  
*Spud, you reminded me of one of the scariest videos ever. It's a freebie documentary at Netflix called "Jesus Camp".*

### UNTOLD RICHES AWAIT YOU

This is just a fragment of the site, you know. Head [HERE](#) for the full menu. Enjoy!

### BLEAT PREMIUM

Go [HERE](#) to join - for as little as you like. You'll get an email with your passwords. The page for your bonus-secret ultra links is [HERE!](#)

Hmm. I just watched this movie (released in theaters in 2006) last month for a college class, and I found it less “scary” than suspiciously edited and intensely manipulative. I also didn’t much care for the filmmakers’ use of children (to whom they were apparently granted remarkable access) to serve their “Look at the freaks!” agenda. Indeed, I thought that agenda so transparent that I wouldn’t be inclined to accept “Jesus Camp” as gospel, so to speak, on Evangelical practices and beliefs.



**Tim Hamilton** says:

November 16, 2009 at 2:01 pm

@Julia

Not two points, they’re claiming, but three: Center of the Galaxy, the Sun, and the Earth. Think of it viewed from the Earth, and you’re asking whether or not the Sun & Center of Galaxy are in exactly the same direction in the sky.



**Borderman** says:

November 16, 2009 at 2:31 pm

Yes. The clinical term for this is “checkinosis” and it is endemic to your quadrant at this time, but that’s not important right now.

Please set your Illudium Q-36 Explosive Space Modulator on stun and contact John Cusack on the sub-space hailing frequency. We are standing by to beam you and Operative Cusack aboard the mothership as soon as global warming causes the Interstate highway system to play crack the whip on Danny Glover’s cab which he only recently caught.

The Secretary will disavow all knowledge, so good luck, bgbear.

And remember, we’re all counting on you.

And Cusak.



**Borderman** says:

November 16, 2009 at 2:33 pm

***bgbear (roger h) :***

*I am on my last book of bank checks, am I going to run out of money?*

Yes. The clinical term for this is “checkinosis” and it is endemic to your quadrant at this time, but that’s not important right now.

Please set your Illudium Q-36 Explosive Space Modulator on stun and contact John Cusack on the sub-space hailing frequency. We are standing by to beam you and Operative Cusack aboard the mothership as soon as global warming causes the Interstate highway system to play crack the whip on Danny Glover’s cab which he only recently caught.

The Secretary will disavow all knowledge, so good luck, bgbear.

And remember, we’re all counting on you.

And Cusak.



**Borderman** says:

November 16, 2009 at 2:37 pm

Message 6 sent in error, Message 7 is correct. Am still learning how to use this interface. Please pardon the waste of bandwidth.



**HunkyBobTX** says:

November 16, 2009 at 2:59 pm

From Wikipedia:

*“A New Age interpretation of this transition posits that, during this time, the planet and its inhabitants may undergo a positive physical or spiritual transformation, and that 2012 may mark the beginning of a new era.[6] Conversely, some believe that the 2012 date marks the beginning of an apocalypse.”*

- Sounds like every other election year I've seen.



**Rex V** says:

November 16, 2009 at 3:18 pm

When I see Nicolett Mall I can't help but think about Michael Keaton in Jackie Brown.



**bgates** says:

November 16, 2009 at 6:18 pm

*Danny Glover who manages to avoid both gravitas and intelligence as the President*

Seems to happen a lot with Presidents these days.

OR,

*Freeman is the President.*

*He's also God.*

Seems to happen a lot with Presidents these days.



**MikeH** says:

November 16, 2009 at 7:07 pm

This movie will only serve one good purpose. fuel for Rifftrax or Cinematic Titanic (both existing thanks to MST3000) James you and Mike Nelson need to get back together and riff this one.



**boblipton** says:

November 16, 2009 at 7:49 pm

**Patrick :**

*Actually, it ends on December 31, 2009.*

Thanks for the correction. You had me worried.

Bob



**Patrick says:**

November 16, 2009 at 10:49 pm

Somebody get that bucket guy a recording contract. If I was walking down that street, I'd probably have dropped a fiver into his bucket. No "probably" about it, that was worth \$5, if not more. Words of the wise, he spoke at the end: "Don't let no one steal your joy today."



**Ross says:**

November 18, 2009 at 3:27 am

"The world simply CAN'T end on Dec. 21, 2012 because at that point my annual Frank Zappa's Birthday Party will just be getting revving."

Yeah, but at least you don't have to agonize over what song to kick it off with that year...

"Look here, brother-

Who you jivin' with that Cozmik Debris?"

[ May I also suggest following that with "Deteriorata" from Nat'l Lampoon's "Radio Dinner"? ]

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THE LATEST

**WHY A STORK?**  
A lost cultural reference, alas. Plus: Listen! [...]

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something more, later.  
Who cares? You're  
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ABOUT

Monday Matchbook

Comic Sins: Hey, Guardian

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# TUESDAY, NOV. 17

on NOVEMBER 17, 2009 · [69 COMMENTS](#) · in [DOMESTIC LIFE](#)

polymathamy on [06.14.12 Bleat](#)

[Amanda from Michigan](#) on [Boo. Hiss](#)

[Julie](#) on [Testing the new RSS feed idea](#)

[shesnailie](#) on [Autobots and Bruckner](#)

[Wagner von Drupen- Sachs](#) on [Autobots and Bruckner](#)

**Allow me** some parental pride:



She whipped this up after school. Drew the cat first – which she doesn't like much, she said – then did the lyrics from some song the kids like on their Warrior Cats tribute videos. "Did I teach you how to put layers under other layers?"

140 OR SO

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ONLINE MEETINGS

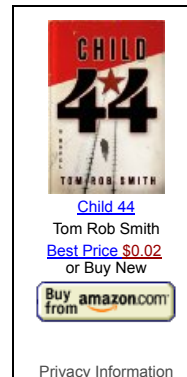


**GoToMeeting**  
by citrix

TRY IT FREE

A BOOK I RECOMMEND

She grinned. “No.” She’s proud of the general effect, which is why she gave me permission. Also came up with a nifty little piano composition tonight. Annnnd acts like math is slightly less difficult than gargling house paint.



**I hate banking;** I hate almost everything about it, for one reason: I don’t believe the money’s there. If I can’t have it in front of me, Scrooge McDuck style, it just doesn’t exist. This is immature, yes, and probably speaks to deep issues about money, but I’ve been wondering why this is. Why I found it more comforting to have cash in small amounts on hand instead of in the bank, doing something. It was unlikely it would be needed for a kidnapping, after all, because they’d want more than the small amount I

had on hand, and the criminals would be unlikely to be swayed by the fact that I had ironed the money to make it extra flat and therefore aesthetically satisfying. There would be a pause on the line: you ironed the money? Confused words in the background: he did what? Why does this matter? But I enjoyed setting aside some pin money. Got over that; put it in the bank. Periodically it goes into investments, which is even more unnerving than the bank, because it all goes into vast sloshing piles, as easy to identify as an individual steerage passenger thrashing around after the Titanic went down. Less so, since I don’t imagine my money screams. Much.

With age comes wisdom, they say; if so, I’d best call UPS and initiate a package track. This might require a trouble ticket.

Whenever I used to go to the bank I would get a certain nervous feeling, expecting the teller to frown, tap some keys, and say “you said you had how much?” Now it’s all online, which is logical and secure and fool-proof, right up until you check your checking account balance and it’s about 1/10th of what you expect it should be.

This happened Sunday. I looked at the receipt, and figured: we’ve been

THE PAST AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

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THE DISTANT PAST

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robbed. At least they left a few dollars. Nice of them. But how? HOW? Wracked my brain; had I used my credit card online? Because as we all know, once they have your number they can drain your entire bank account the way hackers do, which is by typing furiously in a dimly-lit room until someone says “we’re in,” and then they get a completely nonstandard interface with no real-world analogue, complete with spinning graphics and keystrokes that make clicks and beeps.

Yes, I’d used my card online. It was a paypal site. Wasn’t it? Yes; I always check the URL to make sure it’s real, and the company isn’t located on 123 Fake Street. But here’s the amusing part: after I bought the software (a really nice disk utility) I’d browsed the “about us” page, and everyone on the software team was Russian. No offense, but I figured it was all a Mafia setup at that point, and the disk utility had somehow found my master list of passwords – which is A), encrypted, and B) written in a code no one else can figure out, because it’s based on a conceptual template that can be customized without me forgetting it, and has random permutations that make it extra strong – and they’d figured out how to get into my bank account.

This, I knew, was nonsense. But. Where had it gone? Where? I was out on errands, but couldn’t concentrate. Drove home. Traffic was slow. Move! It may be Sunday, and the banks are closed, but they’re probably open in Russia! Not Moscow, but one of the eastern parts from Risk! Then: ah. Realized what happened. Long boring story, but it was suddenly clear what had happened. Confirmed it online, breathed a deep sigh of relief, and continued on the Sunday errands.

Provisioning is the weekend errand, and I try to do it cheaply. Because I am, perhaps, cheap. Not wise, and not psychopathically penurious, but . . . frugal. Not one of those who comparison shops for months on end before a major purchase; no, that makes sense. I fret over small things, as if this somehow insulates me in the long run from overspending. Premium brands? No. Lots of clothes? No. Expensive wine? No. [Which brings me to these people.](#)

It’s a story about people who used their severance to continue their lifestyle just as before, and ended up broke because they ate out a lot and bought “cases of \$36 a bottle wine” and lots of flowers and had manicures. This to me is madness. I probably don’t enjoy a good economic boom as much as I should, because I figure it’s going to end eventually, and you might find yourself broke, unable to sleep, mentally toting up the cost of all that Starbucks over ten years.

What I can’t bring myself to do is use coupons. If I could have them all on my iPhone, and just run barcodes over the scanner, fine, sign me up. But my objection to coupons stems solely from the person who is always behind the person with coupons. At Target the other day a fellow got out an envelope with at least 7000 coupons, and proceeded to thumb through the Clancy-thick sheaf until he found the right one.

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HOST WITH THE MOST

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**Today:** Comic Sins, and something else. It's a week of generous updates. See you soon.

Pass it along, if you wish



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## 69 RESPONSES TO *tuesday, nov. 17*



**Bridey** says:

November 17, 2009 at 1:31 pm

Natalie's got a nice sense of proportion — the ears are the only area that's funky, and I presume that's an anime-type style thing, like the catbangs. Not that it's a bad look. My cat could definitely rock the emo bangs.



**Lulu** says:

November 17, 2009 at 1:40 pm

***bgbear (roger h) :***

*The eating at restaurant thing always seems key to me. It is certainly a weakness my financially challenged sister has. Convenient but, costly.*

*The times I was out of work (not too long, can't stand it) I always concentrated my new free time on preparing inexpensive meals and managing the leftovers to save money.*

*@Bonnie\_*

*I go for barter, I was wondering how I would do with lots of cheap booze if the economy fell apart. Trader Joe's and Bev Mo here I come.*

*That or ammunition. Of course, some people would probably want trade ammunition the hard way.*

Eating out is a huge expense that could easily be cut out of most household budgets to painlessly save thousands of dollars a year. And as far as I can see it's not more convenient to eat out than it is to eat at home! Think about it. Here's what you go through when you eat out:

Get in the car, drive to the restaurant. Hopefully the traffic isn't too bad. Arrive, try to find a parking place. Then wait. And wait some more. Whether it's at the drive-thru of a fast food joint or seated on the banquette of a sit-down restaurant with a pager, prepare to wait for awhile. Be seated. Get menus. Figure out what you want. Wait for server to show up and sit through the spiel about whatever the special is. Order. Wait for food. Wait some more. Eat. Wait for the server to bring the check. Figure out proper tip. Put down credit card. Wait for server to bring back credit card. Leave. Drive back home.

OK, so let's say I'm hungry. Do I want to go through all the above? Or how about this?

Fix meal. Eat. Put dishes in dishwasher.

I never understand why people insist they eat out every meal because "it's so convenient."

UNTOLD RICHES AWAIT YOU

This is just a fragment of the site, you know. Head [HERE](#) for the full menu. Enjoy!

BLEAT PREMIUM

Go [HERE](#) to join - for as little as you like. You'll get an email with your passwords. The page for your bonus-secret ultra links is [HERE!](#)

**boblipton** says:

November 17, 2009 at 1:48 pm

***swschrud :***

*dump the gold, unless you need it for jewelry manufacture or plating. that's a shell game between investors otherwise. dump paper, that's what it's for but clip coupons. they help you stretch your paper further. average shopping trip at (rhymes with little baby bears) Sunday. spent \$96. value gained: \$146. find a nice corner in the back of the store to pull the coupons if you aren't shopping tag-team, with one pushing the cart and pulling the coupons, and one grabbing Articles 'o' Stuff and carting them.*

Why does this surprise people? He files away paper towels.

Bob

**Lulu** says:

November 17, 2009 at 1:48 pm

***GardenStater :***

***Lulu*** :*No job; no income. Yet they continue to spend, spend, spend while turning down job offers and assuming that eventually everything will work out just dandy.*

*Having experienced a year and a half of (at least partial) unemployment, I need to point one thing out: While I was receiving my state Unemployment checks, I did indeed turn down a few jobs, as well as not apply for others. Why? Because, if I had taken them, I would be earning (after taxes) less than I was on Unemployment (which was far less than what I had been making). The economics of it were simple: Take a job at Home Depot, and earn less money? Or continue to collect Unemployment, and search for a better-paying job? It's a flaw in the system: If you take even a part-time job, your Unemployment stops. A real Catch-22, IMHO. That being said, I think these people who continue to get pedicures and go out to dinner every week are nuts. I don't do that now, and I've got a well-paying job! But maybe that's the after-effect of joblessness.*

The article didn't give the impression that these job offers were from places like Home Depot. It's not as if they're describing the former CFO of a Fortune 500 company, out of work 3 or 4 months, who hasn't yet lowered him or herself to pushing a broom at McDonald's. It's more along the lines of "I've been out of work for two years and owe my family \$60,000, but if I accept this job I'll be making \$70K per year instead of \$140K, and that just isn't right! Don't these people know who I am?!" Seriously. Go back and read the article. Some of these folks are apparently more comfortable with spending every dime they have and then living off charity than they are with lowering their opinion of themselves just a teensy bit.



**bgbear (roger h)** says:

November 17, 2009 at 1:56 pm

@Lulu

Convenience. I think it is the shopping for groceries part and cleaning up part they are trying to avoid.

Also, some people do not have the basic tools for good home cooking.

I am with you, restaurants are some of the most time consuming events I have been a part of. I hate being invented to lunch at the office. I have billable hour goals and I am unwilling to work longer at the end of the day to make up for a 2 hour lunch excursion.



**Al Federber** says:

November 17, 2009 at 2:13 pm

James should invent an automatic money-ironing machine in his spare time.



**GardenStater** says:

November 17, 2009 at 2:20 pm

@Lulu

You're probably right. Don't get me wrong—I think they're nuts to continue spending their severance pay on luxuries.

But it can be awfully tough to realize you might have to go back to work for half of what you were making before. I mean, when the Unemployment ran out, I worked as a stablehand, shoveling you-know-what, for eight bucks an hour. But I was pretty certain it would be a temporary gig. Thank God it was (not because of the work—I enjoyed it—but because of the money).

That being said, I was "thisclose" to landing a job, and lost out to another candidate because the company got them for less money. It's hard when you're middle-aged to even know how to price yourself. I just hope I can hang on to this job until I retire, or hit the lottery....



**hpoulter** says:

November 17, 2009 at 2:25 pm

I use a service to iron mine:



**hpoulter** says:

November 17, 2009 at 2:27 pm

Damn, the pasted link didn't work. How about this? (I miss the Buzz)



**hpoulter** says:

November 17, 2009 at 2:28 pm

Oh, well, it was funny.

One more try:

<http://www.collegehumor.com/pictures/gallery:stripper#1902553>



**Warren** says:

November 17, 2009 at 4:33 pm

Nicely done on the graphic.



**LindaL** says:

November 17, 2009 at 5:52 pm

We eat home-made dinners about 85% of the time, but eating at a restaurant is sometimes easier and quicker. My son and husband usually meet me somewhere halfway between work and home for dinner, rather than eating leftovers by myself as my husband is hearing out the door for work. With that being said, We both are working and can afford it. If either of us weren't working, there really wouldn't be that need for convenience.

What was so striking about the article to me, was the elitism that was so completely conceited and clueless. Their karma must just be hellish.



**LindaL** says:

November 17, 2009 at 5:52 pm

s/b: heading



**Wendy** says:

November 17, 2009 at 6:20 pm

Way to go Natalie, excellent artwork! I miss the Gnat years. And the (G)nat years. \*Sigh\* They grow up so fast...



**browniejr** says:

November 17, 2009 at 10:30 pm

"Why I found it more comforting to have cash in small amounts on hand instead of in the bank, doing something."

First thing I thought of: "Mr. James Lileks" storing his well ironed cash in his locked desk drawer in the den, Don Draper-style. Is your name actually Whittington, Mr. Lileks?



**Droptma Styx** says:

November 17, 2009 at 10:50 pm

James, your daughter's got talent. Let's hope she doesn't abandon her muse somewhere in her adolescent Dark Ages.



**bgates** says:

November 17, 2009 at 11:31 pm

Chris M – even cheap Windows people can use [Gimp](#), the free Photoshop. Don't make your child try to make art in MS Paint.

What struck me about the severance article was the salaries – 200k and 140k. Obviously there are jobs for stupid people that pay 6 bucks an hour, or a million a year. I had thought 100k-300k was the sweet spot that required intelligence. I guess not.





**juanito - John Davey** says:  
November 17, 2009 at 11:55 pm

@bgates

Most folks that I've pointed to Gimp complain about the learning curve – but for free, you can't beat it. Very cool app.



**Ross** says:  
November 18, 2009 at 4:52 am

“...coupons rarely save you money because they just encourage you to buy something that you wouldn't have bought in the first place.”  
Sorry, I'm with GardenStater & the others: use 'em for thing you buy anyway & have everything ready when you get in line. The last couple of years the registers where I usually shop spit out variations of the ones I've just used with the receipt.  
As for the dining out debate, there are situations where(within reason) a restaurant gives you more than saved time/convenience. If, like me, your place has a purported kitchen that the galley on a small cruiser would laugh to scorn, there are tons of meals you can't make at home. Even w/more space to work, there are some meals I'd just rather have a pro make—either because I'd ruin it until I'd mastered it(theby wasting a lot of money) or I wouldn't use the leftover ingredients(if the dish calls for non-staples) before they went bad(again, wasting money).

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ABOUT



B&W World: Oddly Familiar

Out of Context Ad Challenge

RECENT COMMENTS

# WED, 11.18: OFFICIAL "TIRED OF KEEPING THIS QUIET" POST.

on NOVEMBER 18, 2009 · [112 COMMENTS](#) · in [DOMESTIC LIFE](#)

**The job** has become consumed by preparations for the Star Wars Holiday Special, as I'm calling it. We're shooting a big show at the Mall of America next Monday – stop on by, say hello, throw tomatoes – and we have a pre-taped hardy-har segment on Thursday, and a music show to shoot tomorrow. The music will be excerpted for the Holiday Special, and I assume we'll be doing non-sectarian stuff, no hark-the-heralds.

In case you're wondering: yes, I *do* work for a newspaper. But as our name reflects: we're a media company now. Adapt, adopt, improve; wasn't that the Musketeer motto? No; picked it up from a Monty Python sketch, I believe. The one where Cleese robs a bank. Anyway, it's a fine motto, no?

Speaking of which – brief hiatus, as I finish up the enormous and enormously likable Python documentary. Pity they didn't get all together to do it, but I suspect the egos and aggravations have expanded to the point where they don't fit comfortably in a room; alone, they can be more expansive about each other, and generous. You do wonder who made the most money, though. I suspect it's Cleese. Palin seems the most normal, but somehow the most remote; Jones is the fellow with whom you get into terrible arguments; Idle the one who wants to get the band back together because life has been so much less exciting ever since they broke up.

polymathamy on [06.14.12 Bleat](#)

[Amanda from Michigan](#) on [Boo. Hiss](#)

[Julie](#) on [Testing the new RSS feed idea](#)

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140 OR SO

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A BOOK I RECOMMEND

Ah, probably not possible. I can't imagine getting together with the guys I worked with in my youth, unless they were the fellows with whom I shot pinball and discussed life and international Communism; we still see each other. The Crazy Uke, for example. We were roommates for a while at a house his dad built; it was 1983. Three of us, the troika filled out by Victor, a younger fellow who loved the Stray Cats, later became a private detective operative, and then an Orthodox priest. (I think. More or less.) For some reason when I recall the house I remember a comrade from the Daily newspaper, an utter drunk, a fellow who looked tailor-made to play an upper-class dissolute serving time in India, self-medicating with gin and quinine, making sardonic remarks about the Hindoos or the Mooselmen until he went native and became one or the other, or died in a last gasp of heroism during the Sepoy rebellion, stirred by the smell of gunpowder to find his essential qualities as an English-speaking person and die with the Union Jack clutched to his homesick bosom. He did coke, I seem to recall. Later he started up a magazine.

Everyone started up a magazine in those days. Those who didn't wrote for them. His version lasted one issue, which was typical. I don't remember what I wrote for him, but I do remember the payment. I went to his apartment to get it. He apologized for not having actual money, and handed me a check he had designed on his Personal Computer and printed off on a Dot-Matrix Printer, state of the art. It would be good for one hundred dollars in the future.

Never saw him again. I was thinking about that last night after I wrote the piece about Money, and it set off a row of dominos that click-click-click until they dead-end at the Obelisk of Betrayal. Said object was erected, oh, a year and a half ago? I've never talked about it.

Well, as the dentist said in a Moorhead office building when he discovered my first cavity and prescribed a filling, "no time like the present."

My last book, the sequel to Regrettable Foods, was sold by the same agent who sold my previous seven books. The difference with the eighth? He kept a large share of the royalties, which is a kind way of saying he took the money from the publishers and did not give it to me. In this business we expect 15 percent to be shaved off, but 100 percent seems a bit excessive, don't you think?

I began to be intrigued by the slow delivery of royalties, and called the local branch of the agency. She promised to get right on it. I heard nothing. Calls to the head agent, now in New York, went unreturned. Mind you, we'd been friends since 1985. I was happy to be with the agency. Proud! They had a great client list, New York cred, success after success. If you wrote a book in this town, he was the agent you sought. We did deal after deal, and I figured thus it would always be.

Except he wasn't returning my phone calls.



THE PAST AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

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I assumed he was busy. He used to tell a joke: a man comes home from a business trip to find his house burned down. He calls a friend, who says "your house is gone, your wife ran off with the insurance adjuster, the dog is missing, your car was stolen, and your teenaged son drained your bank account. Oh, and your agent called." There's a moment of stunned silence; eventually the man says "my agent called?"

Hah hah! Well, we had a laugh about that. We had many laughs. Last time I saw him we were in a Village bar with plank floors, meeting with my Random House editor about the next book. All very New York Publishing World and very cool and amusing. Top of the world, Ma.

But now he wasn't returning my phone calls. Heck, even if I'd been a pity client from the old days whose work he couldn't sell, I would get a mercy call now and then. Not now. And the checks were missing. I didn't think there was any connection. But. Well.

The local branch didn't return many calls either, but when we did talk, she promised to get on it. And call me back.

So I'm sitting in the movie theater on a summer afternoon, watching the trailers before "Batman Returns." Phone rings. It's my agent. I make the great fatal mistake: *hey, good to talk to you, but, I'm about to see Batman; can I call you in two hours? I've been trying to get the check for the last book.* He says absolutely.

When the movie is over, I call back. Answering machine.

He never did call back, that day, or the next.

One call to the publisher informed me that the check had been sent, and cashed, a looong time ago.

If you're wondering why I had not made that call before, well, I'd been used to slow payouts for a long time. DIDN'T YOU THINK YOU WERE BEING ROBBED? No. By my friend? Why? He had books on the NYT list. He handled just about everybody on NPR. He was *the guy*.

Armed with the information about the payoff, I confronted the agent who ran the local branch. To this day I don't know what she knew exactly, but I suspect she had her suspicions – and while she always struck me as a good person in a tough spot, I can sum up the year that followed:

Sorry; vague words about what happened; you're not the only one; we will repay; money is coming from a settlement, be patient; I'll sign a contract that sets up a payment schedule; sorry the payments are late, but I'll set things right; the settlement didn't happen.

Leading to: if you want to sue, I don't have anything.

I think I'm as furious about this now as I was when I discovered the perfidy.

It would be difficult to press criminal charges against the local agent. Any

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legal judgment would probably be paid off as quickly as the money the agency owes me, which is to say: never.

I feel bad about this, for the local agent's sake, because I believe the misappropriation was solely the lead agent's doing, and she didn't profit from it. Everything I've seen from her indicates shame and horror at finding it all blow up like this. That said, we had a contract. I would have been content to get fifty bucks a week for the rest of my life. The last series emails and phone calls have gone unreturned; radio silence since last summer.

More tomorrow.

**Out of context ad challenge** around 10:30 or so! See you then.

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Pass it along, if you wish



## 112 RESPONSES TO *wed, 11.18: official "tired of keeping this quiet" post.*



**shesnailie** says:

November 18, 2009 at 5:13 pm

\_@\_v – googling the exact phrase “We unconsciously absorbed a crucial equation: Virtue = Work” and it seems the book attached to swifty m bezzler’s quote is for sale at amazon dot com. you want we should all leave negative reviews?



**Borderman** says:

November 18, 2009 at 5:21 pm

You all are so correct...took mere seconds with Google to find out this scumbag agent's name. Says he accepts queries.

Here's my query: "What part of 'keeping your clients' royalties is stealing' don't you understand?"

Wonder how long before his name is permanently and indelibly smeared with the word *thief*? Not long, I'll wager.



**Petrushka** says:

November 18, 2009 at 5:41 pm

In fact, Cleese enters a lingerie shop, thinking it is a bank, realizes his mistake, then utters the line, 'adopt, adapt, improve.'

And for the record, I own many of your books and regularly give them as gifts, taking it for granted that you were being paid in a timely manner for your delightful offerings. I join the chorus in helpless frustration for you.



**Nivaya** says:

November 18, 2009 at 6:01 pm

My husband said we should repay you the money we spent on Gastroanomalies via PayPal. \*nods\*



**GoHskrs** says:

November 18, 2009 at 6:28 pm

I found a listing of other authors this agent-in-name-only has represented (URL sent to you, James). Wonder if any other of his clients have been similarly treated? Might be worth asking them.



**swschrads** says:

November 18, 2009 at 6:38 pm

I detect the smell of trapped skunk. "website being rebuilt" indeed.

get the money in US Postal Money Orders, James 😊 you have to provide cash to buy them, and they use fraud-o-pens on the 20s and over.



**GoHskrs** says:

November 18, 2009 at 7:18 pm

Meh. Email to your [first-name@last-name.commercial-domain](mailto:first-name@last-name.commercial-domain) box failed, so I sent it via Twitter instead.



**GuyfromNH** says:

November 18, 2009 at 7:28 pm

James, so sorry to hear this. I had an agent once who said a novel of mine was at a publishing house for a year... without a response... until I contacted the editor in question and found out the book had never been submitted. Ick. Not as awful as a story as yours, tho... good luck... hope this has a good outcome...



**Queeg** says:

November 18, 2009 at 7:49 pm

This is a sad tale. It's one thing to be rooked... quite another to be betrayed by someone you regarded as a friend. Whether you get the money back or not, you've lost something that you'll never get back. Of course you should pursue your legal rights... meanwhile I'd be happy to contribute to the James Lileks Legal Assault Fund.



**swschrads** says:

November 18, 2009 at 9:48 pm

perusal of sir agent's firm on da web indicates he's been rather hard to find for almost everybody since June, 2007. two of the four agents have apparently struck out on their own.

website scoffers, including me, note... the wayback machine has its first REAL snap on September 25, 2002... and it's the same bogus placeholder that exhibits today.

so the personage didn't go to ground in the past few days, it's been "when convenient for me" for a while.

outside the courthouse, about now, I'd get knowing nods.



**SarahW** says:

November 19, 2009 at 12:02 am

Cheezit Crackers, sue. A judgement is good for twenty years, and

you're entitled to your payment. Make them lose what they should lose, which might be more than they are willing to let on to you is available. I'd defer to your counsel's opinion but the corporate veil here is effing pierced. You never know when someone will die, inherit, win the farging lotto.

Also embezzlement is a crime. Do something.



**Matt says:**  
November 20, 2009 at 8:52 am

Enough playing nice in the sandbox – start kicking some sand. The agents firm should have some sort of fidelity insurance. Lawyer up and go hammer and tongs on them. Not how I would want to proceed either but after a year + of stalling you should beat them like a rented mule.

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## THURSDAY, NOV. 19

on NOVEMBER 19, 2009 · [61 COMMENTS](#) · in [DOMESTIC LIFE](#)

**There's a vase with a flower** in a niche on the bathroom wall. Or rather there was. Spun around this morning getting out of the shower, the robe caught the flower, the vase went down. Glass everywhere in the room of bare feet. I thought: the day's either off to a horrible start, or this is as bad as it gets.

That all depends on one's self, doesn't it? As I said yesterday: adapt, adopt, improve, DESTROY. Or something like that.

**Just a few notes here;** exhausting day. Get this: we had the first musical concert. For the TV channel. At the newspaper. In the morning I was Ted Baxter with the news, doing a sports interview of all things, and then we hosted a remarkable group of musicians.

The guitarist was [Billy McLaughlin](#), with his group "Simple Gifts." Oy. Lovely beyond compare, this; [go to the site](#) and listen to the samples. Billy had a big career in the 90s with the Narada label before he came down with a rare condition that just happened to cripple his left hand. For a guitarist, that's the end of the career. He taught himself to play with the other in a new style, and this new group is part of his renaissance. Sweet guy, kind and generous, and the band was equally talented. The violinist was playing some old tunes, and I asked her *not* to play "Nearer My God to Thee," because, well, around here in the newspaper business we're sorta gunshy about Titanic references. She laughed and played it, and it was lovely.

polymathamy on [06.14.12 Bleat](#)

[Amanda from Michigan](#) on [Boo. Hiss](#)

[Julie](#) on [Testing the new RSS feed idea](#)

[shesnailie](#) on [Autobots and Bruckner](#)

[Wagner von Drupen- Sachs](#) on [Autobots and Bruckner](#)

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[A BOOK I RECOMMEND](#)

I have the best job I've ever had.

Somewhere in between the morning news and the afternoon concert I posted to the Strib blog, the Bleat, the Hughiverse, and wrote most of Friday's column. Wasn't home to get my daughter from the bus, which made for a double-bad day. Miss breakfast with her, even though she's as owly in the AM as I was as a kid. She's about four, five years away from asking if she can have coffee.

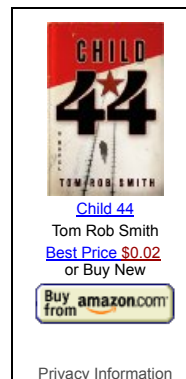
She already asked why I drink coffee, and I say "because I like it." Which is true. Not the most ethical answer, I suppose. "Because Daddy needs a jolt, and gets pounding headaches if he doesn't regularly dose his system with the hot, nourishing power of caffeine" would be honest, but then you're setting the groundwork for saying that drugs are okay.

Of course, drugs are okay, depending on the drug. I know this guy who's absolutely brilliant – one of those free-ranging intellects that can fasten on the particulars of a scientific discipline for a career and engage in wide-ranging conceptual debate for the joy of the argument. On coffee, it was like arguing with a supercomputer with buzzsaw arms and laser-beam for eyes; on the spleef, he walked into every logical trap like a sleepwalker in a rake store. And he was smart enough under the influence to know he'd been smoked on account of the smoke, too. That's the thing with weed: you're so boring. The ones who get out in time are the ones who get tired of boring themselves.

They're also the one who realize, early on, that (fill in the blank with the name of an artist) was probably not high when he did that. Even though everything just FITS so AMAZINGLY and seems aimed with obvious intent at other people who were high.

Anyway. I miss my daughter in the morning. But work is good, and I still have freedom and challenges. After today I went home, fell asleep in my shirt and tie, woke, then went to dinner with Mr. and Mrs. Giant Swede at a local restaurant. There are so many. Every commercial district in the neighborhood has a new little cafe, and they're all great, and they're all packed. We do this every fortnight now; last time it was a Spanish joint, this time a carb-heavy wine-bar famous for homemade spicy tater tots and sandwich fare.

The bathroom:



THE PAST AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

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I have to laugh, because 40 years ago I don't think people were pulling out Instamatics to snap a shot of light fixtures in a bistro can. They could have, but when you were given an allotment of 12 or 24 shots, you took care.

It had an interesting effect, though – when you went to camp, you rationed your shots, mindful you had two dozen, no more. You ended up shooting half of them the last day just to burn off the roll. The entire concept of “burning off the roll” is probably lost, and it's a pity; it was gone before anyone thought to devote a big expensive coffee table book to the 24th shot taken by people who were heading to the drugstore to drop off the film, and realize they had one more picture left to take.

Wonder what that book would be like. Lots of dogs? Drug store parking lots?

**As for yesterday** – interesting response. Heard from a few people in the same situation. People in The Business. This was something of an open secret, but apparently I'm the first to talk about it. I have to admit I worried about breaching the matter; gosh, what if they get mad and do something legal? Then I remembered: they have my money. They took my money and did not give me my money. So, there's that. I appreciate all the well-wishing and sympathetic outrage, guys – why, it's prompted me to set up a PayPal for donations to the Bleat, just for spit 'n' skittles, as they say. I've never charged for this or run ads, because that's always seemed like sitting someone down, making them listen to a monologue, then asking them to pick up the check for coffee.

But, what the hell.

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HOST WITH THE MOST

I will say this: it's been a hell of a task to keep this thing Popping and Vibrant this year, because I've been lashed to the wheel since I was reassigned to the digital / video division. (These terms are relative, of course – it's not real work in the sense that my father works, as in "lifting things" or "Driving all night" or "sitting in the bottom of a Navy vessel listening to the watertight doors close because there are Japanese subs about." I'm not that deluded. Making your living with your tongue and fingertips is still cakewalk city compared to making your living with your back and your arms.)

Anyway: it's not over. I learned a great deal today, and having shaken the tree, let's see what drops down. If I don't hear anything from the other parties in 48 hours, I'll post a few links which will speak for themselves.

**Later today:** First Day Covers, oh boy. Gosh, can't wait. But then it's Sears 1934 around noon, if I remember to post it.

Thanks for your patronage & support. You're swell. You just *are*.

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Pass it along, if you wish



## 61 RESPONSES TO *thursday, nov. 19*



**Retread** says:

November 19, 2009 at 4:32 pm

What happens now if we buy a few copies of your books? Will you get royalties, or is nasty agent keeping it all?

I usually buy a couple of copies to give as gifts but the thought of doing so now if you won't see a penny of it gives me pause.



**D T Nelson** says:

November 19, 2009 at 6:18 pm

I've been drinking coffee since I was six months old, so they tell me — I cannot remember being six months old, but neither can I remember a time before I was drinking coffee — and started drinking it every day at the age of twelve. I don't *\*think\** that was the cause of my minor heart trouble, but even if it was, it's a fair trade.



**Wendy** says:

November 19, 2009 at 6:44 pm

I too hunted for the Pay Pal button/link/donation bin. Come along James, we'd like to prove our fidelity!



**lanczos** says:

November 19, 2009 at 7:08 pm

***bgbear (roger h) :***

*The broken vase reminds me of one acquaintance from work who was in the shower during the Loma Prieta Earth Quake in*

*1989. The shower door shattered into thousands of safety glass shards. Naked and alone in a dark room full of glass is no way to calm down after a 7.1 earthquake.*

The only situation that could be worse: ...*having taken a laxative.*



**bellczar** says:

November 19, 2009 at 8:38 pm

James, I've finished a lot of rolls by taking shots of the urban environment, mostly in Minneapolis. Also many of my car.



**Mikey NTH** says:

November 19, 2009 at 8:45 pm

Not just the amount of film, but you also had to take care of how many flash bulbs or flash cubes you had. IIRC, everyone would troop outside so that pictures could be taken rather than burn up expensive flash bulb/cubes.

Yes, I remember when dad got an electronic flash that would work with his old Agfa. Based on the outdoor slides (since converted to disc) he had to remember to use it no matter if he was inside or out.

(I used that camera for a time, and it had a hand-held lightmeter. It was a darn fine camera until it finally wore out for the last time. BTW – I still have a Kodak Brownie somewhere that belonged to my grandfather. I took a few reels of photos with it back in the late eighties, and they actually came out well. I should dig it up again.)



**efurman** says:

November 19, 2009 at 9:18 pm

There is nothing intrinsically wrong with adds. Not all adds are created equal. You would just have to screen and approve them to make sure nothing obnoxious or overly stupid made it to the site, but that would entail some extra effort on your part and considering the number of irons you already have in your fire...

You might want to check out [projectwonderful.com](http://projectwonderful.com). And no, I do not work for them nor am I affiliated with them in any way.



**lindal** says:

November 19, 2009 at 10:44 pm

HPoulter, who knew we had so much in common?

And that's all I really have to say about that. When I stopped, I felt like a moron for about two weeks afterward.



**Steve G.** says:

November 20, 2009 at 9:54 am

I told my wife about what happened to you yesterday, and her response was "Is he [the agent] in jail now? I sure hope something legal is happening." I would have to agree.



**DensityDuck** says:

November 20, 2009 at 1:26 pm

I'd be happy to pay you just to keep doing Bleats. That's basically what Jerry Pournelle is doing.

It's funny to see the internet world returning to ad-supported columnists, though, because that was how everything was going to work circa 1998. Unfortunately the world just wasn't ready for the notion of "I pick the content I want to see from an infinite menu"; they were too used to "the newspapermen know what I want to see, the newspapermen know what to say about it, STOP ASKING ME TO THINK YOU BASTARDS I JUST WANT TO SIT HERE EVERY MORNING AND HAVE KNOWLEDGE AND OPINIONS EJACULATED INTO MY BRAIN"



**Mikey NTH** says:

November 20, 2009 at 5:38 pm

Destiny Dude – I think "brain-basting" would be a happier turn of phrase than "ejaculate on the brain".

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something more, later.  
Who cares? You're  
reading this? Really?







ABOUT

First Day Covers

Sears 1934: latest update

# FRIDAY! NOVEMBER 20

on NOVEMBER 20, 2009 · 60 COMMENTS · in DOMESTIC LIFE, MEDIA

**What. A. Day.** First of all: you asked for a donation button. Why, I'm happy to help; I've set it up with PayPal, and as I might expect, it doesn't work. Yet. Some sort of verification needs to occur. When the bytes move through the digestive system and cough up useable code, I'll slap it up.

This morning was normal enough by the new abnormal standards – a pell-mell race up Park Avenue to work, with “Turning Japanese” on the radio for the final leg. Deeply creepy song. No one knew what it meant except that Japanese stuff was cool, you know. I had a girlfriend who had a sweater with big Japanese characters, and was a bit disheartened to learn it meant something like “Fish Cowards in The Hallway” or something equally unhip. On the other hand, the sleeves had two sets of zippers, this being 1983, and multiple zippers indicated that one was fully aligned with the zeitgeist.

For all I know, the “Fish Cowards” were a good band.

This. Day. After morning TV newswork I finished a column, then shot out here:

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- Julie on [Testing the new RSS feed idea](#)
- shesnailie on [Autobots and Bruckner](#)
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The Bob Who is Of the Sponge! We had to cut a video to drop into the Star Wars Holiday Special. I got a look at where we'll be shooting; it's a five-story rotunda that has something going on every day. Today it was an anti-cigarette campaign, complete with a gigantic Claus Oldenberg-proportion cigarette stubbed in an ashtray. Enormous video screens showed depressing ads to an audience of Zero. You don't get people to quit by scaring them; they've internalized that fear way down deep and spend the day moving it aside 20, 30 times a day. When you tell them that smoking will do bad things they think "it's probably done it already, so what's the point in quitting?"

This is where we'll do our show next Monday. Today we shot the gift-giving sequence. I'm looking for a present for my co-anchor, and vice versa. Lest you wince at the possibilities for faux camaraderie, it began thus:

(shot of LILEKS and AIMEE laughing, as though the camera just happened to catch our Newsbreak Anchor Team having a great festive on-the-job moment)

Me: "Hey, you know how TV stations always like to make their anchors do things together so you think they're friends?"

Aimee: “Instead of barely tolerating each other on camera?”

Me: “Heck, off camera too! Well, that’s what we’re going to do today.”

And so on. As it goes on, it’s apparent she’s shopping for an insufferable co-worker, and I’m trying to get something cheap that doesn’t require much effort or thought. I don’t know why I keep writing bits for myself that put me in the worst possible light. Perhaps the surest way to deflect minor criticism is to embody the major ones, and inflate them? Naaaaaaah. Couldn’t be that.

We were interrupted three times by Mall Cops, who wanted to see our papers. One such fellow made a call up the chain just to check us out, then came back again to see our papers, only to tell us it was okay, but he had to check. In this modern world of constant threats and tiny cameras capable of recording exploitable terror points, you can’t be too cautious, even if you see a crew with large media badges on their coats and a camera the size of a roasted pig from a royal banquet. I understand, they’re doing their job; no harm no foul. But when I asked if the media badges meant anything, he said that anyone can get them, you just have to show credentials.

This is why I throw my lot in with the Citizen Journalism types. All credentials mean, I guess, is “someone else hired me.” What I’d decided to hire myself?

That was my day; aside from work, I had a brief desperate nap before supper, a radio interview, piano instruction with the Child, a short session of reassurance that the movie version of her new favorite book may indeed be okay (“but I looked up the cast on the internet and they have a girl with brunette hair playing the girl who’s blonde.” I could either say “that’s how I felt when they said Jessica Alba would play Sue Storm instead of Charlize Theron,” or reassure her. Chose the latter) and then I wrote the text for sixteen pages of Institute of Official Cheer updates.

Why?

Because I love this site and I love the fact that people like it. So there.

**Your enormous** [Comic Sins :: comic ads :: Muscle Ads update is here](#). Enjoy! See you around noon with Sears 1934, and later today with 100 Mysteries.

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Pass it along, if you wish



## 60 RESPONSES TO *friday! november 20*



**Matt** says:

November 20, 2009 at 4:38 pm

**Mark E. Hurling** :*Why thank you, canajuneh. Always happy to be of service. I have done that job in the past, and will do so again when necessary. Just remember Gollum he'll see you when*

HOST WITH THE MOST

*you're sleeping, he knows when you're awake . . . So be good for goodness sake.*

I do not equate AF with Santa Claus, that is for sure.  
I think he's more akin to the 'Quinch Who Stole Lileks'...

You're a preeened one, Mr Quinch  
With no ti-ming and no style  
As helpful as a horsefly  
As stinky as a stool

Mr Qu-u-uinch!

You're as useful as a school of pirhanas in a swimming pool



**DryOwlTacos** says:

November 20, 2009 at 4:51 pm

I think there must be some federal law that says that a Strong Female Character must occupy a certain percentage of screen time in each movie marketed in the US, and of course Peter Jackson, wishing to turn a buck or two on the deal, had to comply by making Arwen's part much bigger. While I was OK with the revisionist story as it played out, I objected quite strongly to Liv Tyler being billed above actors who are her betters by far.

Nice to see Merry and Denethor in current TV series ("Flash Forward" and "Fringe," respectively.)



**\*Di\*** says:

November 20, 2009 at 5:21 pm

***bgbear (roger h)** :circa 1974 did Arnold have have any idea what his life would be like 35 years later?*

I think Arnold had big dreams from day one – plus a big personality to accompany his big muscles.

His choice of wife didn't harm him any, in getting ahead 😊

It's interesting to see how many actors/entertainers (wrestlers even!) come to be state governors. What's that all about?



**bgbear (roger h)** says:

November 20, 2009 at 6:41 pm

@\*Di\*

Green Acres parodied that with the governor of their fictional state being an former actor. The actor playing the actor governor used his real name, movie veteran Lyle Talbot.



**Charles Cox** says:

November 21, 2009 at 10:01 am

I thought it was Claes Oldenburg, not Claus Oldenberg.



**Angie** says:

November 21, 2009 at 5:04 pm

Yay, the check came! Nice, nice "coincidence"! I'm so happy for you

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and for all of us who have bought your books thinking to thank you for your inspired commentary (of which “rake store” is only my most recent favorite). And again, hooray!



**shesnailie** says:

November 21, 2009 at 6:35 pm

\_@\_v – from what i understand, ‘turning japanese’ was about the face you made in the final throes of a sexual encounter...



**grs** says:

November 22, 2009 at 12:52 pm

***Al Federber :***

*Camera paranoia? More like too many dull, angry “cops” with nothing much to do. Get used to it, James, and don’t forget to thank your boys Cheney and Bush, creators of Police State America.*

And all this time I’ve been under the impression that Obama is in charge . . .



**fizzbin** says:

November 22, 2009 at 2:39 pm

Re: Newly arrived check. Yes, coinkydinkys are amazing. I’m glad the power of press exposure results in something good happening, yet again.

I know I’m a big booger, but I never get too excited about checks until the hold expires and the funds are in my account....my adult children laugh at me 😊



**Jay** says:

November 22, 2009 at 4:58 pm

I’m teaching in Japan. I turned Japanese long ago. Yeah, really, it happens.

About Japanese things being cool, my students are bemused when they meet Americans who have Japanese/Chinese characters tattooed on themselves. Some of them have chosen some odd things, perhaps unwittingly. One girl had the characters for “large intestine” on her upper arm.

[← Older Comments](#)

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ABOUT

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Sears 1934: latest update

Monday Matchbook

## MONDAY, NOV. 23

on NOVEMBER 23, 2009 · [33 COMMENTS](#) · in [DOMESTIC LIFE](#)

**Monday** is shaping up as a total career-ending clusterfarg or an enjoyable once-in-a-lifetime experience. Either or both. We're shooting what I call the Star Wars Holiday Special at the Mall of America. Don't know what more I can say now, except this: if anyone had told me when I got into newspapers that I'd be doing this down the road, I would be as delighted as I am surprised. Starts the week with a bang, it does, and if there's anything this week needs it's a loud noisy takeoff, right?

I love Thanksgiving, but I always feel useless. The womenfolk do all the cooking; the kitchen is a hen party non pariel, and the menfolk just wander at the margins like beaten wolves skulking at the perimeter of the campfire. I don't watch football anymore, so I don't have the option of sitting in front of the TV and watching big guys run into each other. But I still like football, if need be, so if I have to join in the reindeer games, I will.

Seems soon. Seems as if the holiday season, as it's called for non-sectarian / commercial purposes, arrived ahead of schedule. It's been warm, and without a week of skin-cracking wind and low temps and blowing snow that gets down your collar and makes you curse and think four more months of this idiocy, at least, it's not November. I was looking at some video from a few months ago, and was shocked to see how green everything was. Bare and brown is the norm now; bare looks familiar. Bare looks right. Which is so wrong.

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### 140 OR SO

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### A BOOK I RECOMMEND

**Nigh-perfect weekend.** Laid out a ton of sites for '10. I'm going to finish up most of the 30s site additions, then go on to the other decades. Yes: 20s, 40s, 50s, 60s, 70s. They'll be the repositories for all the stuff that doesn't fit anywhere else. Few updates this week. since it's a holiday, but a big surprise on Wednesday.

**Watched** "Star Trek" again. Obligatory DVD-release reviewing. Same impression: good, funny, taut, mushy plot in spots, and Spock needs Poligrip. I still think Engineering is ridiculous, and needs to look like a Starship instead of a factory in Seattle.

**I did errands** on Saturday, my mood unaccountably buoyed by a special-delivery package that arrived around noon: why, it's a check from the agent. I'll be switched.

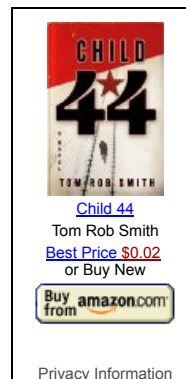
Not all of it, but some of it. If you're wondering, well, don't you wish you'd said something earlier? No. Wanted to let everything work through the process we'd set up, and when that went south, I still debated.

Now let's see if it clears.

**Finished "Blood's A Rover,"** the latest Ellroy novel. Longtime patrons of the site know I'm a big Ellroy fan, but man, this was an unrewarding book. There were long, long sections where I wanted to say "that's not writing, dear boy. That's storyboarding." Main problems: two of the three main characters are indistinguishable. They have slightly different attributes, but attributes are not personalities. People speak in dialogue that's indistinguishable from the narrative only because it's put in quotation marks, or written down in diary form. There's just too much of everything – it's like sitting next to a guy at a coffee shop counter at 3 AM, and he won't stop going on in a speed-freak rap about Nixon and Kennedy and the CIA, and while it's interesting as a study in madness, you wish he'd take a breath.

I'm serious: every 40 pages, someone in the book takes a lot of speed and reads THE FILES. FILES about the crime. FILES about the connections. FILES about the characters and their crimes and the connections between their crimes and THE CRIME. This is described in the mannered be-bop prose: he fixed on the connection. He *re*-fixed on the connections and *re*-wired. Joan Klein / Celia Bupkis / Ruth Buzzai, in Vegas 12/7/67. He focused and felt the connection slip. He *re*-refocused and got a soft *click*. He unwired and thought: Reginald Leander Jackson Hazard – now, which indistinguishable plot-puppet was he again?

There's a great crime story buried in the book, but when I say buried I mean 100 feet down. It doesn't resurface until the end, and when it does, well, who the hell is this guy who's fingered for the murder at the house? Another interchangeable guy from the long list of early-middle-aged private detectives, bug men, fixers, operatives, and LA demi-monde slime-time players. Eh. The crime story – or, as the book would have it, THE STORY, is lost in fog of hallucinatory Central American escapades. I think I speak for many when I say I'd rather read Ellroy talking about restaurant menus in LA



THE PAST AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

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in the 50s than writing about, oh, the Dominican Republic.

**The period.** I would have been content if the tale ended with “The Cold Six Thousand,” because more Hoover, more CIA, more fer-cripes-sake CUBA obsession is just not what I’m in the mood to rehash.

**The women.** The central motivating figure in the book is a Communist activist, and supposedly she inspires obsessive devotion in All Who Meet Her. [One reviewer](#) called her Ellroy’s “most realized female creation to date.”

*There is no evidence presented for this assertion in the book.*

I’ve read everything he’s done. This was like chewing through a cement pillow, with occasional pockets of Alka-Seltzer. Most of the reviews are laudatory, so perhaps it’s just me; perhaps I lacked the discipline or time or inclination to inhabit its rhythms. It’s not as though he’s lost it – he did a four-part piece on his life with women for Playboy, and it was much more harrowing than anything in this novel. It also pointed out what makes the book so odd: in his memoir, he describes his salvation in a relationship with a woman who has the same first name as the Red Queen, and notes that she was a left-winger, he was a right-winger. He describes his motivation: so women will love me. The most pitiful character in the novel says the exact same thing, and he’s meant as a stand-in for the author.

**The matchbook will be late**, but it will arrive. See you soon.

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Pass it along, if you wish



### 33 RESPONSES TO *monday, nov. 23*



**ed in texas** says:

November 23, 2009 at 6:49 am

Ellroy’s books are like that. The only way I can describe it is “you’re in a forest, and some of the trees are EVIL”. I mean, even ‘LA Confidential’. When you’re reading dialog, and you have to stop and check which character said that, ’cause any of them might have said it, you feel the need for a little, say, differentiation, I guess. Make ‘em more distinct.

What we need is an ‘X Files’ movie written by Ellroy. THAT would exceed the density of lead.



**MikeH** says:

November 23, 2009 at 6:49 am

Ah Thanksgiving, a useless federal holiday dedicating to eating and watching football. I drive cab that evening so I’m hoping that a bunch of people will get in an arguement with family and decide they need to get away to the bars. Otherwise it’ll be a slow night for me. We’re having our dinner early before my shift.

Good luck with the check, bank fees suck!!

HOST WITH THE MOST

**Tim Windsor** says:

November 23, 2009 at 7:24 am

I made it ten pages in before I realized I actively disliked everyone I'd met so far. A glance at the total page count to come told me the journey would be a long slog. So I got off.

800 pages into "Under The Dome" instead and feel like I made the right choice.

**Nancy** says:

November 23, 2009 at 7:33 am

Great news about the check (crosses fingers for luck). I hope if this is an installment—he adds a little interest.

**Diakoneo** says:

November 23, 2009 at 7:39 am

6:40 and only 4 comments. Gonna be a slow Bleat week...

**RPD** says:

November 23, 2009 at 8:36 am

I suspect that the Bleat is well read enough that your little rant did apply some pressure to The Agent. I'd be willing to wager that you wouldn't have seen the check if you hadn't said anything.

**browniejr** says:

November 23, 2009 at 8:51 am

RE: The Check  
Squeaky wheel gets the grease again. If it doesn't clear, "The Agent" should not only hear one wheel. Hopefully he has figured this out, so it should be a good check. (fingers crossed for you!)

**rbj** says:

November 23, 2009 at 9:30 am

““that's not writing, dear boy. That's storyboarding.””

I've gotten the same impression from later Michael Crichton novels, such as Timeline. A book that is intended to be made into a movie just doesn't work as a book.

Good news about The Check, but it does seem to me that the words "Ponzi scheme" will be linked with The Agent.

**Good Grief** says:

November 23, 2009 at 9:48 am

Every year I have one or two clients that ignore the agreement they've signed, and drag feet paying my invoice. they always point the finger at THEIR client, saying to me that they'd love to pay me, but can't until they get reimbursed. After I remind them that I covered that sad excuse in advance, in the agreement, they often pay up. ...this is after six or nine months of my gentle persuading though.

But when I get the check (which, yes, covers the mortgage and pays for cheerios and generally keeps the lights on here), I still always

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feel let down. There's something oddly disappointing about getting the check after all and thinking "well, thanks for the months and months of ill-feeling". The account gets settled eventually, but the damage is done. It's not always simply that they have decided to shove my work and invoice to the side, and try to avoid me, it's that they have decided to damage the relationship. If they had the fortitude to call and say "we're running a bit behind, can we send a partial payment?" I'd be inclined to say yes. But dodging, and playing games... well. They seem to think you won't remember that after they finally pay.

Their settling the monetary account never pays off the psychic one, does it? That's what sucketh. That, and when they try to make YOU feel like you're being a hard\*ss about it.



**wiredog** says:

November 23, 2009 at 9:53 am

November is Gratitude Month! If you're in AA in the US. Being both I have lots to be grateful for.

For starters, I'm above ground and still breathing. Odd to be thankful for that at 44, but way too many former Known Associates, and a few friends, are not.



**Andrew** says:

November 23, 2009 at 10:04 am

I think Ellroy's at that point where he's too big for an editor, and his work suffers for it. I also think that he had one book (about the armored car heist) that he wanted to write, and one (a continuation of the Underworld trilogy) that he felt he had to write, and just ended up welding them together.

Hopefully, he won't take 10 or so years to write his next novel. I think that's a big part of the problem.



**LindaL** says:

November 23, 2009 at 10:18 am

Yay about the agent issue!

I read the interview in the Strib about Ellroy and BaR. I also listened to Kerri Miller's interview with him for Talking Volumes. My three conclusions were, "I can't stand people like him, What a difficult interview that must have been, and No way am I reading that book."



**WatchWayne** says:

November 23, 2009 at 10:30 am

Ya see there, James, you're sort-of getting paid to Bleat. Didn't hafta name names or nothing-- sometimes embarrassment travels as fast as gossip.

[@wiredog](#)

My friend lost his above-ground status yesterday, after a brave fight with a rare bacterial infection. Just as brave was his 20-plus-year (successful) fight with things that qualify one to be an AA member.

**Tom says:**

November 23, 2009 at 10:53 am

The engineering scenes were filmed in a Budweiser brewer! The Enterprise has been re-imagined as about 2-1/2 time bigger than in the original TV series, and they wanted to give a sense of scale that was missing in the various TV show engineering sets. 7 out of 10 for effort, but they probably should have toured the engineering spaces of an aircraft carrier or cruise liner to see how such spaces really look.

**Mark E. Hurling says:**

November 23, 2009 at 10:55 am

I have to agree with Ed in Texas about Ellroy's dialogue streams. Once I went back to the last clear character reference I had to count forward to where I had lost the thread so I could make sense of the narrative. WireDog, only 44? Ya' pup! Wait until 59 starts to weigh on your bones. Having grown up (sort of) in the 50's and 60's, Ellroy provided some context to those oh so mysterious conversations taking place over my head by the adults around me.

**juanito - John Davey says:**

November 23, 2009 at 11:33 am

Read today's Bleat at 5:30AM in the parking lot of the condo in South Lake Tahoe. 14 degrees, and I left the ice scraper at home, so I downed my daily Bleatage via my phone while waiting for the heat to come up enough to melt the ice off the windows so I could drive 100 miles to my office. Bad signal on the phone lakeside meant barely hitting the Edge Network, but since I was in such close proximity to the Condo, the phone kept trying to switch to the wireless signal inside. Too close to firm up the Edge Network, not close enough to pick up a strong wireless signal. Bleh.

So, were I able to comment this morning in the pre-dawn hours, I would just suggest that if the Star Wars Holiday Special doesn't offer a cartoon peek at Boba Fett, Video tributes to Art Carney, Harvey Korman, and Bea Arthur ( or at least a ceremonial rendition of the theme to *Maude* ) or the vocal stylings of Carrie Fisher, I'm going to be disappointed.

Errr, Happy Life Day.

**Lou Shumaker says:**

November 23, 2009 at 11:50 am

Ellroy's book about his mother's murder was pretty dam good, especially the abridged book on tape. Listening to that at 2 a.m. in the car on the way home from work managed to scare me pretty good. Pity this book isn't as good.

And James' review reminds me why I like this Brave New World of the Intertoobs. While I can admire professional book reviewers (and I've been one, too, as well), I know how quickly they have to read and how little they get paid for their opinions. In some cases, they've made a living from it by not reading the book, but danced around it singing mekka-lekka-hai-mekka-chally-ho.

But James admires Ellroy. He's read probably all he's written, and he can express an informed opinion on the books that sounds more credible than a newspaper writer of unknown (to me) quality. Reading through a dozen reviews on Amazon, discarding the over-

the-top praise and the Worst. Book. Ever. reviews, a discerning reader could get a pretty good idea of the book's quality. (I get the same feeling with the reviews at Rotten Tomatoes, so even pros can play this game).



**bill hedrick** says:

November 23, 2009 at 12:20 pm

Sending you a note about a play you wanna catch sometime soon (this weekend would be nice) It will please your geeky heart. The Klingon Christmas Carol is opening at Mixed Blood this weekend and is both funny and serious. You have a Kevin Bacon number of 2 on this one, since this was developed in cooperation with the merry bunch o' Klingons of the RakeHell.

**Lileks on Thangsgiving | Junior Ganymede** says:

November 23, 2009 at 1:09 pm

[...] Pretty much captures my feelings about it: [...]



**Ed** says:

November 23, 2009 at 1:27 pm

For a brief shining moment, I thought that Harlan Ellison finally finished his sequel to "A Boy and his Dog.. imagine my confusion 😊



**SarahW** says:

November 23, 2009 at 2:37 pm

I still think you should get a judgment against the guy.. He can still pay you in installments.



**SarahW** says:

November 23, 2009 at 2:38 pm

You know, suing him will protect you if he or his company go bust. Creditors who get at the back of the line usually stay there.



**Diakoneo** says:

November 23, 2009 at 2:42 pm

Phone – \$150  
Plan – \$35/month  
Cost to receive tweets – \$0  
Getting tweet that (G)nat rickrolled James – \$Priceless



**Emily** says:

November 23, 2009 at 4:31 pm

I'm sorry the book was no good.

I'm a Pratchett fan, and his latest was one delicious treat from beginning to end.

I'm also a fan of this guy who puts out books based on funny captions for old pictures. Not sure when he's going to write another one, but I'll be watching.

**lanczos** says:

November 23, 2009 at 6:15 pm

Elroy Who?

Oh, wait... Ahhh, never mind – there's a replay of a college football game starting in a few minutes on TV.

**hpoulter** says:

November 23, 2009 at 7:14 pm

*Emily* :I'm sorry the book was no good.  
I'm a Pratchett fan, and his latest was one delicious treat from beginning to end.

Ook!

**swschrads** says:

November 23, 2009 at 7:37 pm

would be fine if the partial check had more than partial backing.

taking the week off. today's installment: moving kerrappe and generally cleaning up the garage... the REAL cleaning and rearrange, so I can butcher some innocent wood yes, to the saw with you! BWAAA-ha-ha-ha!!!

ought to be able to start aligning the big scary power tools by noon Tuesday. I hope to have a lintel for the top of the patio door by supptime. sides, maybe.

**Cruel Comparisons** says:

November 23, 2009 at 7:46 pm

What, no sniffles?

I feel played...

**PersonFromPorlock** says:

November 23, 2009 at 8:37 pm

@Emily

Pratchett doesn't write duds. I did think that "Monstrous Regiment" didn't show his usual *joie d'ecrire*.

**lindal** says:

November 23, 2009 at 10:25 pm

More members for the Bleat-Pratchett fan club, HPoulter!

I'm rereading Pyramids as a breather after reading The Gathering Storm by Brandon Sanderson and the late Robert Jordan at ludicrous speed.

**Bill Peschel** says:

November 23, 2009 at 11:05 pm

@hpoulter

Ook! Ook! Although "Making Money" was meh and my wife hated "Nation."

OTOH, after I discovered his work, I bought all his books in paperback and am seriously considering the special edition. The man's a great writer.



**hpoulter** says:

November 24, 2009 at 6:58 am

I like the witches and the watch stories the best, I think. The one that I thought really showed how he had matured as the series progressed was "Night Watch". Wonderful story. I plan to wear lilac on my lapel next spring – maybe Memorial day.



**Steve Ripley** says:

November 24, 2009 at 8:59 pm

"big surprise on Wednesday" — maybe a Diner?

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THE LATEST

**WHY A STORK?**  
A lost cultural reference, alas. Plus: Listen! [...]

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**Who cares? You're  
reading this? Really?**







ABOUT

Monday Matchbook

Thanksgiving Week 2009

# TUESDAY, NOV. 24

on NOVEMBER 24, 2009 · 79 COMMENTS · in DOMESTIC LIFE



**Before I walked head-on** into the pole and started bleeding I'd had a grand day. Saw my daughter off to school in the autumn mist, then drove to the Mall of America and got a parking spot right by the door. The technical team – the people who make video possible, because without them the anchors might as well stand on a roof and shout – had everything in place for the day's shoot -

Except for a SVGA connector. As the ditty goes: for want of an SVGA

connector, the war was lost. Pink ran to the nearest Radio Shack, and I mean nearest: in the mall, upstairs. Closed. She drove to another one a few miles away, and that explains why the company is still around: if you need a SVGA connector and your local Shack is shuttered, try another. We all love Amazon, but until they can materialize items in front of you with sparkly transporter effects, bricks & mortar have an advantage.

Unfortunately, the other store a few miles away didn't have an SVGA connector. But they checked local inventory, and discovered that the Mall store, 120 yards away from our set, had one. But it's closed! Calls were made;

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Hand Cream

THE DRY SKIN THAT CRACKS & SPLIT

THE DRY SKIN THAT CRACKS & SPLIT

**FIND A RETAILER NEAR YOU**

## A BOOK I RECOMMEND

a local manager, perhaps realizing that his entire training as a Radio Shack manager was leading up to this moment, set his jaw with grim determination, whipped out his keys, laughed at the consequences and opened the store a few minutes early. If only a fellow employee had cautioned against this rash action, and the manager had barked “Then I’ll see you in hell!”

JUST LIKE HAN SOLO!

Always thought that was a stupid line. I thought it was odd at the time when I first saw the movie. (In the theater. Opening night.) It had a great rakish adventurer ring to it, but it didn’t make sense. Sir, it’s going to get dark and cold soon on this ice planet; it may not be wise to go out now. THEN I’LL SEE YOU IN HELL! Uh, sir, I’m not intending on ending up in hell, and even if that does happen, how is that an appropriate response? Or are you just saying that to everyone these days? Was that you in the cafeteria this morning telling the lady at the steam table you’d see her in hell because she was out of bacon?

Then the blast doors go down, and someone walks up and asks what that was all about. “Oh, Solo – he’s the guy whose prior motivations are encapsulated in his last name, you know him? Shouts a lot about seeing you in hell? He went to look for the Skywalker kid.”

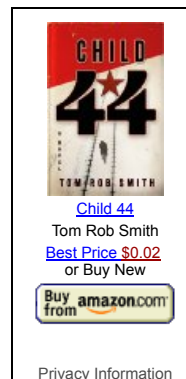
The other guys nods, and says “He take a thermal imager?”

“Oh, crap. I was supposed to put one in his bag.”

“Well, don’t say anything. We never saw him go. Anyone asks, he was going to the cafeteria to see if they had bacon yet.”

Anyway, we got the cords plugged in, and began. Shot most of the interviews out of sequence, because guests arrived in staggered intervals. Found myself doing a nine-minute demonstration of Things to Buy with a local shopping maven, and had to keep telling myself: play it straight. Play it straight. Behave. And then she described a game kit that includes “A wand that remembers everything you’ve ever done,” and I almost wept. DON’T HAND ME A LINE LIKE THAT. When she introduced a seven-CD Michael Jackson set it was all I could to keep from asking if she had a ninety-six Edison cylinder collection of George M. Cohen songs. She would have parried it well, though; she had that perfect TV gloss that can absorb any shot, like Star Trek shields. Although she probably wouldn’t rock back and forth when the shields took a hit – not because the act of firing upon a Starfleet vessel has a physical reaction, but because the tremendous strain of absorbing the energy usually requires the ship to shunt power away from the inertial dampening system to avoid blowouts. Which is why people fall over. No, really.

Then a food shelf guy. Then an accountant who talked about holiday shopping this year, and what the predictions say. (It’s a mixed bag.) We had a Mall of America decoration spokesperson who described the seasonal ornaments – blue and silver this year, very early-mid sixties. There’s only so many ways you can talk about bulbs without eventually using the word



THE PAST AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

| NOVEMBER 2013 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
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“balls,” and I made a special mental note NOT to use that particular term when asking about the ornaments below the statue of Spongebob Squarepants. Orbs! Spheres! Round things! And so on.

Interviewed a mall cop, and afterwards had a release form thrust in my hands: they were shooting a show called “Mall Cop” for TLC. Cool. Interviewed a proper cop from the local burb-force, thanked him for coming. Turns out he’s a fan. “I have ‘Falling Up the Stairs,’ he said. I advised him to sell it on eBay for as much as he could. So it went for hours, and then it was done, and we packed the gear, and headed into the bowels of the Mall of America to the loading dock. Never been backstage at the Mall. Wide halls, guys whizzing around on carts; if only they’d had a CMDF badge on the side. (Okay, nerds, that’s your challenge for today. Stands for? NO GOOGLING.)

We put the gear away, returned to the Mall. Let me tell you: nothing makes you more aware of the mall as a stage than being backstage.

Walked through the Nickelodeon amusement park, en route to the Twin City Grill. I wanted to see if they could seat eight, so I called directory assistance. While walking. Was waiting for the number. While walking. Passed a Spongebob Tree, and turned around and said “That’s what I meant by Spongebob’s orange balls.” While walking -

I hit the pole hard enough to shove my glasses into my head, which I did once before in junior high school. A big red-haired gawky kid had been dribbling with his head down, smacked into me, sliced my brow, blood everywhere. The coach said: oh yeah, you’ll need stitches. Went downtown to the clinic. Got stitches. Still have the scar. This time? Who knew? The day was young! I was certainly bleeding. But I was still walking! We were all walking! Hey, are you okay? I’LL SEE YOU IN HELL! I literally heard a BONNG when I struck the pole. As I said on Twitter, it lacked only birds, twittering.

Everyone peeled off to the restaurant; I went to the bathroom, got some tissue, blotted the flow, and went to my car, where I have a complete assortment of bandaids. En route a young woman at a skin care kiosk handed me a square foil package of something or other, and asked a question. I didn’t get it – Rooshian accent – but she had a concerned look on her face, and I asked her to repeat herself.

“Let me look at your nails!” she said.

There are times in my life when I drop the social niceties, and being asked about my fingernails while bleeding from the head is one of them. I walked on. Applied ointment and a bandage in my car, and had a laugh and a cigar.

At least I waited until the shoot was done to walk into something, eh? We call those “professional instincts.”

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HOST WITH THE MOST

Pass it along, if you wish



## 79 RESPONSES TO *tuesday, nov. 24*



**Drew** says:

November 24, 2009 at 12:17 pm

*My copy of "Falling Up the Stairs" is a hardbound, library copy that I bought for \$60 on eBay about 5-6 years ago!*

—

Whoa! Now you're just tempting me . . .



**old unkajoe** says:

November 24, 2009 at 12:29 pm

[@bgbear \(roger h\)](#)

When your friend walked through the screen door, did he strain himself?



**bgbear (roger h)** says:

November 24, 2009 at 12:32 pm

[@old unkajoe](#)

hee, hee



**Bill McNutt** says:

November 24, 2009 at 12:33 pm

I've had the same experience, complete with "boooooonnnng" sounds. Mine was a vicious, feral attack flagpole. I SWEAR it wasn't there a minute ago, and then suddenly I'm Sideshow Bob.

Bill



**fizzbin** says:

November 24, 2009 at 12:33 pm

CMDF = Canadian Midget Defense Force...they're a small outfit 😊



**Ronsonic** says:

November 24, 2009 at 12:35 pm

"Let me look at your nails!" she said.

Now THERE was your cue "I'll see you in HELL!"



**Renna Warren** says:

November 24, 2009 at 1:09 pm

So...when are you going to get your nails done. Don't leave us hanging.



**swschrads** says:

November 24, 2009 at 1:29 pm

I'll have you know I singlehandedly saved St. Paul from a marauding parking garage. I should get a medal.

going with the wife to a Wild game, hustling along... we parked the

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other side of United Hospital, and had a burger, and were hoofing it to the X. crossed, brushed the side of the handicap-cut curb with my heel... and then I saw it.

the gold parking ramp was rushing towards Summit Avenue!

I of course had little time to think, and dropped a masterful head-first tackle into the lead pillar, right in front of ExerCare.

no “thonnngggg”, just a solid thunk.

and that’s how I saved the City of St. Paul. fortunately, yes, sorry, it’s the same old line, I didn’t injure a vital organ. was quite a woozy little exerciser inside ExerCare for a few minutes before closing, vacuuming up aspirin.

oh, the game. seats were in the nosebleeds wayyyyy up high, several moments of vertigo when I realized there is not enough room in front of the seat to put your pop. but it was a good game.

nails... don’t French ‘em. it looks incomplete.



**Larry** says:

November 24, 2009 at 1:33 pm

1st time it happened to me I saw stars just like in a WB cartoon  
CMDF = Combined Miniature Deterrent Forces



**RebeccaH** says:

November 24, 2009 at 1:33 pm

You know that old saying about how comedy isn’t funny unless somebody gets hurt?

I’m sorry. I couldn’t help myself. I laughed.

If it makes you feel any better, James, I have a history of falling off sidewalks.



**\*Di\*** says:

November 24, 2009 at 1:40 pm

Well, Mr. L., at least you didn’t damage a vital body part.



(I walk into parking meters a lot)

And, your efforts are noble, but balls is still balls . . .



**juanito - John Davey** says:

November 24, 2009 at 2:07 pm

**WatchWayne :**

**@bgbear (roger h)**

*I guess I’m the only one that knows what funk lives on top of our refrigerator. What, you say, I could clean it myself??? I’m the only one that would know that, too.*

I’m 6’3”, my Child Bride is 5’2”. We seemingly live in different worlds. And I \*have\* to clean the top of the refrigerator. Kind of OCD about that one. She could care less.

**Mikey NTH** says:

November 24, 2009 at 2:36 pm

[@RPD](#)

I have found the same thing. One sunday morning, after service, I went to the airport to pick up my brother. Merely standing in a dark suit and tie led to people coming up to me and asking for directions, questions about policy, what could and could not be taken on the airplane, etc. They assumed I must know what is going on – I'm in a dark suit and tie and just standing there.

**Sorcerer Mickey** says:

November 24, 2009 at 2:38 pm

CMDF = Consolidated Martian Dimwits & Fools? (“No! Wait, that’s THE wrong answer!”)

**Borderman** says:

November 24, 2009 at 3:11 pm

Outside my office one fine summer day in 1989 I took a shortcut under a staircase made of heavy gauge steel with three duck-walk steps, and stood up. Only problem was I should have made it *four* duck-walk steps because I hadn't completely cleared the staircase. Classic “gongggg” was still ringing in my ears when I realized the reason I was looking up at blue sky and clouds was because I was on my back. Thought briefly of Wile E. Coyote getting one of his own anvils dropped on his head, but this had really happened. Blood everywhere to say the least. Took 23 staples about two inches behind the hairline to close up the scalp lacerated down to the bone. Was interested to learn stitches are no longer used at the local doc-in-a-box, but staples. Big, thick, metal, *staples*. Thank God for lidocaine.

My compliments on meeting the pole at the mall. I know just how it feels. I think.

Did the Russian woman want to see your nails because she wanted to sell you something, or because it is a quick way to detect low blood-oxygen content? It's a pilot's quick reference for knowing when to descend or get on the oxygen bottle: your nails (and maybe lips) are blue or bluish. It's possible she might have been trying to render aid instead of separating you from your money. Or not.

**PhiskPhan** says:

November 24, 2009 at 3:25 pm

My sister walked into our screen door this summer, and there's still a faint impression of her face (skin oils? makeup?) visible from certain angles. We now call it the Screen of Turin.

**juanito - John Davey** says:

November 24, 2009 at 4:06 pm

[@PhiskPhan](#)

Our old Labrador Barnaby, would routinely run through the front screen door to chase the mailman (Canine stereotype, I know, but I'm intolerant that way). After about the 5th repeat occurrence, I replaced the screen door with a wood framed screen door with slats across the bottom (like jail cell bars!).

Made. No. Difference.

The dog ran through the screen, the slats, and the wood framing.  
And yeah, he got maced.  
The dummy.

Kept the front door closed after that...



**raf** says:

November 24, 2009 at 4:21 pm

“not because the act of firing upon a Starfleet vessel has a physical reaction, but because the tremendous strain of absorbing the energy usually requires the ship to shunt power away from the inertial dampening system to avoid blowouts. Which is why people fall over. No, really.”

YES! That’s how the game is played. When Star \*\*\*\* phenomona don’t fit current physics, the theory needs to be amended.

I once, in a brightly lit department store, with no one around to distract me, turned and stepped off right into a pillar. Dazed and befuddled, but bloodless.

And Clorox Means Dead Fungus. Trust me on this.



**Dave (in MA)** says:

November 24, 2009 at 4:25 pm

The way I see it, you’re entitled to walk into a pole.  
It’s been **how** many years since you backed your car up through a closed garage door? (Two years in a row)



**browniejr** says:

November 24, 2009 at 5:06 pm

[@PhiskPhan](#)

**PhiskPhan :**

*My sister walked into our screen door this summer, and there’s still a faint impression of her face (skin oils? makeup?) visible from certain angles. We now call it the Screen of Turin.*

First thing I thought of: Oils and Makeup? The “Clown of Turin” returns. (Old BUZZards/ Lance Lawson fans will understand...)



**juanito - John Davey** says:

November 24, 2009 at 5:13 pm

**raf:**

*“not because the act of firing upon a Starfleet vessel has a physical reaction, but because the tremendous strain of absorbing the energy usually requires the ship to shunt power away from the inertial dampening system to avoid blowouts. Which is why people fall over. No, really.”*

*YES! That’s how the game is played. When Star \*\*\*\* phenomona don’t fit current physics, the theory needs to be amended.*

Ahem!!! [The Star Fleet Technical Manual](#).

Or

[The Physics Of Star Trek](#)

All will be revealed...



**Kim** says:

November 24, 2009 at 5:32 pm

***bgbear (roger h) :***

*@Kim*

*gee, I guess I am lucky I got mine before JL was an intertubes "star" it cost me about \$6 with shipping, hard back used library book.*

Dang! I remember thinking, "Wow, this must be one rare book!" : D And thinking SCORE!!! LOL! Got my money's worth though, it's not only fun to read, it holds up to a re-read...or two...



**MikeH** says:

November 24, 2009 at 6:32 pm

No comic sins tonight? That's a sin.



**Jan** says:

November 24, 2009 at 7:26 pm

It says much about my fundamental immaturity but I am laughing myself stupid at the impact stories, though not unsympathetically.

My aunt was taking my five older sisters and me for a rare treat: to a movie, Mary Poppins, the first time I had ever been to a movie. As we were walking to the theater, I was so excited and distracted (and little) that I walking right into a parking meter pole. It knocked my on by five-year-old fanny. As my aunt rushed over to help me, one of my sisters hissed through clenched teeth, "Get up or we won't get to see the movie." I got up. Creased forehead? No problem.



**Jan** says:

November 24, 2009 at 7:30 pm

Edit: That should be "It knocked me on my five-year-old fanny."

No lasting effects, or so I thought. Hmmm...



**Seattle Dave** says:

November 24, 2009 at 7:52 pm

My freshman year of college, a bunch of fraternity brothers and I were walking to the all-you-can-eat Chinese buffet for lunch one weekend day when a group of pretty girls passed us going the opposite direction. One of our guys, Eric, turned around to look at them and walked straight into the metal pole of a "Bus Stop" sign, making a nice vertical mark on the side of his face and knocking him flat on his butt. Needless to say, we all fell about the sidewalk laughing. When we'd regained our composure, we continued on our way to the restaurant. We walked in, and Eric, perhaps still semi-stunned, overlooked the waist-high "Please Wait To Be Seated" sign in the center of the foyer and walked right into it, breaking the post clean off at the base. Needless to say, there was little dinner



conversation other than sporadic bursts of laughter. I think we had walked all the way home before the fits of giggles finally subsided.

And being guys, of course, we did not let it die, but continued to bring it up frequently for the next four years, even re-enacting the scene for every new group of pledges so everyone could share in the joy.

Poor Eric. It's probably all our fault he's now a successful personal-injury attorney.



**xrayguy** says:

November 25, 2009 at 5:25 pm

Solo/Hell ref; Isn't Hell, with two Ls, a Judeo-Christian concept? How is it that a culture "long, long ago etc" would have such a concept of Hell, but not Christianity? Y'know, just picking at the idea. Yes, I know about Hel, the daughter of Loki who ruled the underworld-I DID read the Edda, thank you very much.



**Marcus Bressler** says:

November 27, 2009 at 7:02 pm

It's George M COHAN, not COHEN. He was Irish, not Jewish. Erin goy bragh!



**John Lawton** says:

November 29, 2009 at 4:49 pm

CMDF = Combined Miniaturization Defense Forces

From "Fantastic Voyage"

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