

2018 Week 47: The Week Ending Saturday, November 24th

Paul R. Potts

Sunday

For dinner Saturday night we had the beef ribs, stewed in the Instant Pot, with a couple of pounds of green beans, which I blanched and then sautéed in leftover bacon fat from breakfast. The kids ate those up like candy. The ribs were delicious, but I think if we make this recipe again we might increase the cooking time by ten or twenty minutes. They were certainly cooked, but hadn't really started to come apart the way that slow-cooked ribs do.

Sunday was quite a busy day. I'm still fighting to adjust to my medications, and so have been sleepy and slightly disoriented. I woke up and got ready for the day convinced that it was Monday. When I got out of the bathroom I accidentally gaslit Grace, who briefly panicked that she might have lost track of what day it was. I don't think I've ever had this happen before. I've occasionally woken up a bit unsure of what day it was, usually while on vacation, but I don't think I've ever been convinced that it was the wrong day. The sleepiness is also interfering with my motivation to continue writing this blog, even though writing daily ought to be a pretty well-established habit by now.

I made scrambled eggs with leftover basmati rice and salmon and tried to herd the kids to get ready for Mass. While I was warming up the car, waiting for the last few people to get in the car, and cleaning a few things out of the front seat, I noticed that our housemate or her boyfriend had again thrown bags of trash in our recycling bin, as well as loose returnable beer cans. Bags of trash filled with both recyclable and returnable containers, but I have pretty much given up trying to convince them to return and recycle; I just can't continue to make that my problem. So I left the returnables. The trash bags in the recycling are my problem, though; if there is obviously trash in the recycling bin, the recycling folks will leave the whole bin untouched. So I had to dump out the recycling bin to make sure there wasn't more trash in it, and get the bags of trash into the trash bin. Again.

We made it to Mass, but we were about fifteen minutes late. That was better than the previous Sunday, but still not great. St. Joseph always has coffee and donuts after the 11:00 Sunday Mass. We should start putting some cash in the

basket because our family eats a lot of donuts.

On the drive home from Mass we decided to stop for a walk, since the weather was nice. We stopped at Hewen's Creek Park off of Bemis Road. We had not been to this park before. We weren't up for a long hike, we were hiking in slush and mud and not all of us had suitable boots, and Pippin had a typical Pippin meltdown, but despite this we had a short but very nice walk. The main path follows the edge of a small reservoir, which was partially frozen. There were big star-shaped cracks in the ice, and the kids decided that these cracks were where the giant squids came up to feed. (To the best of my knowledge, there are no giant squids in Hewen's Creek park.)

When we got home, Grace and I were quite tired and so wound up essentially letting the kids run wild for a good chunk of the day while we did some tag-team napping, with occasional interruptions. I went down first for a while, then she came in and slept for a bit, but after a while I couldn't stay asleep. Really I would call it a pretty useless day, but I must remind myself that sometimes doing nothing, just chilling out and resting, is actually recuperative and necessary.

When we dragged ourselves out of the bedroom we found that our kids had not been kind to the house, so we had to demand some action. The kitchen and family room were falling into complete chaos. The CD rack was in disorder, with dozens of un-filed CDs precariously stacked up on top of the rack. So we insisted that the kids do some cleanup. They got most of the CDs put away. When I did spot checks, though, I found that their alphabetizing was sorely lacking. Some mistakes were understandable — a Pink Floyd album filed under "F." ("Yes, a collect call for Mrs. Floyd from Mr. Floyd. Will you accept the charges from United States?") But there's no good reason they should be confused about where to file *The Very Best of Supertramp*. And there were a number of orphan discs and orphan cases, loose discs stuck on top of shelves, some broken cases, and at least one completely shattered. At some point I need to sit down and go through the whole rack and check that all the discs are in the right cases.

I can't get too upset, because this whole rack is filled with discs that I was willing to let them handle, which means I'm willing to let them get damaged. But the rack of CDs is also there for an educational purpose — they are supposed to be learning how to take care of a small library of CDs. They are allowed to listen to any of them, but they are supposed to take one disc out at a time and put it away when they switch to another disc, and they are supposed to keep the whole thing alphabetized so we can find discs. I can't fault the occasional broken case, as Elanor and our housemate's two-year-old also have access to the discs and sometimes wander off with them. But they varsity team (the older Potts kids) haven't even been trying to keep the rack in order.

For dinner on Sunday Grace threw a ham hock in the pressure cooker with a bag of black-eyed peas and broth. I got one dishwasher load, which no one had started on Saturday night, going, and prepped another dishwasher load. It's demoralizing to start out the week way behind on dishwashing.

“Demons of the Punjab”

While the black-eyed peas cooked in the Instant Pot, and we continued to try to get them to finish getting the family room organized, we took a break to go downstairs and watch the previous Sunday’s episode of *Doctor Who*, called “Demons of the Punjab.” Set in 1947 in India, it is about the upheaval and chaos that followed the Partition of India into India and the newly created country of Pakistan. The story is brought to life on a small scale by the revelation of a sad secret in the life of Yaz’s grandmother — her marriage to Yaz’s grandfather was not her first marriage. In fact, it was a different marriage that she proudly recounts as being the first marriage to take place in Pakistan. The Partition split families, both physically and politically, and this is dramatized beautifully. The Partition was terrible. According to Wikipedia:

In the riots that accompanied the partition in Punjab Province, it is believed that between 200,000 and 2,000,000 people were killed in what some have described as a retributive genocide between the religions while 50,000 Muslim women were abducted and raped by Hindu and Sikh men and 33,000 Hindu and Sikh women also experienced the same fate at the hands of Muslims. Around 6.5 million Muslims moved from India to West Pakistan and 4.7 million Hindus and Sikhs moved from West Pakistan to India. It was the largest mass migration in human history.

I’m still thinking this one over, as it is quite thought-provoking. It has me contemplating the way that the producers placed this plot in a science-fiction (or at least science-fantasy) setting. It feels a bit like a throwback to the very earliest days of *Doctor Who*, when the show was promoted as educational, and there were serials like *The Aztecs* and *Marco Polo*. I can’t help thinking that the historic plot line would have been perfectly at home in a straightforward historical drama, except for the way the story is tweaked to require intervention to maintain the timeline, in a manner similar to the story in “Rosa.” In “Rosa,” The Doctor observes that the timeline is being tampered with by a rogue alien and so she and her companions must intervene to fix it. In “Demons” it first appears that the Thijarian aliens are the threat to the timeline. But the perspective shifts neatly and we come to understand that the “demons” of the story aren’t the demonic-looking aliens at all. And The Doctor plays a supportive role, intervening when necessary, but mostly to ensure that the emotional “keyframes” of the story stand on their own.

This does leave the Thijarians feeling a bit like an unnecessary alien race. Den of Geek points out that the show has already — and very recently — introduced an alien race that might have done the job here:

Indeed, it was Jodie Whittaker’s very first on-screen appearance as the Doctor that likewise introduced us to The Testimony: glass-bodied aliens from “Twice Upon a Time” who snatch people out of time and space in the instant before their death so that their lives can

be recorded and preserved. It's one step beyond merely attending someone's final moments but it's pretty much the same dynamic in both episodes — we expect predators, and we later find out that they're historians.

I guess the producers felt that the story needed that same sort of twist, and so a known-benign race wouldn't do, but still, it seems like a lot of new alien races are piling up and too many of them are "one-offs." Let's at least hope that they can be used again in future episodes.

I think this is the best episode of Series 11 to date, largely because the core historical drama it frames is a strong story in and of itself. Looking around at a few reviews, it seems that I'm not the only one to hold this episode in high esteem. If Series 11 continues with episodes of this quality, it will wind up as one of the better seasons of the rebooted show.

Monday

When we came back up from watching *Doctor Who*, it was time to eat our black-eyed peas and salad. There were enough of both for me to pack a lunch using the 3-tiered "tiffin." In the third layer I put some leftover basmati rice. A decent lunch will help me get through this short week. I have both Thursday and Friday off work! And I will get paid a day or two early, which will help us pay for our extra Thanksgiving food expenses. We are making plans to set our Thanksgiving table with Fiestaware, which should be pretty spectacular.

After dinner I got another dish load on, and got Veronica to do some of the remaining hand-washing, and we actually got to bed at a reasonable hour, and sleeping without too many interruptions. This morning Grace had an ultrasound. She made a batch of celery and apple juice before she left and so I took some with me in the car.

This morning I tried to go to Harvest Moon Café for breakfast, but it was too crowded, so I had a toasted cinnamon bagel with peanut butter at Joe and Rosie Creamery. While I was eating the bagel, I read another short story in *Moderan*. I've made slow progress through the book, but I am making progress and do expect to get through it eventually.

I ordered a medium coffee. That's my typical caffeine intake for a weekday — normally I would have finished it by the time I was done with my bagel. But this morning, I found myself feeling a little wired and not loving the taste of coffee, and unable to finish it.

I suspect this is an indication that the Celexa is starting to take effect. When I went on my first SSRI, back around 1996 or so, I *immediately* lost my taste for coffee — the morning after my very first dose, I knew something had changed. The effect wasn't nearly that dramatic this time, as I've been taking Celexa for a week. I still might find that I need a little caffeine to help me power through

the sedative effects of the medication, but I'll see if I can scale back the dose; maybe I'll try switching entirely to tea.

The other medication, Flomax, seemed to work incredibly well right off the bat. But the effect seems to have faded somewhat. Maybe the Celexa giveth and the Floxmax taketh away? I really don't know. I'll continue to see how my system adjusts over time.

Tuesday

Grace made soup last night with homemade beef broth — delicious! We ate that with another Costco salad kit and a loaf of bread from Mother Loaf. We struggled as usual to get dinner cleanup done quickly. While the kids worked on dishes I tried to fix some of the problems in the CD rack. It's a bigger mess than I thought. There are a number of broken cases. There were cases stuck on the shelves backwards, or upside down. There are cases taken apart and then put together wrong. The mind reels. Maybe on Friday we can clear off the dining table, pull all the CDs out, sort them, and put them back in order. Because that's how I would love to spend the limited vacation time I have to spend with my kids.

Grace gave me an update on the baby. Her ultrasound yesterday showed things going fine. The baby is already estimated to weigh over six pounds.

After cleanup last night I was able to read the kids a story. I finished the chapter called “The Council of Elrond” in *The Fellowship of the Ring*. It was interesting to note how some phrases spoken in this chapter wound up in the movie, but in the movie are spoken by different characters. For example, Elrond says, addressing Frodo:

‘If I understand aright all that I have heard,’ he said, ‘I think that this task is appointed for you, Frodo; and that if you do not find a way, no one will.’

In the movies, we hear the Lady Galadriel say versions of the “appointed for you” phrase twice. In Lothlórien, she tells Frodo “this task was appointed to you, and if you do not find a way, no one will.” Then later, in *The Two Towers*, Frodo stumbles and falls in Shelob's cavern, and experiences a vision of the Lady Galadriel, and she tells him “this task was appointed to you, Frodo of the Shire. If you do not find a way, no one will.”

I'm so glad to finally finish this chapter. We have made painfully slow progress through *The Fellowship of the Ring*. I'd like to be able to finish it by the end of the year. Things start moving much faster after “The Council of Elrond!”

At some point late in the evening our housemate and her boyfriend arrived back at the house. I think they were getting a ride. Somehow it turned into a screaming fight between them and the person giving them the ride, in our driveway, late in the evening. This is the kind of thing that can result in me

getting text messages from neighbors asking if everything is OK. Grace got an update; it seems like this means that our housemate's plans for Thanksgiving are off. What that means, I don't know, but I fear it may mean that she will be trying to cook a separate Thanksgiving meal for her boyfriend and children in our kitchen while we host our own Thanksgiving meal for family and friends.

Grace has pointed out that this keeps coming down to the fact that we never really could offer them what they wanted, which was a separate apartment with their own facilities for everything, including their own kitchen, refrigerator, pantry, clothes washer, and even separate trash pickup. We still can't offer that; what we can offer is to share. But if we still can't even agree how to handle trash and recycling, what hope was there that we'd be able to effectively share meals?

This all seems to have something to do with toxic ideas about self-reliance and individualism and pride, which to me very quickly becomes unreasonable entitlement and unwillingness to accommodate other people — to the point where even the *notion* that one might have to collaborate with others seems like an offense and an affront, and so turns into acts that deliberately demonstrate contempt.

Elanor again woke us up a couple of times during the night. Grace had to get up at 7:00 because she has another “non-stress test” today (they just monitor her and the baby). I got out in time to get a breakfast sandwich at Harvest Moon. Tonight I'll make our usual Tuesday night run to Costco.

Wednesday

I made a run to Costco last night and put it on my black credit card, since our balance in checking was pretty low. It was pretty crowded. I only got a few things: oranges, a pot pie, lamb steaks, apples, pears, crackers, rolls, soy sauce, and white vinegar for laundry. Grace found out that the Mother Loaf bakery was not going to be able to supply the cranberry bread we ordered for Thanksgiving, so had to reluctantly accept some other breads. I'm not sure just how this happened, as she placed the order on Saturday. Apparently it has something to do with the number of loaves of a given bread they can make per batch. Their other breads are still delicious so I don't think any of our guests will complain.

We made a meal of leftovers last night, along with a fresh pot of brown rice, as we had six or seven containers of leftovers including some chicken, some chicken pot pie, two soups, black-eyed peas, some egg and tuna salad, etc. We got through quite a bit of it, although I think we might have to throw away some of the squash soup, since we just aren't getting through it and no one really loved it to begin with.

Elanor made quite a mess of her face, hands, clothes, and hair, so after dinner I gave her a quick bath. For some reason she won't sit down in the tub full of water. She used to sit in the water just fine, but at some point decided that her

bottom was water-soluble, or something like that. So she spends the whole bath standing in the tub while I try to wash her up with a washcloth as best I can, and squeeze water over her to rinse her off, and she yells at me. Sometimes, as a parent, you just have to say “whatever works.”

With Grace’s prompting, Joshua and Sam confessed to me that somehow, in the midst of a fight yesterday, they had managed to break one of the black keys off our piano. I’m not sure how to fix it. It’s made of some kind of plastic, and was apparently glued on. So I guess I have to figure out a way to chip off the old glue and figure out what kind of glue to try.

The kids were really off their game last night, as far as getting chores done, and getting ready for bed. I hoped to read them a bedtime story, but it didn’t happen. It was well after midnight by the time Grace and I got the lights out. I was woken up briefly by Elanor, then again by our housemates. Between the medication, the mediocre night’s sleep, and the fact that this is the last work day before Thanksgiving, I really, really didn’t want to get out of bed this morning. I stopped at Joe and Rosie Creamery for an almond milk mocha and a couple of day-old pastries. I happened to have a fully-stamped coffee card in my wallet that I had forgotten about, so the coffee was free, which was a nice surprise. I was paid early because of the holiday. So Grace should be able to pay for our catered Thanksgiving meal tomorrow right from our checking account. Hopefully we will have enough leftover food that I don’t have to spend much money on groceries between today and next Friday, since I have to keep this paycheck alive for a few days longer than usual.

I’m very happy that I’ll have an extra couple of days off work, even though I expect that I’ll have to spend most of Thursday and Friday cleaning.

Yesterday I checked into the “patient portal” system and looked at my recent test results. Everything looked pretty good to my untrained eye. My PSA test was 1.0 ng/mL. My cholesterol numbers seem pretty decent. My cholesterol was 164, and triglycerides 81, and LDL 104. My HDL could be better. It was 44, in the “normal” range, while greater than 60 is considered “desirable.” I’m not entirely sure how to bring that up. I think I had it up higher before when Grace and I were drinking bulletproof coffee regularly and eating something closer to a paleo diet. I know my diet has gone downhill this year as we’ve struggled with the influence of our housemate and her boyfriend bringing carbs and junk food into the house. Our kids are now demanding pasta and bread all the time, and Grace and I wind up sharing them, although reluctantly. We really need to consider how we might improve our diet in 2019. Grace will no longer be pregnant so she should no longer be struggling so hard to find foods that don’t trigger heartburn. In my case it is complicated by having to do something for my own lunches (and most mornings, also my own breakfasts) during the work week when time feels so scarce.

The “patient portal” system continues to be kind of a dumpster fire. It shows under my list of medications a prescription I haven’t taken for about fifteen years

(it says “prescribed June 9, 2003”). There’s an option to remove it, so yesterday I told the system to remove it. Today it shows up under a list of “Medications You’ve Asked to be Deleted.” It also appears that I was prescribed Celexa before, in December of 2000. The system doesn’t seem to show any distinction between my current prescription and my original prescription eighteen years ago, and I can’t edit it or add notes. And, as well, it appears that my new doctor prescribed me a blood-pressure medication. But it was not one of the prescriptions that was called in for me the day of my appointment on Monday, November 12th. It looks like it was called in on the 13th. And — no one ever told me I had a new prescription. Not my doctor, not my doctor’s staff, not the pharmacist. So I’m going to head over to Meijer and see if it is actually there for me to pick up.

Thursday

Meijer wasn’t too bad on Wednesday. I got my prescription, and started it. So far the side effects aren’t too bad. It makes me urinate more, so I’m drinking more water, which doesn’t seem like a bad thing. There’s some extra dizziness on standing that suggests it is in fact lowering my blood pressure.

I spent the last few hours of my work day on Wednesday fixing bugs in LabVIEW code. The open-source, third-party VI that I am using to read fields from `.ini` files works, but it does not follow the normal LabVIEW protocol for error-checking in series. If a value isn’t found, it will just return a default value, like zero. There’s a flag result to check whether the value was found. So I had to create another VI that checks the flag and generates an error and *does* follow the standard error protocol to allow chaining VIs together and reporting the first error. Foolishly I had assumed that these third-party VIs for managing data in `.ini` would work more or less like the standard LabVIEW VIs for managing data in other kinds of files.

There’s another VI that returns an array of **double** (double-precision floating-point) values. This one doesn’t even return a flag indicating success or failure. So I had to write yet another error-checking VI for this one that generates an error message if the returned array doesn’t contain the expected number of elements.

The better thing to do would probably be to add the error-checking I want and expected to the third-party VIs, but I was hesitant to open up that can of worms.

Drama

I had just about finished up and tested the last of my code changes when Grace informed me that there had been an incident at home.

I’m going to share only the barest sketch of what happened — the things that I think are part of *our* story. Our housemate and her boyfriend were having an argument in or around his car in front of our home. This led to him calling the

police and claiming that she had taken pills as a suicide attempt. To the best of my knowledge this wasn't true.

“Person is making a suicide attempt” or even “person is suicidal” tends to generate *quite* a response from the authorities. Grace tells me that all the kids except her youngest were in the house; her youngest was in the car. Our piano teacher was in the house and my kids were getting their piano lessons when the yard started to fill up with emergency vehicles. Eventually there were three police cars, a fire truck, and an ambulance in the yard.

Grace went out to speak with the police and heard about the suicide risk claim. Our housemate told the officers that she was not suicidal. One officer went to speak with our housemate's boyfriend, who was sitting in his car with their youngest baby smoking a cigarette. That turned into the officer arresting him, leaving the baby in the car. I will leave out the reasons for the arrest.

Grace got the baby out of the car and removed an unlit cigarette from the baby's mouth and took him inside. She had a conversation with the police. One officer asked if he could search our housemate's room. Grace told him that we did not consent to any searches at this time.

They took our housemate away in the ambulance for psychiatric evaluation. Then there was a whole flurry of phone calls. Grace made it clear that our housemate's boyfriend is not welcome here ever again — that SWATting is not something we can tolerate.

We also had a conversation about whether we could pay seven hundred dollars to bail him out; I gave it some serious thought. Almost all the money in our accounts was fully spoken for, to cover upcoming mortgage payments and other fixed expenses. I had a Thanksgiving meal ordered that I had to pick up and pay for on Thursday. Both my credit cards are nearly maxed out, so I couldn't charge that much on either card. To take out that much cash I would have to overdraw my checking account, which would trigger a withdrawal from our overdraft protection line of credit. Since I already did that a month ago to pay for the new furnace in the Saginaw house, this would leave very little credit available for any other emergency, like a car repair. We are going to squeak through the first few weeks of December with very little margin for error, so spending most of our remaining credit seemed too risky and we had to say no.

When I got home Grace had understandably not finished some of the errands she planned to do for Thanksgiving, although she managed to get to Mother Loaf in time — just barely — to pick up our bread. We wound up with one extra loaf of the cranberry walnut, because at least one customer failed to pick up his or her bread. So we wound up with 3 loaves — multi-grain sourdough, einkhorn sesame, and cranberry walnut. We had 3 extra kids to manage for the evening. We ate dinner very late — I pan-fried lamb steaks and Sam assembled a salad.

Grace spent much of the evening on the phone with our housemate and our

housemate's boyfriend's mother trying to keep everyone in the loop on what was happening. After taking my medications I started to drift off to sleep. They kept our housemate for observation long enough to make sure that she hadn't actually ingested any pills. We weren't sure whether they were going to actually keep her for up to 72 hours for observation, or not — we had to consider that possibility, and warned her on the phone that we thought they had the legal right to detail her for that long without a judge's order. Grace stayed up a while later to see what was going to happen, and so was awake to go pick her up when they decided to let her go about 1:30 a.m.

We still have to figure out what to do with our housemate's boyfriend's car and his things. We don't want him coming back here, so we probably have to get his car towed to his mother's house and pack up his things. I don't want to have to pay for that tow, but might have to anyway. I don't have very much money left for the week.

Thanksgiving

We didn't manage to get up and ready at 7:00, but I was up about 8:00, and cooking breakfast at about 9:00. Sam got up early and was making noise in the kitchen as he put away dishes and starting another load of dishes. I made instant coffee and scrambled seven eggs, and was somewhat surprised that the kids ate them and were hungry for more, so I also made a batch of chocolate chip pancakes. Then I worked on the bathroom a little bit and tried to direct more kids to do clean-up chores. Joshua did some deep-cleaning in the bathroom.

I brought the television and Blu-ray player up from the basement and set them up in the family room so that the younger kids would be distracted by movies and not interfere with the preparation. We set the table with Fiestaware plates, all in different colors, which was very striking, although ultimately it didn't make the table quite as fancy as it did the previous year, when we used our "curbside china" — a huge set of vintage china we found set out for trash pickup. Then I headed out to go pick up most of our Thanksgiving food at Tippin's market. Pickup started at noon and I got there right at noon.

We had ordered prime rib instead of turkey, a tray of green bean casserole, rolls, a container of *jus*, and a couple of pies. It was supposed to come with gravy, too, but somehow both they and I missed that when we went down the checklist. It was all hot and ready to serve, but we weren't planning to eat until about 4:00, so I left it to chill in the back of my car and ran to Meijer.

Grace had intended to ask me to pick up macaroni and cheese at Costco but forgot, and we had promised our guests macaroni and cheese. So I found myself at Meijer trying to find Gruyère cheese. There wasn't any to be found, except for a small amount of the smoked variety. In fact several things on my short list weren't on the shelf, as the store was pretty picked over. I brought sorbet for punch, and a couple of kinds of cheddar, and flowers for the table, and a few other things like dry mustard and flour. When I got back, preparations were

in high gear, but we were considerably behind schedule. So we were stressing; Grace had to go pick up one of our guests.

We had mashed potatoes to make, and cranberry relish, and the macaroni and cheese. I made a pot of pasta and drained it. While Grace ran out to get her friend, Veronica finished the mashed potatoes (they were great!) and I worked with Joshua to make the cranberry relish. I hadn't used the food processor in a long time and it wouldn't go on. I wound up moving it from outlet to outlet and then taking it apart to see if there was a burned-out fuse or something — there wasn't. I had forgotten that the top has to be latched a certain way or it won't run at all, as a safety interlock. So I felt stupid, but fortunately we got the relish made and it was tasty.

Grace had asked me to do something with the macaroni and cheese while she ran out but I did not feel up to taking on such a critical task — we weren't following a recipe, but she had something in mind. So I had to say no. She managed to get a sauce made and used up about half the pasta I had prepared and got it in the oven to bake with the rest of the dishes from the car.

Our guests arrived. Our Aunt Shelley brought a number of sides including her delicious hot greens and sliced ham. We heated up the prime rib and green bean casserole from the car. Aunt Shelley commented that our oven was smoking a lot. My ongoing struggle against people spilling food all over the inside of the oven has not really resulted in any improvement, and I have not deep-cleaned the oven for a couple of weeks, so this was the result. Aunt Shelley brought far less food than last year — maybe half as much, since last year we had a *mountain* of leftovers. We still had plenty of leftovers. We won't need to get groceries for at least a couple of days.

Everything was delicious, but the macaroni and cheese was very slow to show signs of browning. A lot of oil was coming off the cheese, so it was kind of bubbling with oil on top. We finally pulled it out of the oven after people were already eating their desserts, and it was unfortunately not delicious, although it's edible.

We managed to get perishable foods bagged up and into the refrigerator and a start made on the cleanup before we all gave up and went to bed. But at least it was a start.

Friday

Today was a chill-out day. Grace and I slept late and no one was particularly hungry in the morning. I made a couple of glasses of instant coffee with cocoa powder and coconut milk while Grace got a bath. I sliced some bread and we nibbled at a few leftovers while I slowly made my way through some dishwashing. This afternoon Grace took the kids except for Elanor out for a playdate. I played with Elanor for a bit and then when she started to doze off, the powerful baby sleep waves she was giving off knocked me out as well. So I got a wonderful nap

this afternoon, which is helping me as I adjust to new blood pressure medication.

We've been eating cold sandwiches of the sesame einkhorn bread (delicious, it reminds me of Zingerman's sesame semolina), with leftover prime rib and mustard. Grace has gone to pick up the kids and when she gets back, we'll heat up the macaroni and cheese and, if we can, Grace and I will finally get to see *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*.

Evening

For dinner we re-eated greens, candied yams, the above-mentioned macaroni and cheese, and a small amount of leftover black-eyed peas. The kids had left the remaining two containers of sorbet in the back of my car instead of putting them in the freezer, and today was not as cold as yesterday, so it was very soft. They used the rest of the ginger beer and some sparkling water and the sorbet and made punch. Grace and I hadn't gotten a chance to taste it yesterday, so this was our chance. It was very sweet. We had to cut it with more sparkling water and some leftover wine to make it palatable. Our housemate and her three children joined us for dinner. We are continuing to gradually get the kitchen back into shape, but I have more to do tomorrow. Including, probably, another round of oven cleaning.

It's about 10 p.m. and we're about to start *Fantastic Beasts*. I brushed my teeth and took my Celexa and Flomax so we'll see if I can stay awake for the whole thing.

Saturday

Well, I opted out of staying up for the movie last night. Grace and Veronica were having a loud disagreement and the baby was running around. There were too many distractions for me to feel like I could concentrate on the movie. So I read some more of *Moderan* and dozed off.

Moderan

I've finished three out of the five parts of the story collection. I continue to enjoy it — it's dark and deeply weird. Some of the stories are more forgettable than others, but the best ones contain some real "depth charges" — images I read but don't fully absorb. Then they pop up into my brain unexpectedly days or weeks later. All the same, though, these stories are not exactly consoling, comforting, or suffused with nostalgia. They present an extremely bleak view of human nature that is convincing precisely because of its bleakness. I'm again reminded of darkly satiric authors such as Philip K. Dick and Stanislaw Lem. The *Moderan* stories as a *project* — a self-consistent series of stories presented in the same universe — makes them build on each other. The world of *Moderan* is not a very detailed or deep fictional world, but it is remarkably consistent in tone.

Winding Up the Week

I'm definitely still adapting to my medications. The blood pressure medication is working, but it is very intense in the first few hours, and I really have to stand up slowly. Standing for extended periods of time leaves me extremely dizzy. I've really benefited from naps and early bedtimes over the last few days. This morning I wasn't feeling very energetic, and neither was Grace. We slept quite late. I finally made a pot of tea and we had tea with coconut milk. For most of the day the kids and I just made small meals out of leftovers. During the afternoon I went ahead and watched *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*.

The movie is not bad, although I suspect it would have been a lot more fun on a big screen, as the magical pocket universe filled with magical animals obviously represented a huge amount of visual effects work. Some of the other recurring effects seemed like they came out of the last Harry Potter movie, the two-parter *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*.

The world of *Fantastic Beasts* is pretty dark and gray, and the beasts represent splashes of color whenever they show up. Of the cast, Dan Fowler is really terrific as Jacob Kowalski in just about every scene he's in, while the leads, Eddie Redmayne as Newt Scamander and Katherine Waterston as Tina Goldstein, both seem kind of colorless. Wikipedia says that Matt Smith was considered to play Newt Scamander, and I think that would have been a good idea; Redmayne reminded me many times of a less enthusiastic and less emotive Smith. Alison Sudol as Queenie Goldstein is a great supporting actress.

The movie gets underway *very* slowly, like a ship slowly floating out of port. Lots of things happen, including lots of apparating and funny scenes with magical creatures running around, but we're over thirty minutes in before anything happens that seems significant to the plot. And speaking of the plot — there's too much of it, with a number of secondary characters that take up too much of the film's running time. By the end of the movie things are finally moving along at a decent clip, though, and I found the ending to be fairly satisfying, although some things wind up handled a little too predictably for my taste.

Evening

After watching the movie I dug into some oven-cleaning. I couldn't put it off any more. I need to work on letting go of anger and just doing what needs to be done.

For dinner we heated up a Costco pot pie. After dinner Grace and I had a conversation with our house guest. We are trying to figure out the best way to handle the fallout from Wednesday's events, and figure out how best to support our housemate and her children over the next few weeks. December is not going to be an easy month for any of us, it seems.

Tomorrow night if possible we'll wind up my four days off by watching the next episode of *Doctor Who*, called "Kerblam!" There are only three more episodes

in the season after that — it's a short season of only ten episodes total. And instead of a Christmas special, there will be a New Year's special, airing on January 1st.

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.

- *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* (2016 film)
- *Moderan* by David R. Bunch (New York Review Books Classics 2018 edition)
- *The Fellowship of the Ring* by J. R. R. Tolkien (bedtime reading in progress)

Pittsfield Township, Michigan

The Week Ending Saturday, November 24th, 2018

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