

2018 Week 30: The Week Ending Saturday, July 28th

Paul R. Potts

Sunday

Last night we succumbed to frustration and laziness and got Chinese takeout from King Shing on Carpenter Road. I made a pot of our Lundgren short-grain brown rice with butter in the Instant Pot — fantastic rice — and Grace went to pick up our order. We had short ribs, orange chicken, salt-and-pepper shrimp, ma po tofu, and sesame balls.

Their ma po tofu is not great — they used frozen peas and carrots which were still hard — but I like this dish a lot. It's very homey. The last time I ate it might have been at San Fu restaurant, formerly in South Main Market in Ann Arbor, now gone for years.

The salt-and-pepper shrimp tasted good but it was excessively hot. I used to enjoy the also-long-gone Dinersty restaurant's jalapeño squid sauté — visible on the overhead menu in this archival photo from 1991 — which had a little heat added from peppers, but not an overwhelming amount. This was hotter, packed with onions and sliced jalapeño peppers. I guess one of the dangers of growing older is that new things are always reminding you of old things that were better. Anyway, I mistook them for sweet peppers and ate a mouthful, which my dining companions found highly entertaining (“why is Dad's face all red?”) Their ribs are still excellent, and so is the orange chicken, and the sesame balls filled with bean paste are one of my favorite treats.

“The Stealer of Souls” by Michael Moorcock, in *Elric: The Revenge of the Rose* by Michael Moorcock, Edited by John Davey (Gollancz Michael Moorcock Collection)

I finished reading the third Elric novelette, from 1962, called “The Stealer of Souls.” It takes place five years after the events of “The Dreaming City.” This is a fun one because it features an epic castle-storming, and some magic involving elementals. Moorcock's concepts of elementals, as well as his notions of chaos and order, were pretty clearly adopted right into Dungeons and Dragons. This story also has good examples of moments where Stormbringer, Elric's runesword, gets out of hand and devours a soul Elric doesn't really want devoured. It might

be exciting to hang out with Elric in battle, but he loses more friends that way. I'm a bit worried about his buddy Moonglum of Elwher, who doesn't seem like a bad guy, although he is perhaps a bit ethically "flexible."

***The Fortress of the Pearl* by Michael Moorcock, Concluded**

I also finished reading *The Fortress of the Pearl*, the later Elric novel, and the other material in the Gollancz/Sirius book *Elric: The Fortress of the Pearl* including some of Moorcock's musings about gothic fantasy, which he claims was as mind-altering for him as mescaline, and the story "One Life, Furnished in Early Moorcock" by Neil Gaiman. That's a serviceable story, but aside from making me grimace at Gaiman's depiction of the grim and perverse life in British public school, didn't seem particularly strong in the way it set up connections to Moorcock's work.

The end of *The Fortress of the Pearl* isn't bad; in fact it's an improvement over the long middle section, although one of the plot problems, Elric's forced addiction to a dangerous elixir, just sort of goes away without much explanation. There's some nice revenge served cold, and poetic justice. But there's also a typical instance of Elric solving his problems as only Elric can, by going full-on berserker with Stormbringer, bellowing "blood and souls for my Lord Arioeh!" That kind of thing can really ruin your day, not to mention doom your ancient and venerable city of sorcerors and dreamthieves. And (spoiler) apparently Elric leaves Oone pregnant. This little plot point leaves me scratching my head at the way it belies the concept that "whatever happens in the dream realm, *stays* in the dream realm."

Note added while editing on April 11th, 2022: I was considering getting rid of this volume, but I didn't; it got a bit better, and really, I just can't bear to break up the set of nice multi-color Gollancz trade paperbacks that make up their Michael Moorcock Collection.

I read a bit more of *Jherog* and the plot complications continue. It gets exciting. I haven't really decided how I feel about the book. Much will depend on how well Brust pulls off the ending.

I think I forgot to mention the bread from The Mother Loaf Breads in Milan. Yesterday afternoon Grace picked up two loaves: a fig and fennel loaf, which we ate yesterday — and it was quite delicious — and a whole wheat sourdough loaf. This morning I toasted the whole wheat sourdough, and breakfast was bulletproof coffee and toast with butter. I also made a platter of scrambled eggs.

Grace and I spent much of the afternoon working on cleaning up our bedroom, which really was in desperate need of a deep cleaning. We spent several hours just folding and putting away laundry. Then we took a break for lunch, which was a bag of small rolls from Costco served with some lunch meats and various condiments. Then we got back to working on the room. She had brought our Riccar vacuum cleaner back from Saginaw, which works better than the other

one we have at the house, so we used that. The room's not spotless but it got a thorough sweeping and vacuuming and a round of cleaning and organizing, and it's much improved.

We had a tentative plan for the podcast, which was to read the last chapter of *Mistaken Identity* by Asad Haider and discuss it, along with a segment on what we've been reading (including some notes on Moorcock). Then we'd record a discussion, and I'd put it together in a show with last week's interview with Matthew Haugen of the Huron Valley DSA. But it's 7:40 now and I'm not really sure if we can get that done. So I'm going to set this aside for now and talk to Grace about our plan for the rest of the evening. I'll need at least a couple of hours to edit and produce the show, and as usual I don't want to stay up past midnight on a work night. And we've still got to figure out some kind of dinner — we were thinking we might make blueberry pancakes, since it's been a while since we last had “breakfast for dinner.” But we'll see. It's always so hard to get done everything we want to get done on our weekends, even with some help from the kids.

Monday

The Pottscast

Well. The rest of Sunday was very busy. I didn't really get dinner per se; I grabbed a banana and a few spoonfuls of hummus and went down into the basement to print out notes while Grace instructed the kids on what to eat for dinner. I was overstuffed with things to say. It's like I've said to Grace — I feel like we either need to do a 1-hour weekly show, or a 4-hour daily show.

I wound up talking a bit about Arthur Machen, and a bit about Michael Moorcock's Elric stories, and a bit about the Thai cave rescue operation. Grace would occasionally make the “wind it up” gesture, and I'd get a bit flustered, because I often feel like I'm *already* trying to get through a topic quickly, and when I try to bring it to a close quicker, it seems to take longer.

Then we talked a lot about Asad Haider's book *Mistaken Identity*. I've been reading bits and pieces of the book for a number of weeks now and I've hoped that we would get to talk about it, but Grace hadn't read it and it is very hard for her to get time to read things. So the solution that presented itself yesterday was for me to read her the final chapter out loud and talk it over with her, before recording. We marked sections of the chapter that we found particularly compelling and wanted to talk about. Then Grace read much of it on the show because ultimately we found it hard to present Haider's more interesting arguments using brief excerpts.

My left eye was all red last night by the time we did the show. With all the vacuuming and sweeping we did yesterday afternoon, we stirred up a lot of dust, and some of it probably got in my eyes. While trying to record the show, I could barely read my notes. Getting through the editing was slow and painful as I

couldn't read my computer screen all that well either. Fortunately, the irritation has diminished and my eyes work better and feel better this morning.

This show seems like it could have used some editing, but again it came down to the choice between getting something out on time, or setting it aside to finish later, which would blow the schedule. But we've worked hard to stick to a schedule. We haven't succeeded every week, but we've succeeded more often than not. So, I pressed on, and had everything uploaded and published by 2:00 a.m.

Bafflement in the Bathroom

I didn't get a great night's sleep. I woke up and found that the kids had done bizarre things, like emptying out the squeeze bottle of diluted Dr. Bronner's liquid soap that I had prepared yesterday to use for bathing this week. And squeezing out most of a bottle of conditioner. And vanishing most of the toothpaste. And taking away the towels. And leaving toothbrushes in the kitchen. And leaving a wet soap holder on the piano, for some reason. So I wasted time this morning griping and fixing some of these things and grumbling to Grace about how a four-year-old ought to be able to be done with this kind of thing, and four older kids ought to be able to notice when he is making his bizarre messes. The little spring-loaded rod that snaps into the wall fixture and holds rolls of toilet paper has been missing for several weeks. Did he flush it down the toilet? Did it wind up in the back yard? Why is he destroying our shrubberies? Does he hate shrubberies? Is this real life? Why is this happening to me? Is this forever? This is fine. I'm okay with the events that are unfolding currently.

I'd like to write that I feel great despite only getting four or five hours of sleep, but that isn't true. But I don't regret finishing the show while I had the chance. I had breakfast at the Uptown Coney Island diner on Jackson Road, in a hurry, on my way to work. I ate a mushroom and feta omelette, under-cooked hash browns, and three cups of coffee. And some antacids. My stomach is gradually settling down. Overall, we got a lot done yesterday. I feel satisfied. I just wish I wasn't exhausted. And I wish we could find the little toilet paper roller.

Tuesday

I got home from work quite late last night — it was about 9:00. I stayed to work on some LabVIEW code because it seemed to have a bug, and was not reliably displaying values returned by one of the remote control commands. But with further testing it seems that the bug may be on the firmware side. Apparently calling `SCPI_ResultUInt16()` twice to return multiple values in a SCPI command handler doesn't work reliably. Sometimes I get the two results, with a comma between them, which is what I want to happen. Sometimes I get only one result. Sometimes the comma between them is missing.

“Kings in Darkness” by Michael Moorcock

I was feeling oddly feverish and sweaty at my desk yesterday afternoon. I was trying to keep myself hydrated but was developing a headache by the time I left. When I got home I just went into the bedroom to lie down for a while before dinner. I had only a few pages to go, and so finished reading the fourth Elric novelette, “Kings in Darkness.” Elric gets a girlfriend, named Zarozinia. He has a habit of forgetting about his one true love, it appears. She’s seventeen. (I guess the story takes place in an ancient and fantastic time known as the Age of Consent.) This one has zombies in it, and a fight in a barrow, and a lich (an undead sorcerer). It’s very *Dungeons and Dragons*. Or, rather, *Dungeons and Dragons* is very Moorcock. I was somewhat surprised to find Zarozinia is still alive at the end of the story. I started to read the next one, “The Caravan of Forgotten Dreams” (aka “The Flame Bringers”), but only got partway into that one.

Then I dozed for a little while, which made my head feel somewhat better.

The Pizza Biscuit

For dinner Joshua had made a tear-apart “pizza biscuit” based on a recipe for kids in Highlights magazine. We ate that with salad. The original recipe calls for refrigerated biscuit dough, but they didn’t have that at Costco, so I brought home a box of Bisquick. It came out fine, but it looked pretty messy. So we said things like “well, it looks like a pizza that exploded, but it tastes pretty good,” which was true. But Joshua is very sensitive and tends to take any criticism of his work personally. We did praise him for making dinner. But, Joshua, if you are reading this, let me say it again: thank you for making dinner. Food doesn’t always turn out the way it looks in the recipes, and that’s okay. Mom and Dad’s meals don’t always come out looking the way we hoped. We’re not food stylists. If it’s edible, we eat it. It’s even okay when it becomes an object of humor.

After dinner I tried to go to sleep again because my head still hurt, but no one else was quiet, so I sort of lay there with a pillow over my head to block out the light until everyone quieted down and we could get the lights off.

Note to self: the next time you are thinking of staying up until the wee hours to finish a podcast, remember how you felt on Monday night. Idiot.

This morning I found that the kids had not cleaned up the dishes. Everything was piled in the sink. I thought they were doing them because I was not up to it.

Also, despite Grace’s orders, they left the garage door open and the garage lights on all night. So we’re going to have to have a talk about that.

I felt somewhat better this morning. I’m still not at my best, but the headache was mostly gone. I was still pretty slow to get out the door, though, despite my best efforts. I went to Harvest Moon Café for breakfast. I decided to try their blueberry pancakes. They were not great. When I ask for fried eggs over hard

at a restaurant, it's not because I really love eggs that way. It's because I don't want salmonella from factory-farmed eggs. And at no point did I request egg jerky. I shouldn't actually need a sharp knife to slice through an egg. So, maybe I should stick with my usual breakfast BLT.

Anyway.

Having had an opportunity to obsess about my code while trying to fall asleep last night and while showering this morning, I made some fixes. While in the middle of a debugging session, my work computer had a "snow crash," where the video card goes crazy and the screen is covered with a grid of flickering black blocks. This is, I think, the third time this has happened in the last month or two. But it's such an occasional problem.

It's threatening to rain again but looks like once again the rain is going to drift over Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti on its way somewhere else and we will get little or none. Most of Washtenaw County is currently in an "abnormally dry" state just shy of "moderate drought." The grass in the median of Jackson Road looks like straw.

Wednesday

On the way home last night, I spent the drive talking into my hand-held recorder, recording some thoughts about my podcast project, current stressors, and other topics. This recording will probably just get chucked into the ever-growing pile of recordings that I haven't done anything with. When I got home, I found that my three older boys were gone — they went to stay with their cousins for a few days.

It was *unnaturally* quiet in the house with just three or our kids and three of our housemate's children. Spooky, really.

Grace and I couldn't get much enthusiasm together for a meal and we were both feeling kind of queasy. She had put a salad together and we heated up some rotisserie chicken from Costco. I ate a few bits of chicken dipped in hummus and that was all I felt up to eating.

"The Caravan of Forgotten Dreams" aka "The Flame Bringers" and "The Last Enchantment" by Michael Moorcock

I finished reading "The Caravan of Forgotten Dreams," another one of the original Elric stories. This one features some soul-swapping magic, and more about Elric's twisted, co-dependent relationship with his sword, Stormbringer. I'm enjoying these shorter pieces. I also read "The Last Enchantment," an Elric story (not one of the original series of stories, and not broken into chapters) from 1978, which appears next in *Elric: The Revenge of the Rose*. That's an interesting story in that it does a little bit of world-building, as Elric meets the Lords of Chaos, although I don't claim to fully understand the ending. I was reading along and didn't realize this story was from 1978, or I would have

skipped it, because I'm currently trying to read the stories in publication order. "The Last Enchantment" fits roughly in here, in Elric's chronology, although Wikipedia says it is not part of the "canonical continuity." But I don't think it really matters. It might make more sense later, but I can re-read it later if I keep going past the 1964 novelas.

"To Rescue Tanelorn..." by Michael Moorcock

There's one more story, "To Rescue Tanelorn..." to read from *Elric: The Revenge of the Rose*, and then it will be time to read the four long stories that (in various edited forms) comprise the various versions of *Stormbringer*. I think some versions are more of a "fixup," turning the stories into a single novel and removing some text; I'm not really sure if his publishers did the editing, or he did it at their behest, but the versions I have in my copy of the Gollancz book *Elric: Stormbringer!* are, I think, Moorcock's preferred versions, presenting the four stories as separate "books" with separate titles and chapters under the title *Stormbringer*. My goal was to read the original Elric material as readers would have read it back when it came out. But I don't really know the detailed editing history, nor do I really want to know, as this is getting complicated enough without trying to figure out if I'm reading the versions that are the closest to the texts as first published.

It seems there is an Elric story from 2008, "The Black Petals," that is not present in my comprehensive 2013-2014 seven-volume set of Elric material. And there's also an even newer story called "Red Pearls." So I guess my "comprehensive" set isn't. Aaargh!

I read Benjamin a children's book for his bedtime story, and we went on to bed. But I didn't sleep well. I'm not quite sure why. At some point I woke up sweating, and it felt so hot in the room that I had to go check to see if Benjamin had screwed with the thermostat. I laid back down on top of the covers and turned on the ceiling fan. Grace felt my forehead and informed me that I had a fever. I managed to get a little bit more broken sleep, but not much. I considered calling in sick, but don't really feel that bad.

Grace got up early to go to an event in Detroit. The attic contractor called her cell phone at 7:30 this morning while she was in the shower, and I answered it. He was calling to confirm that he was going to complete some of the attic insulation work at the old house this morning. I don't know why he felt the need to tell us, at 7:30, how he was going to have to go to Home Depot to get insulation. Maybe he thought we were going to be at the house today? His company is over a month late completing the work. I told him that I would have Grace call him back to confirm, and he hung up without another word. She called him back, though, and apparently had a reasonable conversation with him. Grace is planning to go up there tomorrow to verify that everything is finally done as planned. Well, except the duct-cleaning, I think, which I believe is scheduled for Friday, now that (supposedly) the asbestos encapsulation has

been done.

I had breakfast at Harvest Moon again and there was nothing really wrong with breakfast — it was fine, but my stomach has been touchy, so it's been sitting in there a little uneasily. I really needed those two large cups of coffee.

Vacation Present and Past

Grace and I are talking about how to use my vacation time this year. I have ten vacation days, one “floating holiday” and two more discretionary days that I can use as sick days, or for family emergencies.

Four of the vacation days I pretty much need to use during the week of Christmas. I could come in to work, but the office will probably be empty. The “floating holiday” fits neatly into the 31st; the office, again, will probably be empty on that day, and I can't carry it over to 2019, so I may as well use it then.

We're having a baby sometime close to the end of the year; Grace's due date is the 24th. If the baby goes long and Grace doesn't deliver until 2019, I'll have a new batch of discretionary days that I can take, so that shouldn't be a problem. But I'd better hold on to a few days in case we have a new baby in December before the week of Christmas. The discretionary days I'd better hold in reserve. With young kids, a nasty virus can show up at any time.

If I just plan now to take off December 21st, 24th, 26th, 27th, and 28th, to get the week of Christmas off, and use my floating holiday for the 31st, that's four days, leaving me six. If I reserve 3 vacation days, that leaves three I could take this summer.

Two summers ago we got, for our family summer vacation, a single day away from home with our friend at her cabin in the woods. So I guess with 3 days we could do a little bit better.

If I wind up *not* using all my days, I can carry up to 3 days over into 2019, but if I don't take them by the end of March, I'll lose them. I think last year I lost 3 unused vacation days that way, because I was very occupied with our deadlines and forgot that I had to use them or lose them.

I realize that lots of people have no paid vacation at all. If that describes you, I'm sorry.

Things have changed so much. Grace remembers her experience growing up — her father routinely took six weeks off during the summer, when the family took extended road trips, and more time in the winter. Even my parents — and my mother was an Occupational Therapist, working in a Community Mental Health Center, and my stepfather was a laborer who built motorized wheels for General Electric — routinely took several weeks off in the summer. I don't recall exactly how long those vacations were, but we drove to Iowa, or took the train to the Oregon coast, and so it was certainly more than two weeks; likely, three weeks, or close to it.

I'm fifty years old with six kids at home. I've been working full-time at "real" jobs, in a "real" career, for almost 30 years. And I'm struggling to figure out if I can take three vacation days to spend some time with my family. It really seems to me like there is something wrong with this picture.

I'm not blaming my employer *per se*. This amount of vacation days is not uncommon. I'll get more when I complete more years with this company. But here's the thing: vacation shouldn't be a *reward* for years of service completed. It's a misplaced incentive. In fact, I'd say that the first year or two at a new job is likely to be more stressful than the subsequent years. That's been my experience, at least.

I also think that taking time to support my wife while she has a baby shouldn't require me to use up my discretionary days or vacation days. Does that make sense? Consider — does having a new baby make it less, or more, likely that I will need to take time off work?

Back when I worked for the University of Michigan, in the nineties, my salary was lower than one would typically get for similar work in the private sector, but I had, if I recall correctly, something like 24 vacation days. So it was possible, at least if I carefully managed my days off and could get permission from my manager, which only really came together for me once, to take a three-week block around the end of the year. Usually, I took a few short "staycations" since I couldn't really afford to do much with my time off.

I don't really know what more to say about this, except that I feel so tired and so burned out. I feel that I am aging faster than my parents did, and faster than their parents did. They had many difficulties and many stressors but they could afford their homes, and they had vacations. I feel, as well, that my children have been, for a multitude of reasons, cheated out of much the limited time I have to spend with them. That includes the year and a half I spent living half my days away from home, to take this job. And that feels awful. But I don't know what else to do.

Thursday

Nobody was all that hungry or all that energetic last night, so for dinner we just boiled some sweet corn and had some of the little dinner rolls from Costco with lunchmeat. I finished reading "To Rescue Tanelorn...", the Elric story without Elric. (His name is dropped once, I believe.) It's a story in part about a trip into alternate story dimensions. I didn't think it was stellar, although the beings that live in these other dimensions are creatively portrayed. Spoiler: Tanelorn is safe.

***Jherog* by Steven Brust, Continued**

I read a bit more of *Jherog* and I enjoy the dialogue and Brust's writing in general, but there is so much plot in this story. Maybe it's not the best summer read,

especially when I'm not concentrating as well as I sometimes can. I'm having more fun following Brust on Twitter than I am reading this novel, although I expect the later ones are likely better.

I got a pretty good night's sleep and so had a pretty productive day at work. Grace made me a bulletproof coffee for breakfast and that seems like something to write down. I didn't need to eat anything until about 2:00. I swapped cars with Grace again and she's taking mine up to Saginaw to check on the house, especially the recent repair work. We got an invoice for the plaster and paint work and it's for quite a bit of money, \$3,500. I've been setting aside money in one of our accounts to cover this, since I knew it was coming, but it's still a big chunk of change. I think we're going to pay a thousand now. We should be able to get a little bit more money out of our insurance company now that the work is complete, according to some logic involving depreciation that I don't really claim to understand. But that will help.

Grace is going to get my oil changed, too, since the car is overdue.

Friday

The Storm and the Aftermath

We had a brief thunderstorm yesterday afternoon. At my office in Ann Arbor, it wasn't that impressive. It only rained hard for a few minutes, which means the storm dropped far too little rain to make any real difference in [Washtenaw county], which is in parts "abnormally dry" and in other parts in "moderate drought." Grace was on her way to Saginaw, and told me that Crane Road was slammed hard by the storm, and there were a lot of trees down. It seems like a real ripoff to get damaging winds without enough rain to make the grass green again.

When Grace left, we still had power, but when I checked the DTE outage map a bit later, I learned that our street was without power. The Ann Arbor News web site told me 20,000 people were without power. I have a UPS installed on my main computer downstairs, but I knew it wouldn't last very long, and the Mac Mini I use for recording is not on a UPS. I was concerned about those computers going down hard, but there wasn't much I could do about it.

This is the first outage we've had since moving into our house, other than a few brief ones the first few months we lived on Crane Road.

Grace reported that she found evidence someone has broken into our Saginaw house again. She managed to get the police to come out. Last time, they would not send a car but just asked her to fill out an online form.

Apparently in my neighborhood we had a full-on microburst, or something like it, with brief but very heavy rain, and even some hail. When I got home, I found that Crane Road was an obstacle course of downed trees. The traffic lights were out for miles around. I went back up Carpenter to Meijer and bought a lot of

bottled water and a bunch of non-perishable food: some canned baked beans, boxes of triscuits, RXBAR protein bars, a few cans of herring in sauce, instant grits, some packages of instant noodles that let you add hot water, and some boxes of those “belVita” breakfast biscuits. Oh, and some candles. With no real idea of how long the power might be out, I was not very organized.

I had voice mail around 6:30 saying that DTE had missed the target time of 5 p.m. to restore power and the estimated time was now 8 p.m. Needless to say that didn’t happen. It’s been almost 24 hours.

The house was somewhat of a mess. I think our housemates had been asleep and their children had been unsupervised for a while. There were hair clips and toys and things all over the floors in my bedroom, food spills in the family room and in the hall and bedroom, bowls of food left out to rot, etc. Lots of things to step on, slip in, or trip over in the dark. And it was on its way towards a night lit only with flashlights and candles.

I could find only two flashlights. We had more, but the kids keep taking them. (At our old house we had some nice old-fashioned oil lamps for use during power outages, but our kids destroyed them, like they destroy so many things.) Our housemate took the flashlights, since I did not want her to use candles upstairs with her small children, and I made do with candles downstairs. I heated up some baked beans for our housemates and made some instant noodles. I ate crackers and canned herring for dinner. The black pepper and olive oil Triscuits give me terrible heartburn, for future reference. Likely my stress level had something to do with it as well. The gas stove works fine, if you light it with a lighter. We kept the refrigerator and freezer closed.

There wasn’t really all that much I could do as it got dark. It was too dark to read. So I sent text messages to people, including Grace, opened the sliding door to cool off the bedroom, and closed my eyes and tried to nap in the candle-light waiting for Grace to bring Veronica, Benjamin, and Elanor home.

Old House News

She had to wait for a police officer to arrive. She had heard someone in the house, and a number of light bulbs were removed from the basement, and at least one was broken. Some wallpaper was torn down in the foyer (what the fuck?)

This situation is unnerving — a woman and children walking into a crime scene in progress. The garage door (for humans, not cars) was left open. She still doesn’t have a report number from her call last week. Apparently after a long wait an officer arrived, was very polite and helpful (I have expected to hear a nightmare story about an officer pulling a gun on her and demanding her ID, or at a minimum being a dismissive asshole), and walked through the house with her.

The locks were not broken. It appears that apparently someone has been

preparing to strip copper wire and pipe and that this person or persons may have the realtor's lockbox code. We will try to get it changed ASAP, but the thing about setting up some kind of alarm, or surveillance, or whatever, is that we had scheduled three different contractors in the house this week, so it seemed pretty impractical. Also, we don't actually have any more money to spend on the house at all. And we're not sure what exactly an alarm would achieve — would we drive 90 minutes up there, if it goes off? Would we call the police, who might take even longer to get out to the property?

The good news is that the attic contractor seemed to be done, with a few quibbles. The floor work looks great. So maybe the place will look better to a potential buyer and the potential will be more clearly visible for the other rooms that still have unfinished floors and stripped wallpaper.

After Grace got home and tried to put Benjamin and Elanor to bed, they young ones very wakeful and cranky because of their disrupted schedule and the strange circumstances (no lights). So Elanor screamed on and off for about thirty minutes. It was probably after 2:00 when I finally got to sleep. I was woken up by tapping on the patio door about 6:00. Grace thinks it was the wild turkeys. Grace's brother Jim called at 6:20. I was not able to get back to sleep easily so I made a pot of tea and had tea with some instant grits and re-heated beans. After a while I was able to go back to sleep for a while and woke up after 9:00.

When I finally checked my messages this morning, I had a text from my co-worker Patrick — he had very kindly found and purchased a used generator for us and was on his way over with it. So he showed up and we got it running, in the front yard, with a long extension cable through the window into the house. The main electric panel isn't set up to patch in a generator. We took a look at the well pump, but it uses 240 volts, so we couldn't run it. We plugged in the refrigerator and left it running. Maybe we can salvage some of our food, at least the things from the freezer, although they have probably thawed. I'm not sure if we should trust the lunch meat that was in the meat drawer. We can probably eat the eggs.

So I went into work un-showered and now I'm just wondering how long the power will be out. If it is still out tonight, I don't think we will really be able to pack up and leave tomorrow morning for a vacation. I think we'll have to stay to help our housemates and their young children deal with the food and water situation. So this power outage might have blown our vacation.

I was hoping to record a conversation last night, using a portable recorder, for Sunday's podcast. That didn't happen because Grace got home so late. I thought maybe if the power came on late last night or today I could get it produced and uploaded before we left. I have no idea if we'll be able to get something together. I suppose we could record with the portable recorder and I could try to do the editing and post-processing with Audacity on my laptop, if we're still here tomorrow. I guess maybe that's a contingency plan, if we're not leaving

and the power is still out.

It was raining a bit this morning as I drove into work, but the predictions are for zero point zero zero inches. So we might have sprinkles but we're not going to get anything that will really help end the dry conditions.

So, lots going on!

Saturday

Grace and I are at Harvest Moon for a late breakfast. It's about 11:15. We still have no power at our home. It's been almost 48 hours. Some of our neighborhood is back up and running. For example, the gas stations are back up. Some of the traffic lights are back up, although I think one very busy intersection where U. S. 12 meets the on and off ramps for I-94 still has no working traffic light.

To Be Continued

That's about all I have to report. Dinner last night was chana masala, rice, and spinach (boil-in-bag entrees). With a washtub filled with hot water we've been washing Benjamin's toe (he gave himself a nasty cut running around the driveway barefoot) and cleaning Elanor. My hair looks disgusting and I feel disgusting. At this time I have no real idea when we might have power again. So I'm going to just close out the week and upload this.

Books, Music, Movies, and TV Shows Discussed This Week

This list does not include books, chapters of books, or other works that I only mentioned briefly in the text above.

- “The Stealer of Souls,” “Kings in Darkness,” “The Caravan of Forgotten Dreams” aka “The Flame Bringers,” “The Last Enchantment,” and “To Rescue Tanelorn” by Michael Moorcock, in *Elric: The Revenge of the Rose* by Michael Moorcock, Edited by John Davey (Gollancz Michael Moorcock Collection)
- *Elric: The Fortress of the Pearl* by Michael Moorcock, Edited by John Davey (Gollancz Michael Moorcock Collection)
- *Jherog* by Steven Brust, in *The Book of Jherog* by Steven Brust (Omnibus Edition Containing the Vlad Taltos Novels *Jherog*, *Yendi*, and *Teckla*)

Pittsfield Township, Michigan

The Week Ending Saturday, July 28th, 2018

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