

# 2018 Week 48: The Week Ending Saturday, December 1st

Paul R. Potts

## Sunday

It's about 8 p.m. and we're going to watch episode 7 of the current 11th series of *Doctor Who*, called "Kerblam!" I'm going to try to do a quick recap of the day.

I set my phone alarm for 8:30 and with a superhuman effort managed to drag myself out of bed about 9:15. I got a bath and Grace followed me. We thought we had left enough time to get the kids ready and into the car, but as usual there were last-minute complications. We couldn't find underwear and socks for Benjamin until we went through several baskets of clean laundry. We finally got everyone into the car and made it to Mass about fifteen minutes late. This week I remembered to contribute some money to the basket for coffee and donuts. I tried to eat only one donut, but the kids kept leaving donuts unfinished, so I ate about two, which is at least one too many.

When we got home Grace and I worked on the situation with our housemate and her boyfriend. I'll leave off the details, but this involved several errands and a number of conversations. To make it so he would have access to his things without coming to our home, I rented a small storage unit out by my office and put his things in it, locking it up with a padlock I'm willing to lose, and giving the key to our housemate to give to him. Since I was near Plum Market, I brought home a couple of rotisserie chickens and had Veronica make a pot of brown rice. So we had a basic meal of chicken and rice cooked with broth. Simple, but no one complained.

I'll head back to work in the morning. Money is tight this week but we should get by. I am concerned because the Tahoe is making a knocking sound that sounds ominous.

Grace wants me to apologize to our housemate for my meltdown in October. She's right, it was wrong. Ideally I wouldn't have thrown the tantrum at all. Since I can't undo that, I at least should have apologized long before now. But I haven't found myself able to do this yet.

## Monday

### “Kerblam!”

We watched “Kerblam!” last night. This was a decent episode, but it fell short for me in several ways. The producers tried to maintain a sense that our characters were working inside a truly vast operation, but this wasn’t convincing in many scenes. Every once in a while we’d get a glimpse of the catwalks or conveyor system, via CGI, that showed a vast warehouse space. But most of the scenes weren’t convincing in this regard. We were also supposed to be convinced that the work was grueling. But in most of the scenes where we see people working, we see them moving at a downright leisurely pace while they perform their lines.

This episode also had some incoherent elements. We discover that the missing workers have apparently been rendered into some kind of liquefied remains — kind of a pun on the notion of “liquidating” workers. But when we find out how the workers were actually killed — via violent explosions — the liquid state of their remains doesn’t make sense. It seems to be in there as something left in there from an earlier draft, or just as an unused horror element that doesn’t really fit the tone of the full show.

As a critique of Amazon, it is pointedly somewhat dull, and not sharp. There is a system that destroys the workers within it, and that system is neoliberalism. The story seems like it is on the verge of revealing “the Kerblam! system” as the metaphor for *that* system. But it shies away and veers into a plot involving an idiot/savant maintenance man, Charlie. Charlie, who seems like a good-natured less-than-bright guy with a crush on a co-worker, actually has an IQ of 185 and has been plotting to destroy Kerblam! by framing the Kerblam! system for murdering customers. The mechanism of this attempted murder attempt, as revealed, is extremely clever, and one of my favorite things about this episode. The reference to “Flowers for Algernon” I found downright offensive.

In “Flowers for Algernon,” Charlie, the intellectually disabled young main in “Flowers for Algernon,” is recruited for experimental surgery which raises his IQ to 185. In that story he is the victim. In this story, he embodies some of the worst stereotypes about the disabled as secretly psychopathic savants. By the time we get to Charlie’s super-villain monologue, I had kind of mentally checked out.

There are lots of fun things about this episode. Kira (played by Claudia Jessie) is an endearing and heartbreaking character — although her death is confusing and feels wasted. The interior shots of the Kerblam! management offices were great — I’ll have to find out where it was shot. There were some nice creepy scenes. My kids really loved being creeped out by the delivery robots. And as soon as “rule number one” was mentioned:

Rule number one, keep all loose clothing, hair and body parts away from the conveyor and never, ever, climb onto the conveyors. Any person found on the conveyor faces immediate termination.

Grace and I laughed, realizing that before the end of the episode, there would be a dramatic chase or escape involving the conveyor system. And Lo! It came to pass. I'm just disappointed that the satirical edge I was hoping for turned out to be too dull to properly skewer its rightful target.

When I write these reviews, I generally finish saying what I want to say and then look up other reviews from sources that I think are unbiased.

**Today** Grace and I both got a decent night's sleep and because we got to bed fairly early, we started out the day not too exhausted. There was a snowstorm this morning, but the temperature at ground level was too warm to allow it to stick, so it was just a wet mess. After paying yesterday for a storage unit and a tow, for the possessions and car of our housemate's boyfriend, our checking account is looking pretty scrawny. But we'll make it through the week.

## Tuesday

Yesterday afternoon Grace had to deal with more fallout from last Wednesday. Because our housemate's boyfriend is not permitted at our home anymore, and our housemate does not have a car, Grace had to take her to meet him at a public place. Several of his family members were there too, and the situation apparently led to a loud public confrontation.

Grace is in a tough position here; she's neither a social worker nor therapist nor cop. We're both trying to do the best we can for our houseguest and her family, with very limited resources, and while trying to defend a few firm boundaries around us and our family. I don't really fear for my safety, or Grace's safety, or the safety of our kids. The vulnerable people are probably the ones who are going to wind up doing further damage to themselves by attracting more attention from the state. We really hoped to spare them that — in fact, that was our number one goal for taking in our housemate and her children originally. Grace wound up taking that whole crew — housemate, boyfriend, and kids — to a hotel for the night, so they could spend time with each other, since he isn't allowed at the house.

Last night I got back fairly late and Grace got back fairly late. We didn't have a lot of Thanksgiving leftovers left over. There was still quite a bit of food in the house including chicken drumsticks in the freezer, and plenty of stock, rice, beans, and canned tomatoes, but not a lot that was quick and obvious. Grace directed the kids to make chicken stew and dumplings using the leftover rotisserie chicken carcasses. We found a couple of packages of edamame in the freezer along with some leftover green beans, so we had those on the side. It was a satisfying meal but we ate very late. I'm now taking three different medications that all have drowsiness as a common side effect. Between them they are really knocking me down. I am getting sleepy quite early in the evening and having a hard time fully waking up in the morning, at least until I've had a little time for my brain to warm up, and gotten some coffee down my throat.

Money is quite tight but I will still pick up a short list of things at Costco. I've been eating way too many carbs but it's the perpetual problem: cheap food tends to be very carb-heavy. The kids love it, but Grace and I stumble through the day. As if I wasn't drowsy enough already.

There's a little good news. I was happy to hear that the InSight made it safely onto the surface of Mars!

## Wednesday

### Last Night

Dinner went a little bit better last night. I went to Costco and brought home a box of oranges, two bunches of bananas, two bags of hoagie rolls, a package of lamb steaks, a package of frozen hamburger patties, a jar of avocado oil mayonnaise, a package of guacamole packets, three bags of salad (after the warnings about romaine lettuce, the only type of salad available was Asian Cashew), a box of frozen chicken pita sandwiches to eat for lunch, and perhaps one or two other things that I can't remember. I had to put this on my Team One credit card because things just seemed too tight in our checking account and our other credit card.

Our housemate and her children stayed at a hotel with her boyfriend — apparently he moved them to a different hotel. Grace saw her only briefly.

For dinner last night Veronica made a Jiffy Mix in our big cast-iron pan, and we had that with a pot of black-eyed peas cooked in the Instant Pot with a ham hock, and a bag of the salad. That made a pretty good meal and we didn't eat as late as we did on Monday night. What put it over the top, though, was poached pears. Grace peeled a bunch of pears and cut them in half, and poached them in some of leftover second bottle of the 2017 Château D'Aqueria Tavel Rose. She mixed it with some honey. The result was really good!

The kids were reasonably cooperative about getting ready for bed while I was finishing some kitchen cleanup, and I was hoping to read them a bedtime story, even though it was getting to be too late — it was a bit after eleven by the time they were all ready for bed, and they were bickering with each other, but I was still trying to make it happen. I got my teeth brushed and was all ready to read the story, but then a fist fight broke out between Sam and Benjamin, so I just sent them all to bed. It was unfortunate.

Grace was not feeling very well and is quite uncomfortable as she gets down to the last weeks of this pregnancy. The chaotic situation with our housemate and her family is wearing hard on both of us. Grace doesn't need this stress happening sixteen days before we have a new baby (assuming nothing happens to result in an earlier birth). Last night both of us had a pretty bad night's sleep. I was feeling really wired, although I had not had coffee since before work. My nervous system felt like it was being lit up by the Celexa. At 3:30, the old laptop at the other end of the house woke up and started to play a video, which woke

me up. I got up and shut it down, but then could not get to sleep again for some time. I lay awake and listened to every tiny sound that was happening through the house with seeming hyper-acuity — the sounds of specific kids breathing, and trucks on I-94 — against a background of tinnitus that sometimes happens when I take SSRIs. I started to see pages and pages of an autobiographical essay flashing in front of me. It was nothing too unfamiliar, containing a number of ideas I've kicked around in my head for years, but last night all the descriptions of my early life were organized around the theme of hearing, which seems to be my dominant, and at times most bothersome, sense.

I eventually slept a bit longer but then the kids were awake quite early, so it became impossible to sleep at least 45 minutes before I wanted to get up.

## Today

I took to work three leftover boxes of crackers, the box of frozen chicken pita sandwiches, which I had left in my car overnight, and a few of the guacamole packs. For breakfast I got a latte with almond milk at Joe and Rosie Creamery, and a toasted cinnamon bagel with peanut butter. For lunch I sliced up a little of the summer sausage and warmed up two of the chicken sandwiches, serving them with a pack of guacamole to dip them in and some crackers. The chicken sandwiches were not as tasteless as I feared, although I can't say they are really that good. But I'm willing to eat them again. Then I had a container of yogurt that past me, before leaving for Thanksgiving, had thoughtfully provided for present me. I'm trying to learn to be nice to future me more often.

At work this afternoon I was in a long meeting this afternoon and we discussed a number of new product ideas, some of which have been kicking around for a couple of years. One I even developed as a prototype on a breadboard. I'm happy to have something new to work on, but not *too* new — we are talking about a new product that will allow me to leverage some of my expertise with the Atmel SAM4E microcontroller family, and even reuse some existing code and some hardware design. This would be a higher-volume, lower-cost product than the big “flagship” products that have occupied me the most since starting at Thorlabs. Those are selling, but the software seems to be approaching stability; everything works well enough, we've added all the features that we planned to and then some, and we only plan to make changes to support hardware changes or customer requests. So I don't have that much to do on the “flagship” product line any more. Hence the LabVIEW code. And hence this new project, which I am looking forward to.

What I'm not necessarily looking forward to is the potential for a very tight schedule for the new project. Ideally we'd demonstrate it at a trade show in March. And I'd feel better about the possibility of hitting that deadline if I wasn't shortly to welcome a new baby. And, of course, if some of these other stressors I've rattled on about, endlessly, were gone. And if Grace and I felt that we had more support.

As things stand now, it doesn't feel all that positive, although I will continue to drive myself to do the best that I can.

Tonight I think we are going to cook the hamburgers. It's been a long time since I've had a hamburger — at least three or four months. So I'm really looking forward to eating one. Although they often aren't quite as delicious as imagine they will be.

### **“The Day the Twisters Came”**

Today I am remembering the event that Wikipedia calls the 1985 United States–Canada tornado outbreak. I was in my senior year in high school. Ninety people were reported killed. An F4 tornado hit Crawford County, which is the county south of Erie County where we lived (in the town of Harborcreek), and Venango County, a little further southeast. Albion, a borough in Erie County, was hit. This article from the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, from 2005, called “The Day the Twisters Came,” commemorates the twentieth anniversary of the tornado outbreak, describes how the people of Albion had only about two minutes' warning, but even some who heard warnings didn't necessarily believe them, since most people in the region had never experienced a tornado.

Everywhere, people were wandering around in shock. “It was sad,” recalled Crawford County Commissioner Morris Waid, an emergency worker at the time. “When you looked in peoples' eyes, they had that look of someone who is really, really drunk, not really focused, you know?”

We did some “disaster tourism” after those tornadoes, driving through neighborhoods that were leveled. I don't remember exactly where we went, and my mother and stepfather who might be able to tell me are both deceased, but I remember very clearly driving around to see whole blocks of homes demolished — not just damaged, with roofs torn off, but *demolished*. And that was probably just an F4, while Niles, Ohio and Wheatland, Pennsylvania were hit by an F5. As of 2018, it remains the only F5 tornado known to have hit Pennsylvania.

There's some video, if you want to see what F5 damage looks like. It's hard to imagine experiencing such a storm.

### **Thursday**

We ate our burgers! It turns out the frozen Costco grass-fed burger patties are really quite good, and they are pre-cooked, so we were really just thawing them, which mean less splatter and mess in the oven. So that was dinner, along with more bagged salad. And three of the boys were done and ready to hear a bedtime story, in time to read one!

### “The Ring Goes South”

For them I read the first part of Book 2, Chapter 3 of *Fellowship*, called “The Ring Goes South.” This is more preparatory stuff, after the long and talky chapter “The Council of Elrond.” Time is passing in Rivendell:

So the days slipped away, as each morning dawned bright and fair,  
and each evening followed cool and clear.

It takes almost two months before the scouts start to bring back news of what has become of the nine Ringwraiths. The bodies of eight of their horses are discovered, along with one black cloak.

‘Eight out of the Nine are accounted for at least,’ said Gandalf. ‘It is rash to be too sure, yet I think that we may hope now that the Ringwraiths were scattered, and have been obliged to return as best they could to their Master in Mordor, empty and shapeless.’

Despite this, the Fellowship doesn’t set out for another week. In the film this eight or nine weeks between the Council and the Fellowship’s departure is elided, and it appears they set out after only a day or two. More scenes of this waiting period would only have killed the sense of urgency. In fact it slows the book down, and they know that traveling in winter will be harder, but at least we have the rational excuse that the party would be foolish to set out if any of the Ringwraiths were still roaming around the area.

Elrond tells them that:

‘With you and your faithful servant, Gandalf will go; for this shall be his great task, and maybe the end of his labours.’

There’s a neat little bit of foreshadowing there, without sounding *too* ominous; maybe Gandalf’s got almost enough years on the job to retire with a full pension?

Keep in mind that Elrond can *see* things, he seems to share at least some of the Lady Galadriel’s powers. But his abilities are limited, especially in the present dark times. He tells them:

‘I can foresee very little of your road; and how your task is to be achieved I do not know. The Shadow has crept now to the feet of the Mountains, and draws nigh even to the borders of the Greyflood; and under the Shadow all is dark to me.’

We learn that Merry and Pippin will accompany Frodo as well, although Elrond is hesitant, especially in the case of Pippin; he says “my heart is against his going.” But Pippin is insistent, and Elrond gives in.

Gandalf, speaking to Frodo, calls Aragorn “your friend *the* Strider,” in passing. I think that’s the only time in the books that anyone calls him “the Strider.” The word “the” is not capitalized, so it doesn’t seem that Gandalf is using the

phrase as an honorific or special title. I'm puzzled why it is written that way here. I suspect this might have simply been an editing error.

I had a little better night's sleep last night than Tuesday night. I tried to take my Celexa a bit earlier in the evening, and on a full stomach. I think that helped. I will try over the next few days to take the Celexa and Flomax a half-hour earlier each day, until I'm taking all my meds at lunchtime, and see if that helps with my sleep.

### **Rest in Peace, Our Chevrolet Tahoe (2003–2018)**

Grace sent me a text message late this morning mentioning that the car was making more noise and the “check engine” light had just come on. She still needed the car for at least three errands today, but I asked her to take it right to Monro and told her I would meet her there.

So I took a two-hour lunch. I drove to Monro and picked her up. Our housemate had perhaps a dozen bags of groceries in the car, which had been in her hotel room this morning when Grace went to pick her up. We transferred these bags to my car. Several of them were leaking meat juice. Apparently she had stocked up on a lot of groceries, but kept them unrefrigerated in their hotel room overnight. I did not unpack all the bags, but I think at least twenty-five or thirty pounds of meat was in those bags, including at least six, and maybe more, 3-pound plastic tubes of raw ground beef. In my view, all of this meat is now in extremely dubious condition; I think it may have been sitting at room temperature for nearly 24 hours. And apparently, also, she didn't consider where it would be stored. There is limited space in our refrigerator and freezer.

Anyway, we got back to the house, I put one of the seats in the back of my car, we got the groceries inside, cleaned up the meat juice from inside both cars, and had Veronica start trying to find space in the refrigerator for all this meat and other perishable food. I just hope our houseguest doesn't give herself or her children food poisoning. We've told our kids not to eat any of this meat, and to wash their hands with soap and water after handling it, and wiping up any drips. We also warned them especially that Elanor is very vulnerable to food-borne illness.

Sam and Grace got in the car and I drove back to my office, then Grace took my car and drove Sam to his speech therapy appointment.

The news was very bad. The car has not been telling us that it has low oil pressure. We had an oil change not too long ago. But apparently there was an oil leak inside the engine, and it has been grinding itself up. We haven't seen any drips under the car. All the sophisticated warning messages and lights didn't do their job to clue us in that this was happening. The car was just in the shop a few weeks ago. We've been hearing some extra noise for the last few days. Probably I should have had it in the shop Monday morning, after hearing the noise it was making on Sunday. But now apparently the engine's beyond repair.

It would cost almost \$5,000 to replace the engine. We're not going to have an extra \$5,000 drop into our laps anytime soon. So we have to decide what to do. Do we have it junked right now? Do we keep it at home for a few months in the hopes that we'll be able to get it fixed? I don't know.

I was desperately hoping to get through the next few weeks. I thought that maybe if I could make it to Christmas, I could use some of the money from my end-of-year bonus to have the truck fixed.

### **How Screwed Are We?**

Pretty screwed. Just to review:

- Our family of eight relies very heavily on that car. (We were already facing a problem that once we have a new baby, the car won't be big enough to transport all of us).
- My car can only hold a maximum of four people.
- Grace has many, many things scheduled through the end of the year. And now I'll have to ask her to drive me to work, and pick me up from work.
- *Another* family of four, the family of our housemate and her children, is *also* counting on us being able to transport them in that car. (They won't fit in my car).

I think it may be time to ask our attorney to help us go ahead and surrender our old home, however that can be best done, and whatever the hit to my credit. I can't afford to add a car payment to our fixed expenses now, but maybe if we subtracted all the old house expenses, I could.

Our working car — the one I rely on to get to work — is a 2003 Honda Element. I think the engine is in fine shape, but the suspension is getting murdered by Michigan's rightfully infamous potholes.

Just how big is my end-of-year bonus going to be, anyway? I think it will be quite generous this year. But not enough to solve this. I really don't know what we're going to do. Pray, I guess.

### **Vacation Days**

I have a tentative plan for how I'm going to use up my vacation days in December. From Friday the 14th through Monday the 31st, there are eleven work days left in the year; Christmas is a paid holiday. I have one floating holiday, and seven vacation days. I think the floating holiday has to be used the week of Christmas, so I'll use it for Christmas Eve, Monday the 24th. Grace's C-section is scheduled for Friday the 14th, so I definitely need to take that day as a vacation day. That leaves me six vacation days to allocate.

If I wanted to be out of the office from the evening of Friday the 21st straight through until January 2nd, I'd need to use five of those six days. That would

mean I would only have Friday the 14th through Monday the 17th off to help Grace with the birth, and then that would be it.

Alternately, I could take more days off during that week. I could take off a block from the 14th straight through to Christmas, then come in to the office for the three days after Christmas and again on Monday the 31st, New Year's Eve Day.

I'm really not sure which option would be more useful. It depends in part on whether we will have anyone else coming to help. One of Grace's friends might be visiting the week after the birth. If she can do that and be of help, then maybe it would make more sense for me to go back to work for most of that week.

I hate that I have to make this decision, and that dads aren't guaranteed any kind of paternity leave at all. I mean, if it's good enough for Mauritius, Rwanda, Tajikistan, and Mongolia, why not us?

## Friday

Thursday night was a slog as I didn't get home until late, because I had to wait for Grace to come and get me after her language development class for Benjamin. She had given Veronica instructions about putting a couple of trays of seasoned chicken drumsticks into the oven. When we got home they were sitting on the counter. She should have started it over an hour and a half earlier.

This led to some arguing, as you might imagine. Grace needed to eat and get on to bed, as she was exhausted. The chicken had to cook for at least an hour. I wound up heating her up some leftover rice and black-eyed peas with some homemade broth added, and she ate that and we went on to bed, leaving the kids to eat the chicken and clean up.

It wasn't a great night's sleep. I woke up again at exactly 4:20 and could not get back to sleep for some time. Elanor kept waking up and fussing in Veronica's room. I had set the alarm for seven, so we could deal with the Tahoe in the morning. When it woke up, I wasn't exactly ready to leap into action. But Grace and I got to eat cold baked chicken legs for breakfast, so that was nice.

Grace and I drove to Monro, the repair shop that still had the Tahoe. On the way Grace called the towing company that we used to relocate our housemate's boyfriend's car last weekend. They told us that to tow the Tahoe back to our house, they would need a flatbed truck, and they wouldn't have that available until the afternoon. So we held off and went to talk to the mechanics. They told us that after changing the oil, the truck would probably make it a few miles, so Grace drove it home and I followed her in the Element. It's in the driveway waiting further decision-making. We need to clean it out.

Grace then drove me to work. Friday was a long slog of a day. My co-workers are mostly still very wrapped up in getting some product orders fulfilled, so it was very quiet upstairs. We had a brief visit from the company CEO, and so

pizza for lunch. I had some interesting tech support requests from Germany and South Korea. But in the afternoon my lack of sleep started to catch up with me. I drank some extra cups of tea to try to revive myself but was still struggling to stay awake at my desk.

Grace came to get me and we went to Costco. It had been many weeks since Grace and I have been at Costco together for a shopping trip, and it was the closest thing we've had to a date night in some time. We brought home two packages of cold shrimp cocktail, a box of cookies for dessert, eggs, butter, blueberries, blackberries, a pineapple, salad, apples, boxed coconut milk, a two-pack of frozen bison, a box of cooked beets, sandwich rolls, bagels, brussels sprouts, and another pepper grinder. The cheap pepper grinders they sell are now refillable, which is a great improvement.

We brought shrimp home because Joshua had finally gotten a full-blown set of skin tests and blood tests at an allergist, and been cleared to eat shrimp. We've been keeping him away from shrimp for years since he had a reaction once as a young child. And we've been keeping shrimp away from him, which means for years we've been avoiding some Chinese dishes that we love. Last night we cut loose with the shrimp. So we had a meal that was entirely cold: shrimp cocktail, bagged salad with chick peas added, and cookies for dessert. Joshua did fine. We're very glad to be able to eat shrimp again!

Elanor hasn't been feeling well for a couple of nights — she's had a virus of some kind. We've been giving her a little dose of baby Tylenol to help her sleep. Last night it became clear what kind of virus it is, as her whole bottom broke out in little blisters. We think she has Hand, Foot, and Mouth disease. We think our kids probably got it from a play date, but since they have had it before, they didn't have much in the way of symptoms. But Elanor has not had it before. This is always frustrating because a virus like this was probably contagious in our home several days before any of us knew that it was in the building. So our housemate is not happy to find out about it, but her kids probably already have it, so there may not be a whole lot of value in trying to quarantine them.

## Saturday

I'm getting close to finishing *Moderan* by David Bunch. The stories continue to be pretty uneven in effectiveness, but the consistency of tone remains remarkable, and some really are quite impressive pieces of work.

We had vague plans to watch videos last night but I was very tired, possibly because I've been fighting off the virus that Elanor's got, so I went to bed early, and didn't even read the kids a story.

Today has been gray and with a sick baby, Grace and I stayed in bed most of the morning and cuddled her up while she slept. We had plans for today, but didn't want to spread viruses. Pippin and Joshua were planning to participate in Saline Christmas Parade, as part of their Viva Voce choir group — but the

weather today meant that this was canceled, for which we were grateful. The kids made themselves sandwiches. When I finally got up and got a bath, Grace brought me Elanor, so we could soak her rash in the tub, then brought me some tea. The tea got me moving enough to propel myself into the kitchen and make a package of bacon and two batches of paleo pancakes: one with blueberries, and one with chocolate chips.

Later we had a conversation with our housemate and I finally felt like it was the right opportunity to apologize to her for my blow-up on Sam's birthday, back in October.

It's almost 7:00 and it's been a very slow day, but I think we needed a slow day. Elanor is in pretty good spirits given her runny nose and awful rash. We'll probably watch some videos and maybe read a story and try to get to bed early, to give our little girl yet more down time to recover. So I'm going to call it a week and get this uploaded.

I learned today of the death of former president George H. W. Bush. I've pretty much stayed off of Twitter because the number of people praising him is nauseating. Another war criminal has died. I remember marching to protest the first Gulf War. My study of the events of the Bush presidency as they happened was a large part of the development of my political views. He brought us the Willie Horton campaign. He ignored the HIV epidemic. He pardoned everyone involved with the Iran-Contra affair. He invaded Panama. He fabricated the case for the Gulf War. In the prosecution of that "war" — really a crime of international aggression — he committed numerous atrocities. I won't mourn him, and I won't mourn his son when he dies, and I have no patience for anyone praising him today.

## **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.*

- "Kerblam!" (*Doctor Who* Series 11 Episode)
- *The Fellowship of the Ring* by J. R. R. Tolkien
- *Moderan* by David Bunch (New York Review Books Classics 2018 reprint edition)

*Pittsfield Township, Michigan*

*The Week Ending Saturday, December 1st, 2018*

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