

Bed & Bored

Bed & Bored #011 is produced for the 64th distribution of SNAPS by Laurie Kunkel (email: ElfKunkel; snail mail: 5359 Nicole; White Lake, MI 48383; 248/742-9118 [for area code 702 denizens: 702/258-4529]). **To all four of you—Typographical Error, Esmerelda, Reepicheep, and Peepiceek—thank you for NOT killing me off, despite trying really hard; may this trend continue.** I'd like to thank The Sanity Quorum—David Allred, Karen Belcher, Woody Bernardi, Kathi Fitzgerald, Ed Garea, Stephen Herte, Dave Skolnick, Shelby Vick (ShelVy)—for generating a variety of topics to explore. **Some of the typos are made by me, and the rest by our my boys and Peep; please use your discretion to determine who typed which.** All pictures nicked by ShelVy, who then sent them to me.

Dateline: 20 January 2012

No trees were injured in the creation of this zine, but a large number of electrons were terribly inconvenienced.

Sunday, 01 January: Happy New Year! It's 2012! Today's winner of the Feline Daybreak 500: Peepiceek.

Weather Factoid: Major wind from the West; according to *New Year Superstitions*, "... Strangest of all, if the wind blows from the west, the year will witness plentiful supplies of milk and fish but will also see the death of a very important person. ..." [On New Year's Morning: If the rock is dry, good weather will come to stay. If the rock is wet, rain is on the way. If the rock is moving, high winds will come at night. If the rock is white, snow will fall tonight. If the stone is gone, time for moving on.] The rock is soaked and spinning madly.

Ponderence of the Day: "Interesting, isn't it, that we attach the adjective 'happy' to 'new year'? Not 'prosperous', 'healthy', 'successful' or 'safe'. 'Happy'. I think it's absolutely true that what we hope for most of all for ourselves and others is that we/they'll be happy in the next twelve months. In an uncertain world, maybe that's all we CAN realistically aspire to? It's not a bad ambition, though. The thing is, it's not an objective which necessarily demands big hairy audacious resolutions to achieve. Because almost certainly you already know quite a few of the things you do which can tend to lead to a boost in your overall mood. Perhaps it makes sense to recognise them then? That'll be a tremendous start. Even better, jot them down on a small piece of card as a reminder to actually experience them more often in the coming year. Things to do in 2012? Rather more of what makes you happy."

Goal for the Day: Be flexible in dealing with people and events. Avoid 'psychosclerosis'—a hardening of the attitudes.

Today I'm grateful for: a) Peepiceek—for always knowing when I need company and love; b) a sturdy and secure home; c) ShelVy—for finishing **NAG 14**, so I could send in **B&B #008**; d) food to eat; and e) being reminded that I do have many blessings.

"On the eighth day of Christmas, my true love sent to me: eight Maids a-Milking, seven Swans a-Swimming, six Geese a-Laying, five Golden Rings, four Calling Birds, three French Hens, two Turtle Doves, and a Partridge in a Pear Tree."

Moodscope Score (out of 100): "Alright Laurie. Things look like this. The score for you today is **17%**, which is 40% less than your highest result to date of 57%. You are probably feeling that things are not so positive as they seemed when you took the test last time and got 31%. ... It's clear that matters have worsened. You wouldn't have called your mood great, but you are very likely feeling even lower now. It is time to gather your wits so you can work on the situation, and it'll probably help to let someone close to you know how you're truly feeling. You may not be at your best right now, but it won't last. You'll find yourself back on top as you have been in the past. ... Your score has dropped since last time and you are below your average of 37.6% at the moment. You've never scored lower than this. Let's hope the only way is up."

::snort::

ShelVy: ...Well, it said to 'let someone close to you know how you are truly feeling'; I'm sure I speak for everyone when I say, "Let us know!" Mebbe it WILL do some good...

That's why I sent it out...

ShelVy: But that isn't what it said. It said to tell close friend/s what your true worries are. Now, we know you miss Bill, we know finances are a problem, we know how you feel about [different people], we are aware of lots of your problems - but what are we missing? What is your REAL worry? Isn't that what you are supposed to reveal - or did I misread something?

That's part of the problem, Shel, I don't *know* "how I'm truly feeling." I *know* I feel empty—as opposed to nothing—so, I know I'm not a sociopath. But how I'm *truly* feeling? I've been trying to figure that out since Yule.

ShelVy: Kinda like a detective story, Laurie - Things scattered all around, but which are clues and which are red herrings? You need to have Koko sniffing around...

No, I have the 'eeps, and they've been a comfort. And really only got mad at me when I ran their laser light on the ceiling ...

ShelVy: Yeah, but the 'eeps aren't famous feline detectives!!! <g>

True. And they never encouraged me to read *The Mikado*.

ShelVy: ... and I'll bet they have the NORMAL number of cat whiskers ...

Actually, Peep's are the only uncounted whiskers in the house. Typo has four fewer—yeah, I know, *big* shock there, Esme has six more, and Reep has eight more.

02 Jan: ShelVy: WOW!!! Eight, that is, EIGHT more??? Are you sure Reep isn't related to Koko???

02 Jan: Well, let's see ... Similarities: both prefer human food to kibble/crunchies; neither believes he is a c-a-t; both believe they are smarter than their humans; and both like to be read to. Differences: Koko is a Siamese, Reep is a Maine Coon; Koko lives in Pickax (based on Bad Axe, MI), Reep lives in White Lake, MI; and one is fictional.

02 Jan: ShelVy: According to your Mom, aren't BOTH fictional??? <g>

02 Jan: No. Reep she's seen. Peep is fictional ...

02 Jan: ShelVy: Ah, well. But HEY! Your Mom actually trusts her eyesight???

Yes. I pointed out to her, during our blow-up on 06 September, that if she had to see to believe then, as a current practicing witch, and former Christian, it made me a better practitioner of faith than she.

02 Jan: ShelVy: So true!!!

"Every man should be born again on the first day of January. Start with a fresh page. Take up one hole more in the buckle if necessary, or let down one, according to circumstances; but on the first of January let every man gird himself once more, with his face to the front, and take no interest in the things that were and are past." (Henry Ward Beecher)

Reflections on Ponderence: What makes me happy? Good freaking question. Let's see: pain medication, Kacey, pain medication, Juan, pain medication, Emilie, pain medication, Sophia, pain medication, Typographical Error, pain medication, Esmerelda, pain medication, Reepicheep, pain medication, Peepiceek, pain medication, the mini-SQ, pain medication, Crafting, pain medication, umm ... That's *not* a long list. There must be more ... Think ... Learning things, reading, watching candles burn, craft projects, watching DVDs, journaling—sometimes ...

For the first time since New Year's Day, 1991, I only had fur-children to listen to Bill's and my tradition of reciting this poem aloud.

"What shall I wish thee?/Treasures of earth?/Songs in the springtime,/Pleasure and mirth?/Flowers on thy pathway,/Skies ever clear?/Would this ensure thee/A Happy New Year?/What shall I wish thee?/What can be found/Bringing thee sunshine/All the year round?/Lasting and dear,/That shall ensure thee/A Happy New Year.//Faith that increaseth,/Walking in light;/Hope that aboundeth,/Happy and bright;/Love that is perfect,/Casting out fear;/These shall insure thee/A Happy New Year." (Frances Ridley Havergal, "A Happy New Year")

My **Today I'm grateful for:** list is going to be a reminder to find five people/places/things for which I'm grateful for each day—to appreciate what I have rather than focusing on what I don't have. For me, experiencing gratitude provides grounding, shifts the mind's focus and creates a sense of satisfaction and contentment with my life.

"New Year's [Eve] is a harmless annual institution, of no particular use to anybody save as a scapegoat for promiscuous drunks, and friendly calls and humbug resolutions." (Mark Twain)

January Factoids:

"January is named for Janus (Ianuarius), the god of the doorway; the name has its beginnings in Roman mythology, where the Latin word for door (*ianua*) comes from—January is the door to the year.

Traditionally, the original Roman calendar consisted of 10 months, totaling 304 days, winter being considered a month-less period. Around 713 BC, the semi-mythical successor of Romulus, King Numa Pompilius, is supposed to have added the months of January and February, allowing the calendar to equal a standard lunar year (355 days). The first day of the month is known as New Year's Day. Although March was originally the first month in the old Roman Calendar, January assumed that position beginning in 153 BC when the two consuls, for whom the years were named, began to be chosen on January 1. The reason for this shift of the new year into the dead of winter was to allow the new consuls to complete the elections and ceremonies upon becoming consuls, and still reach their respective consular armies by the start of the campaigning. Various Christian feast dates were used for the New Year in Europe in the Middle Ages, including March 25 and December 25. However, medieval calendars were displayed in the Roman fashion of twelve columns from January to December. Beginning in the 16th century, European countries began officially making January 1 the start of the New Year once again—sometimes called Circumcision Style because this was the date of the Feast of the Circumcision, being the 8th day from December 25." (Wikipedia)

"Janus was invoked at the commencement of most actions; even in the worship of the other gods, the votary began by offering wine and incense to Janus. The first month in the year was named from him; and under the title of Matutinus he was regarded as the opener of the day. Hence he had charge of the gates of Heaven, and hence, too, all gates, Januoe, were called after him, and supposed to be under his care. Hence, perhaps, it was, that he was represented with a staff and key, and that he was named the Opener (Patulcius), and the Shutter (Clusius)." (Mary Ann Dwight, *Grecian and Roman Mythology*)



"Ruler of new beginnings, gates and doors, the first hour of the day, the first day of the month, and the first month of the year, the Roman god Janus gave January its name. He was pictured as two-headed (both heads bearded) and situated so that one head looked forward into the new year while the other took a retrospective view. Janus also presided over the temple of peace, where the doors were opened only during wartime. It was a place of safety, where new beginnings and new resolutions could be forged, just as the New Year is a time for new objectives and renewed commitments to long-term goals." (How January Got Its Name)

"The name, given to the month of 'January', is derived from the ancient Roman name 'Janus' who presided over the gate to the new year. He was revered as the 'God of Gateways', 'God of Doorways' and 'God of the Journey.' Janus protected the 'Gate of Heaven', known as the 'Lord of Beginnings', is associated with the 'Goddess Juno-Janus', and often symbolized by an image of a face that looks forwards and backwards at the same time. This symbolism can easily be associated with the month known by many as the start of a new year which brings new opportunities. We cast out the old and welcome in the new. It is the time when many reflect on events of the previous year and often resolve to redress or improve some aspect of daily life or personal philosophy." (Mystical World Wide Web)

"January is named after the Roman god Janus, who was always shown as having two heads. He looked back to the last year and forward to the new one. The Roman New Year festival was called the Calends, and people decorated their homes and gave each other gifts." (New Year's Day)

"In order to set the calendar right, the Roman senate, in 153 BC, declared January 1st to be the beginning of the new year. During the Middle Ages, the Church remained opposed to celebrating New Year's Day. January 1st has been celebrated as a holiday by Western nations for only about the past 400 years." (New Year's Day)

By her who in this month is born,/No gems save Garnets should be worn;/They will insure her constancy,/True friendship and fidelity.

Whatever you do on New Year's Day, you'll do often in the coming year!

For continued good fortune in love, kiss and hug your lover in the first minute of the New Year.

For the Lakota Sioux (Eastern U.S.), the month of January was the period of "The Hardship Moon."

"New Year's Day: Now is the accepted time to make your regular annual good resolutions. Next week you can begin paving hell with them as usual." (Mark Twain)

Happy New Year, everybody! They're already firing guns...

Karen: Around here, it's fireworks: totally illegal, but the police tend to ignore them. Guns would get them arrested.

Around here, fireworks are set off by the under-18 set (with some exceptions), while the adults do the gunplay (with some exceptions).

YC: Yeah, why jail somebody for blowing a finger off or setting a house on fire or ...

::snort::

Karen: LOL! That could be it. :)

"Time has no divisions to mark its passage, there is never a thunder-storm or blare of trumpets to announce the beginning of a new month or year. Even when a new century begins it is only we mortals who ring bells and fire off pistols." (Thomas Mann, *The Magic Mountain*)

New Year's Resolutions for 2012

(Sit down on 01 January 2012, and turn Resolution list into Goals.)

1. Modify **B&B** colophon for 2012.
 2. Move back into Master Bedroom.
 3. Get paperwork cleaned up.
 4. Find a replacement for Dr. Idiot.
 5. Figure out future (including concerns in Kacey's email).
 6. Be a nicer person (biological familial suggestion).
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"The first of January rolls around/Like clockwork it appears/I find it's timing most profound/As it brings us each new year//Right on time, It's never late/Has never ever blown it/Apparently this wise old date/Refuses to postpone it//Drink a toast to January one/For annual consistence/It's coming means the old year's done/Let's drink to it's persistence." (Stanley Cooper, Happy New Year, 1926)

ShelVy: Y'know, whilst on that subject, Gun Control should mean teaching kids about the proper use of guns, as well as having a course a gun owner would hafta pass before he/she could purchase a gun.

Unfortunately, that's expecting things our government does to Make Sense ...

The FBI's own records show a severe drop in area crime when said area is one that denied gun ownership and later allows its citizens to be armed ... I'll bet Ed would agree...

Under State of Michigan Revised Statutes, every sixth grader *must attend* a Hunter's Safety course—during class time—with grades being recorded as part of the child's social studies grade.

02 Jan: Ed: One has to learn to drive a car before getting a license. It should be the same with guns. My uncle was an instructor with the NRA; he wouldn't let us have even toy guns, nor to even point a toy gun at anyone else. His point was that if we trivialize guns we become careless as to their real power. Frankly I love guns. I've fired a Luger, an M-1, and a Colt .45 on the range. I would love to shoot a Thompson chopper or a Sturmgewehr.

Want to cut down on crime? Then stop imprisoning people for using drugs and lengthen their sentences for any crime committed with a gun - no plea bargains accepted. And Shel is completely right about the FBI records. I worked with their NYC Public Affairs Office and have seen the stats.

02 Jan: ShelVy: RIGHT ON, ED!!!

Okay, this is just a guess, but why do I think one of ShelVy's NYRs was: "Stir up trouble"?

ShelVy: The mention of politics does that to me, Laurie.

Yes, well, the fact that, under the NDAA, which Obama signed last night, that we are all enemies of the state is just doing wonders for me right now.

ShelVy: ...Well, substitute 'Obama' for 'state'...

How to know I'm seriously unhappy? *I* put It in **B&B**.

02 Jan: Ed: As I see it, there is only one basic human right: The right to do as you damn well please. And it comes with the only basic human duty - the duty to take the consequences. And trouble always begins when someone tries to curb this basic right in the name of the earth, society, the poor, whatever. As Nietzsche observed, "Avoid all those in whom the need to punish is strong." Well said.

02 Jan: ShelVy: Nietzsche certainly had a sharp mind!!! <g>

02 Jan: Ed: California has always been the Land of the Pistachio ever since Hollywood came along and substituted film stock for reality. Look at Reagan - he actually believed that the Hollywood version of events was the real one. And Nixon - he made a career of persecuting Commies in the '50s and later sucking up to them in the '70s. The last



president I liked was Eisenhower, though I have to admit that, had Kennedy lived, he would have been one of the greats. I know, I know, that's blasphemy, but when people ask me when I thought the world sent crazy, I tell them I can give them the exact date: November 22, 1963. And look at us now: The good news is that Obama intends to make the rich pay for everything. The bad news is -- guess what? -- you're rich.

We had a governor in New Jersey like that named Christine Whitman. She cut state taxes for everyone, but continued to spend like a drunken sailor on his last leave. So what happens? the counties and towns, needing their money fix so more relatives can be on the public payrolls, jacked property taxes almost out of sight in some communities.

The difference between Democrats and Republicans is that Democrats tell you government will make you smarter, taller, thinner, richer, and make your front lawn greener. The Republicans tell you that government doesn't work, and then get elected and prove it.

02 Jan: ShelVy: Eisenhower was great, no doubt about it. I liked Truman, too; his 'the buck stops here!' is something no current politician adheres to. You're right-on about Kennedy. For one thing, Dems don't want to remember that Kennedy expressed, quite firmly, that lower taxes increase the economy! But Camelot has died.

02 Dec: Actually, Ed, I would place craziness on November 23, when the shock wore off. But, seriously, Gentlemen, are you feeling better now?

02 Jan: ShelVy: ALWAYS feels good to be right, Laurie!!! <g> ... and 'right' in a political sense as well!

"We spend January 1 walking through our lives, room by room, drawing up a list of work to be done, cracks to be patched. Maybe this year, to balance the list, we ought to walk through the rooms of our lives ... not looking for flaws, but for potential." (Ellen Goodman)

Twelve Tips for New Years Resolutions in 2012

By Maria Gracia, [Get Organized Now!](#)

New Year's resolutions, so easy to make, so hard to keep. If we had kept all the resolutions we made in the past, we would be thin, eating healthy, exercising daily, reading serious books, and learning new languages.

What went wrong? How can we do better? Is it really possible to keep New Year's Resolutions?

Yes, it is possible and here are a few tips to help you do it.

1. **Set specific, reasonable, attainable goals.** If your goal is to lose a few pounds, break the task down into attainable steps. What can you do each month, each week, to achieve that goal? Think about how much you want to lose. Five pounds a month? Break that down to one pound or one and a quarter pounds a week. Now you have a specific goal that does not look nearly as fearsome.



2. **If you slip, get back up and try again.** The game is not over. Everyone slips up. We eat too much at a party, sleep in instead of going to the gym. Recommit to your goal and begin again the very next day. Not next week, that is too easy to put off. The sooner you get back on the horse, the easier it will be.

3. **Enlist help.** Tell someone what you are wanting to accomplish. If you make an 'out loud' commitment to someone, you are more likely to feel the need or desire to

keep it. Just be sure that the person you tell is one who will be supportive and encouraging, not someone who will berate you if you don't.

4. **Build in some incentives.** Want to get into the exercise habit? At the end of each week when you have gone to the gym, walked, or worked out at home at least 3 or 4 times, reward yourself with something, maybe a stop at the coffee shop (for a 'skinny latte,' of course), some flowers, or a magazine. After a month or two of regular attendance, perhaps some new workout clothes.

5. **Find what helps you with motivation on a daily basis.** A picture, perhaps, or inspiring words. Some people are motivated by a picture of themselves at a thinner time, or the picture of a dress in a size they would like to wear. Some reminders are verbal, like a sign reminding us to not 'sweat the small stuff.' Place them where they will work the best--on the refrigerator for food, in your wallet if you are trying to spend less. Can you read, watch TV, or listen to music while on a treadmill or stationery bike? Do something to make it an activity to look forward to.

6. **Sit down each week and check in to see how you are doing.** This will help to keep you on task, or regroup, or adjust goals if they are not working. Give yourself permission to rework the resolutions. If you are not losing the weight you intended, try to figure out why. Did you set a too high goal? How could you change, transform the resolutions to work for you?

7. **Limit the number.** Too many goals, or too many difficult ones set us up for failure. Planning to lose seventy-five pounds, quit smoking, learn French, and read one book of classic literature a week is just setting yourself up to fail. Pick one or two that are very important and concentrate on them.

8. **Be sure you really want to do what you resolve.** If you are doing something because someone else wants you to but you don't, it is probably not going to work, at least not for long. If you really don't want to do something it is better to be honest.

9. **Cut out the excuses.** Sometimes you need to confront yourself. No blaming the hormones, heredity, stress, or someone else. You had a choice and you made the wrong one. Sounds harsh, but it is necessary to face your responsibilities. Don't however, continue to beat yourself over the head. See where you misstepped, understand how to avoid it in the future, forgive yourself and move along.

10. **Find some substitute behaviors.** Trying to stop biting your fingernails? What can you do with your hands instead? Knit? Fiddle with some beads?

11. **Reframe your resolutions to make them a want, not a have to.** Feel excited about your goal. If you sigh and say, 'This year I am going to lose some weight because I really need to' it may feel like punishment from the beginning. Reframe your outlook. 'I want to look my best for Susan's wedding in October' gives you a positive mental image and a positive goal. Can you do something to make you feel excited about your goal? Perhaps a healthy cooking class or joining a walking group. Instead of thinking, 'no sweets', think about fruit and low fat foods for dessert. Instead of thinking about the 25 pounds you 'must' lose, imagine buying new clothes for your trim figure. Always try to see the positive side.

12. **Make one of your resolutions pleasurable or fun.** Resolve to do something once a week to make you feel good—a pedicure, a massage, an afternoon with a good book, a nap. It will give you something to look forward to so you do not feel that all your resolutions are just taxing you. Not all resolutions need to be serious. One year I decided not to buy 'boring' (think white and neutral) underwear. Instead I bought prints that made me happy to put on in the morning.

One final note—a resolution to improve something can be made any time. There is nothing magical about January 1, and maybe it works better to wait until after the kids go back to school, or your company leaves or the trip is over. Pick a day on which you are likely to make a successful start, whether it is January 1 or later on. The important thing is when you do decide to do it, truly commit to it.

"I made no resolutions for the New Year. The habit of making plans, of criticizing, sanctioning and molding my life, is too much of a daily event for me." (Anaïs Nin)

- Resolution Goal One:** **Modify B&B colophon for 2012**
- Steps to Achieve Goal:**
- Step 01:** ~~Copy colophon to a new file.~~
 - Step 02:** ~~Go through each sentence.~~
 - Step 03:** ~~Determine value of each sentence.~~
 - Step 04:** ~~Retain that which is important.~~
 - Step 05:** ~~Send to ShelVy for feedback.~~
 - Step 06:** ~~Incorporate feedback.~~
 - Step 07:** ~~Place new colophon into location.~~
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"One resolution I have made, and try always to keep, is this: To rise above the little things." (John Burroughs)

- Resolution Goal Two:** **Move back into Master Bedroom**
- Steps to Achieve Goal:**
- Step 01:** ~~Purchase plywood for bed.~~
 - Step 02:** ~~Call Danno, regarding plywood placement.~~
 - Step 03:** ~~Place additional plywood between mattress and box springs.~~
 - Step 04:** ~~Transfer into wheelchair.~~
 - Step 05:** ~~Set up bed.~~
 - Step 06:** ~~Set up refrigerator.~~
 - Step 07:** ~~Move shelves/nightstand from dining room to bedroom.~~
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"Never tell your resolution beforehand, or it's twice as onerous a duty." (John Selden)

- Resolution Goal Three:** **Get paperwork cleaned up**
- Steps to Achieve Goal:**
- Step 01:** ~~Transfer into wheelchair.~~
 - Step 02:** ~~Go into Bill's office, pull out scanner and his computer.~~
 - Step 03:** ~~Set up work area at table.~~
 - Step 04:** ~~Email Karen.~~
 - Step 05:** ~~Go into craft room, pull out one box.~~
 - Step 06:** ~~Sort box; shred as necessary; repeat a kabillion times.~~
 - Step 07:** ~~Finish up all outstanding paperwork.~~
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"For last year's words belong to last year's language/And next year's words await another voice./And to make an end is to make a beginning." (T.S. Eliot, "Little Gidding")

Hmmm ... Figured out the step-by-steps for half of my goals. Interesting that there are seven steps in each scenario, thus far.

"No one ever regarded the First of January with indifference. It is that from which all date their time, and count upon what is left. It is the nativity of our common Adam. ... New Year's Day is everyman's birthday." (Charles Lamb)

Ten New Year Resolutions for Your Cat

By: Alex Lieber, Pet Place

With the coming of the New Year, the inevitable resolutions begin. Trim your girth, be nicer toward your in-laws, spend more time with the family. We're all familiar with the promises we make to improve ourselves in the coming year.

Your cat, believe it or not, also wants to embark on a program of self-improvement in the spirit of the New Year. Perhaps self-improvement is overstating the case; she wishes to fine-tune herself. Although she comes close, your cat realizes no one is perfect.

Here are the top 10 New Year's Resolutions for your cat, from her perspective. (Just don't say anything if she falls a little short of the goal. You keep her secret and she'll keep yours.)

Resolution #1: I promise to trim down a little. Being bigger means there is more of me to love, but perhaps I can stand to lose a little weight, if I'm given the opportunity and the right kinds of toys to play with.

Resolution #2: I'll be friendlier to strangers. I won't turn my nose up at newcomers right away. Instead, I'll give them a chance to scratch my ears before disappearing under the bed.

Resolution #3: I'll be cuddlier to family members. I'll purr more and be more affectionate to everyone in the family, except the dog—unless he promises to stay the heck out of my litter box!

Resolution #4: I'll be nicer to the birds and fish in household. Sure, I'll be very nice to them. Perhaps if I'm nice, they'd want to come out and play with me ...

Resolution #5: I won't be as finicky about my food. Just as long as it's the right texture, taste and temperature, and given at the right time each day.

Resolution #6: I'll lay off the furniture and stick to my scratching post. After all, that's what the scratching post is for.



Besides, I've made enough marks to show who really owns this place. To do any more would be just catty.

Resolution #7: I'll stop hiding stuff behind the couch. It's getting a little cluttered behind there anyways. Someone in the house is really trying to find that diamond ring—they're making too much of a racket.

Resolution #8: I'll let everyone else sleep later. I suppose 5 a.m. is a little too early to get everyone up to feed me. I think I can hold on until 5:30 a.m.

Resolution #9: I'll stay off the counters, at least when company is around. I only get chased off anyways. Sooner or later everyone leaves, so I can patrol the countertops if I'm just a little patient.

Resolution #10: I'll be more tolerant of those homemade [clothes]. They feel a little funny, and I dislike having something put on me, but the colors really do match my hair coat, and they set off my eyes nicely.

::snort:: The reception to this list being read aloud was mixed: Typo shuddered a couple of times, then headed for the nip; Esme listened, then huffed out a sound totally unidentified to my ears; the 'eeps listened in amusement, and then tore off for a Feline Frolic 550.

"A happy New Year! Grant that I/May bring no tear to any eye/When this New Year in time shall end/Let it be said I've played the friend,/Have lived and loved and labored here,/And made of it a happy year." (Edgar Guest)

R.I.P. Bill of Rights 1789 - 2011

Mike Adams, Editor of *Natural News*
Sunday, January 01, 2012

(NaturalNews) One of the most extraordinary documents in human history—the Bill of Rights—has come to an end under President Barack Obama. Derived from sacred principles of natural law, the Bill of Rights has come to a sudden and catastrophic end with the President's signing of the *National Defense Authorization Act* (NDAA), a law that grants the U.S. military the "legal" right to conduct secret kidnappings of U.S. citizens, followed by indefinite detention, interrogation, torture and even murder. This is all conducted completely outside the protection of law, with no jury, no trial, no legal representation and not even any requirement that the government produce evidence against the accused. It is a system of outright government tyranny against the American people, and it effectively nullifies the Bill of Rights.

In what will be remembered as the most traitorous executive signing ever committed against the American people, President Obama signed the bill on New Year's Eve, a time when most Americans were engaged in the consumption of alcohol. It seems appropriate, of course, since no intelligent American could accept the tyranny of this bill if they were sober.

This is the law that will cement Obama's legacy in the history books as the traitor who nullified the Bill of Rights and paved America's pathway down a road of tyranny that will make Nazi Germany's war crimes look like child's play. If Bush had signed a law like this, liberals would have been screaming "impeachment!"

Why the Bill of Rights matters

While the U.S. Constitution already limits the power of federal government, the Bill of Rights is the document that enumerates **even more limits of federal government power**. In its inception, many argued that a Bill of Rights was completely unnecessary because, they explained, the federal government only has the powers specifically enumerated to it under the U.S. Constitution. There was no need to have a "First Amendment" to protect Free Speech, for example, because there was no power granted to government to diminish Free Speech.

This seems silly today, of course, given the natural tendency of all governments to concentrate power in the hands of the few while destroying the rights and freedoms of their own people. But in the 1780's, whether government could ever become a threat to future freedoms was hotly debated. By 1789, enough revolutionary leaders had agreed on the fundamental principles of a Bill of Rights to sign it into law. Its purpose was to provide **additional clarifications** on the limitation of government power so that there could be absolutely no question that government could NEVER, under any circumstances, violate these key principles of freedom: Freedom of speech, the right to bear arms, freedom from illegal searches, the right to remain silent, the right to due process under law, and so on.

Of course, today's runaway federal government utterly ignores the limitations placed on it by the founding fathers. It aggressively and criminally **seeks to expand its power at all costs**, completely ignoring the Bill of Rights and openly violating the limitations of power placed upon it by the United States Constitution. The TSA's illegal searching of air travelers, for example, is a blatant violation of Fourth Amendment rights. The government's hijacking of websites it claims are linking to "copyright infringement" hubs is a blatant violation of First Amendment rights. The government's demand that all Americans be forced to buy private health insurance is a blatant violation of Article 1, Section 8 of the Constitution—the "commerce clause."

Now, with the passage of the NDAA, the federal government has **torpedoed the entire Bill of Rights**, dismissing it completely and effectively promising to violate those rights at will. As of January 1, 2012, **we have all been designated enemies of the state**. America is the new battleground, and your "right" to due process is null and void.

Remember, this was all done by the very President who promised to close Guantanamo Bay and end secret military prisons. Not only did Obama break that campaign promise (as he has done with nearly ALL his campaign promises), he did exactly the opposite and has now subjected all Americans to the possibility of government-sponsored kidnapping, detainment and torture, all under the very system of secret military prisons he claimed he would close!

"President Obama's action today is a blight on his legacy because he will forever be known as the president who signed indefinite detention without charge or trial into law," said Anthony D. Romero, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union.

Obama's signing statement means nothing

Even while committing an act of pure treason in signing the bill, the unindicted criminal President Obama issued a signing statement that reads, in part, "Moving forward, my administration will interpret and implement the provisions described below in a manner that best preserves the flexibility on which our safety depends and upholds the values on which this country was founded..."

Anyone who reads between the lines here realizes the "the flexibility on which our safety depends" means they can interpret the law in any way they want if there is a sufficient amount of fear being created through false flag terror attacks. Astute readers will also notice that Obama's signing statement **has no legal**

binding whatsoever and only refers to Obama's *momentary intentions* on how he "wishes" to interpret the law. It does not place any limits whatsoever on how a future President might use the law as written.

"The statute is particularly dangerous because it has no temporal or geographic limitations, and can be used by this and future presidents to militarily detain people captured far from any battlefield," says the ACLU.

What this means is that *the next* President could use this law to engage in the most horrific holocaust-scale mass round-up of people the world has ever seen. The NDAA *legalizes* the crimes of Nazi Germany in America, setting the stage for the mass murder of citizens by a rogue government.

United States of America becomes a rogue nation, operating in violation of international law

Furthermore, the NDAA law as written and signed, is a **violation of international law** as it does not even adhere to the fundamental agreements of how nations treat prisoners of war:

"...the breadth of the NDAA's detention authority violates international law because it is not limited to people captured in the context of an actual armed conflict as required by the laws of war" says the ACLU.



In 1789, today's NDAA law would have been called "treasonous," and those who voted for it would have been shot dead as traitors. This is not a call for violence, but rather an attempt to provide historical context of just how destructive this law really is. Men and women fought and died for the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights. People sacrificed their lives, their safety and *risked everything* to achieve the freedoms that made America such a great nation. For one President to so callously throw away 222 years of liberty, betraying those great Americans who painstakingly created an extraordinary document limiting the power of government, is equivalent to **driving a stake through the heart of the Republic.**

In signing this, Obama has proven himself to be **the most criminal of all U.S. Presidents**, far worse than George W. Bush and a total traitor to the nation and its People. Remember, Obama swore upon a Bible that he would "protect and defend the Constitution against all enemies, foreign and domestic," and yet he himself has become the enemy of the Constitution by signing a law that overtly and callously nullifies the Bill of Rights.

This is nothing less than an act of war declared on the American people by the executive and legislative branches of government. It remains to be seen whether the judicial branch will go along with it (US Supreme

Court).

Origins of the Bill of Rights

The Bill of Rights, signed in 1789 by many of the founding fathers of our nation, was based on the Virginia Declaration of Rights, drafted in 1776 and authored largely by George Mason, one of the least-recognized revolutionaries who gave rise to a nation of freedom and liberty.

Mason was a strong advocate of not just states' rights, but of *individual rights*, and without his influence in 1789, we might not even have a Bill of Rights today (and our nation would have slipped into total government tyranny all the sooner). In fact, he openly opposed ratification of the U.S. Constitution unless it contained a series of amendments now known as the *Bill of Rights*.

SECTION ONE of this Virginia Declaration of Rights states: "*That all men are by nature equally free and independent and have certain inherent rights, of which, when they enter into a state of society, they cannot, by any compact, deprive or divest their posterity; namely, the enjoyment of life and liberty, with the means of acquiring and possessing property, and pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety.*"

Section Three of the declaration speaks to the duty of the Citizens to abolish abusive government: "*That government is, or ought to be, instituted for the common benefit, protection, and security of the people, nation, or community; of all the various modes and forms of government, that is best which is capable of producing the greatest degree of happiness and safety and is most effectually secured against the danger of maladministration; and that, when any government shall be found inadequate or contrary to these purposes, a majority of the community hath an indubitable, inalienable, and indefeasible right to reform, alter, or abolish it, in such manner as shall be judged most conducive to the public weal.*"

By any honest measure, today's U.S. government, of course, has overstepped the bounds of its original intent. As Mason wrote over 200 years ago, the People of America now have not merely a right but a *duty* to "reform, alter or abolish it," to bring government back into alignment with its original purpose—to protect the rights of the People.

Obama violates his Presidential Oath, sworn before God

Article II, Section I of the United States Constitution spells out the oath of office that every President must take during their swearing in: "*I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully execute the Office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my Ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States.*"

In signing the NDAA law into office, Obama has blatantly and unambiguously **violated this sacred oath**, meaning that his betrayal is not merely against the American people, but also against the Divine Creator.

Given that the Bill of Rights is an extension of *Natural Law* which establishes a direct heritage of sovereign power from the Creator to the People, a blatant attack upon the Bill of Rights is, by any account, **an attack against the Creator** and a violation of universal spiritual principles. Those who attempt to undermine the Bill of Rights are attempting to invalidate the relationship between God and Man, and in doing so, they are identifying themselves as *enemies of God* and *agents of Evil*.

Today, as 2012 begins, we are now **a nation led by evil**, and threatened with total destruction by those who would seek to rule as tyrants. This is America's final hour. We either **defend the Republic starting right now**, or we lose it forever.

Read the language analysis of WHY and HOW the NDAA applies to American citizens

Many people have been fooled by the obfuscated language of the bill, and they wrongfully believe the NDAA does not apply to American citizens. *They have been hoodwinked!*

In this follow-up article, I parse the language of the NDAA and explain, in plain language, how and why the NDAA does apply to American citizens. Also, read this explanation by Rep. Justin Amash, who voted against the bill.

Make no mistake, folks: The U.S. government has just declared all Americans to be "enemy combatants," and that the USA is now a "battleground" over which the military has total control. We are now a nation living under military dictatorship, whether you realize it or not.

ShelVy: Slammed the door in our faces, didn't he?

I've never been an enemy of the state before.

02 Jan: Ed: Oh, Dear. Most of what Our Kind Health Ranger says is echoed on Fox News by such as Lou Dobbs and Judge Napolitano. Your Liberal friends will not like this one bit, because Fox News has been effectively demonized. Bill Maher may not like it, either.

Hey Shel - did you know that Modern Liberalism is closer to Fascism than to Libertarianism? Fascism is not a philosophy of the right, it is one of the Left.

02 Jan: ShelVy: Right on about Modern Liberalism, Ed. Why do you think Rush Limbaugh called California 'The Left Coast,'???

"Be always at war with your vices, at peace with your neighbors, and let each new year find you a better man." (Benjamin Franklin)

Soph called to wish me a Happy New Year (Em had just called, but Soph wanted to call separately. Em's New Year's Resolution: I won't get *caught* killing my sister!).

The girls had apparently gone to New Year's Eve mass with Kacey's parents, and Soph wanted me to know that the Wise Men were soon going to find the Baby Jesus in a cereal box!

I could hear Em in the background: "No, Soph! In a grain-ger!"

Soph: "But Mom said cereal is made of grain, and Pappie said a grain-ger holds grain, so a grain-ger *is* a cereal box! Right, Aunt Laurie?"

I was laughing too hard to answer...

ShelVy: WONDERFUL Christmas story!!! (Soph-style.) LOL

Karen: LOL! Those 2 are amazing!

Yes, they are. I am curious as to how Em's NYR will play out. I'm terrified to ask Soph about the Wise Men. Her version of "We Three Kings" has them 'the kings of Lake Orion tar.' When I pointed out that the nearby small community of Lake Orion didn't *have* tar, I was informed that "it should 'cause the song says so!" Last year, with Bill's ~~incorrigement~~ encouragement, she was calling them The Three Wise Guys.

Stephen: I love it! In grade school we used to sing, "We Three Kings of Orient are puffing on a rotten cigar. It was loaded, it exploded - Poof! We two Kings..."

Stephen, that's *horrible*! Funny as heck, but horrible!

Karen: And there's the legendary Weeth Reekings Avorian Tar ;)

Okay, that's worse! I'd say it couldn't get any worse, but neither Dave nor Ed have checked in today...

"Drop the last year into the silent limbo of the past. Let it go, for it was imperfect, and thank God that it can go." (Brooks Atkinson)

Karen: Love Incorrigement! LOL!

That was one of Dad's and my exchanges when Jimmy was nine and misbehaving. Dad sighed and said that Jimmy was incorrigible; I replied to not incorrigize him. Dad looked at me, and said that I'd better, at 15, know how to pronounce "encourage"; I replied that I did, but, given Jimmy's behavior, I neither wanted to encourage or incorrigize him. Dad started laughing, and it became our joke.

Karen: That's a nice memory to have. :)

It is indeed.

ShelVy: LOL! ...But I'm surprised you had to explain it to your Dad...

It was bad timing on my part: Jimmy's buddy had set fire to one of his "enemies" mobile homes. When caught, the kid said Jimmy was with him. He wasn't, because the fire was set around 7:30AM, and Jimmy had left for school with me at 6:30AM, and had been mostly in my sight the forty minutes it took him to put on his school uniform, make his bed, pack his lunch, eat breakfast, repack his lunch after I

removed all of the junk food (daily occurrence), brush his teeth, clean up the bathroom from brushing his teeth, and then help me do the close-up house checklist.

I said it to Dad when we were all in the HS Principal's Office, where we were after WLTPD and Waterford Township PD had, with Dad, gotten Jimmy out of class, and they then came to get me to verify that Jimmy had been at school with me since slightly before 7AM, something the HS disciplinarian could confirm as I unlocked the school's front door as I had my keys handy and he didn't. He and Jimmy were engaged in a "throw snow at Laurie" fight as I was trying to unlock the damn door, and I made them stand out there until 7AM.

ShelVy: Ahhh! Makes sense. Did you receive any gratitude from Jimmy?

::snort:: For telling the truth? Ha!

ShelVy: ... I figgered that ...

"To leave the old with a burst of song,/To recall the right and forgive the wrong;/To forget the thing that blinds you fast/To the vain regrets of the year that's past." (Robert B. Beattie, "A Way to a Happy New Year")

Your Cat's Seven Pet Peeves

By: Cal Orey, Pet Place

Even the coolest cat can suddenly become a bundle of nerves when subjected to annoyances—call them pet pet peeves—that drive them crazy.

Theresa Todd saw that happen when a neighbor began petting her new cat Kerouac. "He's so cute!" Todd's neighbor gushed, only to have Kerouac begin hissing loudly. "Kerouac!" Todd cried as her neighbor jumped back in surprise. "What's gotten into you?"

The fact is cats can get riled and complain in a variety of ways, such as fleeing, nonstop meowing or hissing at strangers, in response to negative stimuli. Here are some common pet peeves and how to avoid them:

Being tripped on. This is probably the number one bummer for cats. "Cats don't like it either when you step on their tails because it hurts," says certified animal behaviorist Mary Burch, author of *Volunteering With Your Pet*. **What you can do:** Change your walk pattern. "Teach yourself to look first, then step," says Burch. You can also teach your cat to move when your feet get near by firmly saying, "Move," as you approach. If your cat doesn't budge, gently guide her out of the way. Once your cat does move, praise her with hugs and "Good, kitty."

Loud noises. Cats will naturally flee from thunder, construction work and fireworks. "Loud noises usually don't signal good things to a cat," says John C. Wright, author of *Is Your Cat Crazy?* **What you can do:** Don't feed the fear by over-reacting and pampering your cat. Just chill out instead. "Act calm and rational," says Burch. "Provide your cat with a safe, secure place (such as crate or bedroom). The key is for you to act like everything is under control."

Bothersome dogs. While cats and dogs can live in peace, some dogs can get under a cat's skin, too. "Pesky canines ruin the peaceful lives of cats by barking, biting or chasing the cats," says Burch. **What you can do:** Socialize your animals early, do introductions slowly and separate young and old pets. Feed your pets at the same time—but in separate areas to avoid squabbles. Also, provide safe spots for your cat should the dog decide a game of chase might be fun, explains Burch.

Litter box changes. Linda Hill noticed that once she exchanged her old litter box for a new-and-improved one, her cat started eliminating in the bathtub instead of her box. That's no surprise to Betsy Cambarbri, animal behaviorist at Peninsula Humane Society in San Mateo, Calif. "Cats don't like change," she says. **What you can do:** "If you have a winning litter box situation, don't change it," says Cambarbri, who also advises changing the litter often "because cats are neatniks."

Being tossed out of their favorite spots. Cats also have their favorite places and get bugged by being shooed away. "It ticks them off because you're violating their Queendom," says Wright. **What you can do:** You can relocate, relocate, relocate. "If your cat prefers your stove or kitchen counter tops and you prefer that the cat not be there," says Burch, "make sure the cat has alternative places with similar features." You may want to invest in a cat tree.

Too much attention. "A lot of pats from new people can drive a feline up the wall," Wright says. Being picked up also can turn the sweetest cat from nice to naughty. **What you can do:** "Let guests know that if your cat wants to be petted, she'll come to them," he says.



Too little attention. When a cat comes to you and you don't acknowledge her presence, she may find it a nuisance. "They think it's rude," says Wright, "because the cat has invited an interaction. And that's a big deal for a cat." **What you can do:** Teresa Todd goes one step further to make her cat feel welcome. "Whenever Kerouac greets me I stop what I'm doing and say "Hi Kitty. What's up?" she says. That way both her cat and his needs are recognized. It's an instant pet peeve buster.

"The object of a New Year is not that we should have a new year. It is that we should have a new soul and a new nose; new feet, a new backbone, new ears, and new eyes. Unless a particular man made New Year resolutions, he would make no resolutions. Unless a man starts afresh about things, he will certainly do nothing effective." (G.K. Chesterton)

Monday, 02 January: Happy Mew Year for Cats Day! Today's winner of the Feline Daybreak 500: Peepiceek.

Ponderence of the Day: "Have you ever dreamed of what you'd do if someone handed you a spare hour on a plate? An hour with no responsibilities, no pressures. So what about being given a whole day? [Twenty-four] hours you didn't know you were going to get. A day and a night to do exactly as you please. Well although the lack of responsibilities bit may not be exactly as you might choose, that's very nearly the situation you'll face in just under two months' time. As I was saying the day before yesterday, this year is a leap year, so you have a February 29th (a Wednesday) that you didn't get last year, or the year before that, or the year before that. Purely on the grounds of indulging in a spot of creative thinking, what could you do with this extra day? What would be fun? Or different? Or exciting? There's enough time between now and then to come up with an idea, and to put it into practice. Why not do something different and a bit exciting this February 29th? Take a leap into the unknown."

Goal for the Day: Be flexible in dealing with people and events. Avoid 'psychosclerosis'—a hardening of the attitudes.

Today I'm grateful for: a) migraine medication that works; b) the WLTES departments (FD and PD) for being willing to go the extra distance; c) the portable DVD player; d) Bill's Amazon Prime Membership for the free Instant Video access; and e) Karen—for making me laugh.

"On the ninth day of Christmas, my true love sent to me: nine Ladies Dancing, eight Maids a-Milking, seven Swans a-Swimming, six Geese a-Laying, five Golden Rings, four Calling Birds, three French Hens, two Turtle Doves, and a Partridge in a Pear Tree."

An explanation of Moodscope seems to be in order. One is asked to rate 20 emotions using numbers 0-3: 0 = Very Slightly or Not at All; 1 = A Little; 2 = Quite a Bit; and 3 = Extremely. The emotions, while alphabetical here, are random while taking the quiz: active; afraid; alert; ashamed; attentive; determined; distressed; enthusiastic; excited; guilty; hostile; inspired; irritable; interested; jittery; nervous; proud; scared; strong; and upset. The scale is courtesy the American Psychological Association. Based on my numbers (37), somehow I must be doing better than I thought.

Moodscope Score (out of 100): "Alright Laurie. Things look like this. You have a score today of **5%**, which is 52% less than your highest result to date of 57%. It seems as if things may not be so good as they were when you took the test last time and scored 17%. It's clear that this is not a very good time for you, and matters appear to have deteriorated. You may find you'll benefit from talking about how you feel with someone close. Failing that, it may be worth seeking help from your doctor. It's not sensible to attempt to make sense of this on your own, but stay focused on the fact that you've been better in the past and will get back to feeling good again before too long. You've scored lower today than you did last time and you're actually beneath your average result of 32.2%. You've never scored lower than this. Let's hope the only way is up."

Well, *crap!* Granted *their* number is about how I'm feeling, but *how*??? Is there a shrink in the house? Oh, yeah, the part about telling Dr. Idiot? Not bloody likely!!! She'll just hand me a cough drop! Although, this *could* be why I'm still struggling with writing the steps for turning three of my resolutions into goals.

SheIVy: I ain't no shrink, Laurie - And I'm about to prove it! How? Well, a shrink isn't allowed to express any opinions to a patient. But I'm gonna! (Yeah, yeah; you ain't my patient! But still...)

It's your feeling of self-worth that is suffering. You feel you're just a little Nobody who rode into fandom (sf, gaming and pro-wrestling) on Bill's coat-tail. NOT SO!!! In fact, such a feeling is actually an insult to Bill!!! Don't you realize that Bill saw your value and that's what attracted you to him??? BILL thought - no, KNEW - you were an intelligent, worthy person he could rely on!!! He appreciated your keen mind and sense of humor and latched onto it!

Putting yourself down is, in effect, putting BILL down! Knock it off ... Not only that; putting yourself down is an insult to us of the SQ! We wouldn't be here for some non-entity! Think about it.

Karen: I second that!

That he isn't a shrink or his assessment?

Karen: Both.

Drat! Should have also added "or that I need a rubber room?" ::LATER:: So, *is* a rubber room necessary?

ShelVy: Not at all!!! Just a -ah- change in your way of thinking...

Ed: I told her the same thing, Shel.

ShelVy: See? As you sed, Ed, we both are rational, thinking people...

I don't know that I'm willing to go *that* far!

ShelVy: Give it a try!!!

I said I'd work on being nicer to living beings—which means that if I allow a mosquito to live, I'll have accomplished my goal ...

ShelVy: Well, YOU are a living being, remember!

How long until spring? Let me think ... 20 March 05:14AM UT, so 01:14AM ET... ~6,679,000 seconds.

ShelVy: So spend a buncha those seconds respecting one Laurie Kunkel!!!

Seriously, Shel, I'm honestly not sure how to do that.

ShelVy: Which, I think, is the true core of the problem!!! You gotta realize you ARE a worthy person, one deserving so many good friends. Oh, I know; BILL coulda told you, but you find it hard to accept that from anyone else. In memory of Bill - TRY!!!

Actually, Bill would be making sure I didn't miss my Effexor XR doses, would have made sure to have the dosage upped, and would have plugged in my SAD light every time I've asked someone to do it.

ShelVy: Meaning that you owe it to Bill to do it for yourself!!!



I'm trying; I just get times confused, and I need to set my timer again. It was easier with Kacey: when she came down, it was medicine times.

ShelVy: It was really quite a blow, losing Kacey ...

Yes, it was. When Juan just came down, he said: "Kacey said to say 'Take your meds!'"

ShelVy: I think that, between-the-lines, Kacey was ALSO saying, "Take care of yourself."

True.

ShelVy sent out a bunch of tech support jokes ... They are throughout this ish.

Tech support: What kind of computer do you have?

Customer: A white one ...

Tech support: Click on the 'my computer' icon on to the left of the screen.

Customer: Your left or my left?

Stephen: Say Laurie, does this elevate them in maturity status? I'm impressed.

RotBLMAO!! I, too, was impressed Stephen, but I still think that you are the only adult male in the loop. It's fair: three adults and three ... Well, non-adults.

ShelVy: Gotta admit that having eighty-three years behind me does NOT make me An Adult! ... and I wouldn't change it!!!

"How bittersweet it is, on winter's night,/To listen, by the sputtering, smoking fire,/As distant memories, through the fog-dimmed light,/Rise, to the muffled chime of church bell choir." (Charles Baudelaire, *The Cracked Bell*)

Reflections on Ponderence: "What could I do with an extra day?"

I'd love to spend the day in the wheelchair. I'd love to go into my craft room. I'd love to be able to do some Craft work. Hell, I'd love to be able to do some craftwork!

"We meet today/To thank Thee for the era done,/And Thee for the opening one." (John Greenleaf Whittier)

ShelVy: By the way - what IS 'Moodscope'? I mean, I unnerstand its purpose, just never heard of it before.

A Brit company I stumbled on a year ago. I've been using it to monitor my mood ever since. Bill tried it and was impressed.

ShelVy: What's the subscription cost???

Free.

ShelVy: Free? FREE???. Is it some college thing, or full of ads???. Sounds fascinating! [I] really [AM] gonna go to bed ... sometime ...

Nope, not a college thing ... and no ads.

"I do think New Year's resolutions can't technically be expected to begin on New Year's Day, don't you? Since, because it's an extension of New Year's Eve, smokers are already on a smoking roll and cannot be expected to stop abruptly on the stroke of midnight with so much nicotine in the system. Also dieting on New Year's Day isn't a good idea as you can't eat rationally but really need to be free to consume whatever is necessary, moment by moment, in order to ease your hangover. I think it would be much more sensible if resolutions began generally on January the second." (Helen Fielding, *Bridget Jones's Diary*)

Resolution Goal Four: **Find a replacement for Dr. Idiot**

Steps to Achieve Goal: **Step 01:**

"Good resolutions are simply checks that men draw on a bank where they have no account." (Oscar Wilde)

Resolution Goal Five: **Figure out future** (including concerns in Kacey's and ShelVy's emails)

Steps to Achieve Goal: Step 01:

"A new oath holds pretty well; but ... when it is become old, and frayed out, and damaged by a dozen annual retyrings of its remains, it ceases to be serviceable; any little strain will snap it." (Mark Twain, speech in New York City, 31 March 1885)

I'll be honest: this resolution/goal was in response to biological familial pressure. I try to be a nice person, even when I suspect it's going to bite me. I guess I could try to be nicer to Dave, but I think it may kill him off, and then where would I be? I could, maybe, be nicer to Ed, but, I'm already pretty nice to the 'wolf. I need help here, folks: how can I become a nicer person? Dave? Ed?

Resolution Goal Six: Be a nicer person

Steps to Achieve Goal: Step 01:

"A New Year's resolution is something that goes in one year and out the other." (Author Unknown)

On Christmas Day, ShelVy initiated a discussion I would have preferred to get a good eight hours of sleep on, but I guess I'll have to settle for 7200 seconds. Oh, wait, *no*, I can *move* the discussion, just so I cover the topic at hand ...

ShelVy: Turn it around, Laurie - Imagine that I am in YOUR shoes, same problems, etc. What would you advise ME?

Uh ... what do you want to do? Skydive? Transfer into a real bed? Order a pizza? A few more details, please???

ShelVy: I meant an exact switch. Put ME in YOUR place. If I had your problems, what solution/s would you suggest???

So, you want to make certain I don't sleep tonight? *Freaky Friday* scared the heck out of me. I didn't want to become my mom. What you're asking now is almost as bad. I care about you too much to think about that. And I didn't mean to be flip earlier.

ShelVy: Flippancy on your part never occurred to me, Laurie! I'M the prince of Flippancy!

Okay, I'll think about it!

31 Dec: I have been thinking about it, and my mind is a muddle. I truly do *not* know what I would tell someone in my situation. That's not a cop-out; I've been considering Kacey's email also and I do *not* have a clue.

Customer: I have a huge problem. A friend has placed a screen saver on my computer, but every time I move the mouse, it disappears.

Karen's busy this morning: I thought some information on the stages of grief might be helpful. There are different ideas on this so I'll list 2 of the main ones. The concept is, mourning a loss is a process, and it takes time to go through it. It's not something you get through overnight, or in a few weeks. I'm not sure how much good it will do to read this, except that it may provide you with a reassurance that you are far from the only person feeling this way. Also, not everyone goes through all the stages in order, and sometimes people step back a bit before moving forward again.

The Five Stages of Grief

Denial: "I feel fine."; "This can't be happening, not to me."

Denial is usually only a temporary defense for the individual. This feeling is generally replaced with heightened awareness of possessions and individuals that will be left behind after death.

Anger: "Why me? It's not fair!"; "How can this happen to me?"; "Who is to blame?"

Once in the second stage, the individual recognizes that denial cannot continue. Because of anger, the person is very difficult to care for due to misplaced feelings of rage and envy.

Bargaining: "I'll do anything for a few more years."; "I will give my life savings if..."

The third stage involves the hope that the individual can somehow postpone or delay death. Usually, the negotiation for an extended life is made with a higher power in exchange for a reformed lifestyle.



Psychologically, the individual is saying, "I understand I will die, but if I could just do something to buy more time..."

Depression: "I'm so sad, why bother with anything?"; "I'm going to die soon so what's the point... What's the point?"; "I miss my loved one, why go on?"

During the fourth stage, the dying person begins to understand the certainty of death. Because of this, the individual may become silent, refuse visitors and spend much of the time crying and grieving. This process allows the dying person to disconnect from things of love and affection. It is not recommended to attempt to cheer up an individual who is in this stage. It is an important time for grieving that must be processed.

Acceptance: "It's going to be okay."; "I can't fight it, I may as well prepare for it."

In this last stage, individuals begin to come to terms with their mortality, or that of a loved one, or other tragic event.

The Seven Stages of Grief

1. SHOCK & DENIAL

You will probably react to learning of the loss with numbed disbelief. You may deny the reality of the loss at some level, in order to avoid the pain. Shock provides emotional protection from being overwhelmed all at once. This may last for weeks.

2. PAIN & GUILT

As the shock wears off, it is replaced with the suffering of unbelievable pain. Although excruciating and almost unbearable, it is important that you experience the pain fully, and not hide it, avoid it or escape from it with alcohol or drugs. You may have guilty feelings or remorse over things you did or didn't do with your loved one. Life feels chaotic and scary during this phase.

3. ANGER & BARGAINING

Frustration gives way to anger, and you may lash out and lay unwarranted blame for the death on someone else. Please try to control this, as permanent damage to your relationships may result. This is a time for the release of bottled up emotion. You may rail against fate, questioning "Why me?" You may also try to bargain in vain with the powers that be for a way out of your despair ("I will never drink again if you just bring him back")

4. "DEPRESSION", REFLECTION, LONELINESS

Just when your friends may think you should be getting on with your life, a long period of sad reflection will likely overtake you. This is a normal stage of grief, so do not be "talked out of it" by well-meaning outsiders. Encouragement from others is not helpful to you during this stage of grieving. During this time, you finally realize the true magnitude of your loss, and it depresses you. You may isolate yourself on purpose, reflect on things you did with your lost one, and focus on memories of the past. You may sense feelings of emptiness or despair.

5. THE UPWARD TURN

As you start to adjust to life without your dear one, your life becomes a little calmer and more organized. Your physical symptoms lessen, and your "depression" begins to lift slightly.

6. RECONSTRUCTION & WORKING THROUGH

As you become more functional, your mind starts working again, and you will find yourself seeking realistic solutions to problems posed by life without your loved one. You will start to work on practical and financial problems and reconstructing yourself and your life without him or her.

7. ACCEPTANCE & HOPE

During this, the last of the seven stages in this grief model, you learn to accept and deal with the reality of your situation. Acceptance does not necessarily mean instant happiness. Given the pain and turmoil you have experienced, you can never return to the carefree, untroubled YOU that existed before this tragedy. But you will find a way forward.

Interesting ... I think I'm at different spots on both scales.

Customer: Hi, good afternoon, this is Martha, I can't print. Every time I try, it says 'Can't find printer'. I've even lifted the printer and placed it in front of the monitor, but the computer still says he can't find it."

My final draft on the letter to Kacey:

Dear Kacey,

Your letter has provided a lot for me to think about and required me to do some serious soul searching for answers.

I'm glad you enjoyed dinner, although I was not the one cooking; Angie and Matt's girlfriend Beth came over and did the cooking and I just supervised form the

couch ... needless to say I was still involved in the micro management but I didn't move most of the day :)

I apologize, Love. Juan said you were up and cooking, so I was concerned.

Now I know Paige is doing your everyday care, but Juan and I are very concerned that you are not getting the things you need.

Such as?

I hope you are taking care of yourself with the recent discovery of Bronchitis; you need to be making sure you are taking extra care with yourself (lots of water, breathing i.e. blowing a whistle or even blowing up balloons will help, not to mention getting extra protein).

I promise that I'm drinking water. Paige is trying to get me to agree to drinking a protein drink with every meal, but the stupid things make me nauseous.

I worry that you may not be considering the long run of what needs to be done concerning your care ... why have you not gotten into the wheelchair?

Paige is concerned about me being in the wheelchair for 12-14 hours at a time. She's also using it as a reward: Agree to the protein drinks and go through my junk and then *maybe* I can be in the wheelchair. I'd rather look at the magazines *in* the wheelchair, and skip being nauseous, but that's not yet been given to me as an option.

The Hoyer has been at your house for a few weeks now, has it even been used yet?

Nope. Paige said other than using it to put me in the tub, I need to be able to use the transfer board into the wheelchair and onto (into?) other pieces of furniture, which then goes back to the statement above.

Part of the reason you got the Bronchitis is from lack of mobility; I know it's hard for you to do much, but this is yet another reason you need extra care. Twice a day (at crazy hours) is just not cutting it.

I know, Love, I got the lecture from Dr. Bali, also about bronchitis and mobility. I'm moving as much as I can in the bed.

I would really like to get the number for Kathi or even Paige and Cookie, so that maybe I can make a few calls for you since I know what it takes to take care of you and from what it looks like, you don't seem to be communicating the things you need to the people closest to you. I realize you do not want to be a burden to people but the fact is you need as much help as you can get at this point and I simply cannot do what I would like to do for you therefore I'd like to help you the way I can at the

moment (being letting others know what you may need how they can help and contacting others to find you extra help).

Kathi has been side-lined by an injury, so I haven't seen her since just after Christmas. Her number is XXX-XXX-XXXX. Good luck reaching her; I've left several messages for her and haven't yet gotten a callback.

As for calling Cookie, she has her hands full at the moment with Kenny, Karen, Hannah, and Al, so, I'm desperately trying to keep her not concerned about me. However, if you want to talk to someone who will force me to communicate, your better option is, always, Charlene. Her number—which I thought you had—is XXX-XXX-XXXX.

As for Paige, well, I'm torn on her. I even turned to ShelVy (XXX-XXX-XXXX) and Karen for advice:

Karen: She raises many valid concerns, and some of them are things I have also been thinking about. I don't know how much you are paying Paige, but it seems to me that someone you are paying ought to be showing more concern for you, and not just their own convenience. Also, they ought to show up at better hours for you. Maybe that's the best Paige can do, but if you are paying, can't you find a better person to pay?

I know she does; I'm just trying to figure out the right things to say to reassure her because I DON'T want her worrying about me. I don't want her worrying at all.

Karen: It also seems to me like a lot of Paige's not wanting to put you into the wheelchair, etc, is just excuses because she doesn't want to be bothered. I didn't want to say that, but since you asked. ... IMO the best thing you could do would be to find a better paid aide, someone from Visiting Nurses, perhaps? There's also a visiting homemaker kind of service - not sure if that's the official name, but that's basically what they are.

For basic daily care, Paige usually charges \$25 per day; that comes to \$175 per week. Then, the full wash-ups are \$16 per hour and that's usually five hours a week. So, I should be paying her \$255 per week, but, since I only have \$625 per month, that's not happening. Which, I think, is contributing to the problem.

ShelVy: I can only say, WOWWWW! (Emphasis on the 'OW'!)

Karen: Do you have health insurance? If not, have you applied for Medicaid? It seems like you ought to qualify. I know when the Visiting Nurses were coming out for me, I

only had to pay the regular copay, and it would have been the same if I needed the homemaker. I think Medicaid would pay for them too.

ShelVy: Worth checking out!!!

No health insurance, other than Medicare. Yes, Medicaid will likely occur once I can dig through the paperwork that I wasn't supposed to worry about and neither did he.

ShelVy: Just what you need; more paperwork! <g><ig> Gonna be away awhile; a new author just submitted a really, REALLY fascinating story I'm reading.

Karen: How about you get busy checking out Visiting Nurses and Homemakers, and let her know you are actively doing that, and looking for a replacement or supplement for Paige? I bet some of your EMT friends could help you with finding those resources. And is there a social worker/outreach person at the hospital? I bet they could help you with that, too.

ShelVy: Oh boy ... ! Talk about being caught between a rock and a hard place ... Look, Paige MEANS well; you DO need that protein drink, nauseating or not; more importantly, you need the wheelchair. While you detest the drink, take a deep breath and SWALLOW it (as quickly as you can!) and get into your wheelchair. You need the drink, you need the exercise, you need Paige. Do it for US, Laurie; we all want what is best for you! - To which you snort, 'Good intentions! Did YOU willingly take castor oil as a kid?' <g> But I'm serious!

But, we have now established that I do *not need* a protein drink and that I *do need* the wheelchair. I do know that you are serious, Shel, truly.

As far as Las Vegas is concerned I am so wishing I could be going with you, but at this point, I'm not sure you can make the trip with or without me. It is less than four months away, and as I have said, you have yet to get into the wheelchair with the Hoyer, let alone started working with the slide board to self-transfer. Who will make the trip with you once April arrives and how do you foresee this working out?

Actually, given the activities at CorFlu, I won't be able to go, if I can't fend for myself. So, at this point, barring a miracle on my end, the trip will have to be cancelled.

I don't want to upset you, but I am concerned. You need to be making calls to find more help either from family, friends or part-time nursing ... there are plenty of programs you can get involved in to receive help; Paige just isn't doing enough.

And I am searching for help, I just seem to be coming up against blocks. For example, Humana gave me the contact info for a place in Southfield, and they do not come any further West than Waterford! So, I'm looking, I'm just not finding.

Have you considered meals-on-wheels for lunch-time meals?

I have, but I think I need to be in the wheelchair to let them in. And, if I'm in the wheelchair, I can fix my own meals.

Have you found someone to come in and work on the taxes for you? I know there is a lot of paperwork, but its something that HAS to be done in order to receive things like Medicaid and food stamps, as well as getting extra nursing help. There are programs out there to help you and I'm sure you can research on your iPad what they are.

Step 01: Finding all of the info Bill squirreled away, which requires the wheelchair. I think I'm beginning to see a pattern forming...

You cannot continue to be in the bed all day everyday waiting on Paige to come late in the am and late at night. That is simply not enough; you need more and you deserve more. Please, please don't take this the wrong way; I am just seriously concerned for you and what is to come, and being that this is my only option to help you at this point, I'd like to do what I can.

You are right: breakfast at 11AM-3:00PMish, and dinner at 9-11:30PMish, is driving me bonkers. I know that you are concerned and I really don't want you to be since you have your hands full at the moment.

Let me know what your plan is and what I can do to help you get what you need I am always available to make calls or research on your behalf if you would like, but as I said in the meantime I would really like to have those few phone numbers and make some calls to help you communicate (not that you don't, but as I said I know you never want to be a burden, and, therefore you tend to sugar coat things) to those who love you!!!!

I'm still trying to figure out a plan. And you must be wrong about my sugar-coating things, or I wouldn't be told told to be nicer to others.

**With much love and concern
Kacey**

"But can one still make resolutions when one is over forty?! I live according to twenty-year-old habits." (Andre Gide)

The protein issue is driving me nuts. According to the RDA chart, I need 90 grams of protein per day.

So, let's see what we have:

4AM-9AM: Lucky Charms; Banana; Chocolate Fudge Pop-tart package (Total: 9.29g)

11AMish: 2 Hardboiled Eggs, Bacon, Bagel, and Yogurt (Total: 25.61g)

1PM-9PM: 3 Uncrustables, Tuna Salad Snack Kit, Banana, 3 Mandarin Oranges (Total: 29.14g)

11PMish: A: Steak (35g) Potato/Pasta (6-8g), Peas (9g) (Total: 50-52g); B: Chicken (26.7g), Potato/Pasta (6-8g), Peas (9g) (Total: 41.7-43.7g)

So, up until dinner, I take in 60.04g. On my lowest day, then, I take in 101.74g of protein, and on my highest days, 112.04g. So, *why* do I need to consume *three* Ensure high-protein (25g each) drinks a day? I did—in the spirit of compromise and being nice (and I am really *hating* that word)—offer to drink *one* Ensure Immunity Health drink, which has 9g of protein, but a lot of other vitamins and minerals that, given that I have the immunity system of a compromised two-year-old (according to Dr. Bali), makes a lot more sense to me. My compromise was met with a counteroffer of *four* high protein drinks a day. Now, where is the compromise here???

ShelVy: Mmmm ... Gotta admit that's a good point, Laurie! ... And no, that is NO compromise!!!

Okay, that makes me feel better. Thanks, Shelby!

Karen: This just confirms my opinion that she's doing a lot of these things just to make it more convenient for herself. There's no reason for you to be drinking all those protein drinks and taking in more calories that you don't need. There's nothing about protein that's going to magically cure you. Now, if she were insisting upon something high in the vitamins and minerals you need, she'd have a point. IMO she's asking you to do that because she knows you won't, and that gives her an excuse not to do the things you want to do.

And that's why I tossed it out there.

Karen: That Ensure Immune Health Drink sounds like a good thing for you, though.

And I *am* willing to choke down *one* of those a day.

ShelVy: Laurie, have you yet checked to see what sort of public service help might be available??? I've heard of Meals On Wheels actually bringing food in to a bedridden patient, around here, anyway.

Yes, I have their contact info! But No, no office staff was in today—you know: New Year's Day (observed)

ShelVy: We'll be waiting!!! ...Them being closed reminds me of something local. I have a friend with ruined kidneys who has to have dialysis three times a week. They don't pay any attention to holidays; he goes in every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, regardless of holidays... They don't go for the 'alternate day' routine, either.

"The gardening season officially begins on January 1st, and ends on December 31." (Marie Huston)

Tuesday, 03 January: Today's winner of the Feline Daybreak 500: Typographical Error.

Ponderence of the Day: "Here's a prediction. In a couple of weeks' time, UK newspapers will tell us that January 16th is the unhappiest day of the year. They'll call it Blue Monday. Just one problem. They won't be right. Blue Monday was an idea brewed up by a public relations agency for their travel industry client a few years, based on a purely theoretical formula dreamt up by a part-time psychology tutor. As you might imagine, Moodscope is perhaps in a better position to know which days are, on average, the unhappiest than someone creating their own theory (we've got rather a lot of data). According to our figures, last year's unhappiest day actually fell in March. But one day in January did come pretty close. The 3rd. Oops. For many there can be a bit of a crash after Christmas and New Year, and thanks to public holidays in lieu, January 3rd this year will be the first day 'back to normal' after a long break. I don't tell you this to depress you however. Look upon it instead as something of a weather forecast. If I'd warned you that today would be cold and wet, you'd be daft to leave home without a coat and umbrella. In a similar way, perhaps it's wise to go into today watching out for your own wellbeing (what can you do to lighten your load a little?) and also being aware that plenty of others could be in this same low-mood boat. So batten down the hatches. The good news, though, is that by so-called Blue Monday, things will already be quite a bit better."

Goal for the Day: Set realistic goals for yourself.

Today I'm grateful for: a) Reepicheep—for being so good natured and loving; b) Juan—for being willing to run errands for me, even though he's exhausted from working; c) Danno and Wyatt—for being willing to help however they can, whenever I need them; d) Dave—for giving me an excellent laugh with the thought of living in 2150; and e) the new blossoms on the azalea.

"On the tenth day of Christmas, my true love sent to me: ten Lords a Leaping, nine Ladies Dancing, eight Maids a-Milking, seven Swans a-Swimming, six Geese a-Laying, five Golden Rings, four Calling Birds, three French Hens, two Turtle Doves, and a Partridge in a Pear Tree."

Moodscope Score (out of 100): "Right then Laurie. Here's how it looks. The score for you today is **2%**, which is 55% less than your highest result to date of 57%. Your emotions seem to have been pretty steady since you last took the test and scored 5%. It's clear that this is not a very good time for you, and matters seem to have worsened. You would possibly benefit from talking things through with someone who is close to you. Failing that, it may be worth seeking help from your doctor. Don't try to sort this out on your own, but do remember that you've been better in the past and will get back to feeling good again before too long. Your score has dropped today compared to last time and you are actually below your average of 27.9%. You haven't scored lower than this. Here's to a more favourable result next time."

::sigh:: why am I now *dreading* tomorrow?

"Nature's first green is gold,/Her hardest hue to hold,/Her early leaf's a flower;/But only so an hour./Then leaf subsides to leaf./So Eden sank to grief,/So dawn goes down to day./Nothing gold can stay." (Robert Frost, *Nothing Gold Can Stay*)

RotBLMAO!!! My favorite gossip was back at Mobile Doctors today, and I now know why Jill from Dr. Idiot's office hasn't called me back. She transferred to the Chicago office after a disagreement with Dr. Idiot because of Dr. Idiot's failure to return patient calls, pharmacy calls, and her failure to do well, anything.

The new coordinator for Dr. Idiot took my information and noted I was last seen on 02 December, and "the Doctors try to see all their patients every four weeks, give a week or so, so it may be five or six weeks, but she will see you this month!"

SheIVy: Good for Jillian, bad for you ...

Karen: Yes, but will she actually DO anything useful, such as fill all the prescriptions you need? And will she call in the one(s) she forgot to do at her last visit? And are they going to discipline her in any way for her gross incompetence?

ShelVy: 'Gross'? It's gross to the max!!!

Uhh, not likely? But I have in calls to two other agencies, as I discovered I was discharged by Affinity Home Care by the PT on 16 August. When the PT said she was discharging me, both Bill and I thought it was from Physical Therapy—not the entire agency!!

I really liked the first place I called [courtesy of Humana] and, they will help to co-ordinate Meals on Wheels!

Karen: Good for you! I'm glad to see you are making progress!

ShelVy: Sounds promising!

Juan is doubtful that anyone can take care of me the way they can—and he is right—but said he'll be watching carefully. He regretted those words almost five minutes later.

Karen: Juan is probably right, but since they have so many problems of their own right now, it's good for you to have something like Meals on Wheels. At least that takes some pressure off them.

ShelVy: Agreed!!!

Karen: And I hope you did what I said about making sure Bill's name and SSN are off all of your bank accounts. That's VERY important.

Yes and no. Yes, I filled out and submitted the paperwork, as I had to open a new account, *but* I can't close out our joint account until Social Security processes my request to switch the direct deposit. So far they're saying maybe it will be completed by my April check.

Ed: Good for you. Paperwork has a mind of its own. Hang in there.

Karen: Well, keep an eye on that account and move the money over to the account that's in your name alone immediately every month. Don't let anything but a minimum balance sit in that joint account.

05 Jan: Ed: Again, sage advice. It would behoove you to listen.

05 Jan: Karen: Thanks Ed. Please promise us that you'll do it, Laurie.

05 Jan: I promise; I had already filled out the paperwork to transfer anything over the \$5.00 minimum.

05 Jan: Karen: Excellent! Keep track and make sure they do it right away.

"And finally Winter, with its bitin', whinin' wind, and all the land will be mantled with snow." (Roy Bean)

I also realized one reason why I'm questioning my sanity so much. Last night, I was talking with Mercedes, our former office manager, and she noted something very interesting: every time she asked how I was doing, I'd say something to the effect that X says I need a grief counselor to talk with or Y says my head isn't straight. She reminded me that, I have to know when I'm a danger to myself or to others—well, most others—but that I have to stop listening to other people trying to say that they know best. (No, the irony wasn't lost on her.)



Since I've promised to not endanger myself, she continued, she knows suicide isn't on the table. She also then pointed out that: yes, I do need to talk to people and not isolate myself as I tend to want (hence my thinking about pulling out of SNAPS, moving away from the kids, changing the phone number, etc, etc, etc); yes, I do need to

write; yes, I do need to cry, to scream, and to express myself no matter what; yes, I have to cut myself some slack, especially in regard to trying to be a nicer person; and, most importantly, I need to do *whatever* I have to do to get to Vegas.

ShelVy: ... Please clue me in; 'Mercedes'??? 'Former office manager'? As in ... ? She sounds like a wise and intelligent person, but I feel I'm floundering about in unknown waters ...

Sorry, Mercedes was our office manager from 1994-1997(?). She was studying to be a massage therapist (as opposed to a masseuse) and gave me regular deep-tissue massages and Bill neonatal massages (first time he received one, she tossed him a sheet and sent him in to the bathroom to remove his shirt and shorts. Ten minutes later he came out, having origami'd the sheet into a "diaper." He was quite affronted when Mercedes and I started giggling; the giggles turned into roars when he informed us that we would never know how hard it was, but he assumed Mercedes had wanted this as it was a neonatal massage, and well, any idiot could drape a sheet, he was trying to get into the spirit of the act.)

She became one of our closest friends. In fact, with Charlene, she is co-administer of the trust fund when I die everything is to be sold for to be put in place for the fur-kids and Em and Soph. She is also now the second contact on my Medical Power of Attorney and DNR.

ShelVy: Fascinating...and uproarious!!!

"Just as a dancer, turning and turning,/may fill the dusty light with the soft swirl/of her flying skirts, our weeping willow—/now old and broken, creaking in the breeze—/turns slowly, slowly in the winter sun,/sweeping the rusty roof of the barn/with the pale blue lacework of her shadow." (Ted Kooser, *Winter Morning Walks*)

ShelVy: Remember "The Great Pretender," Laurie?

The Platters? Not so much, as it was almost a dozen years before I was born. But, I loved Freddie Mercury's 1987 (?) cover.

ShelVy: Part of it goes, "My needs are such - I pretend too much! I'm lonely, but no one can tell..."

Right ...

ShelVy: (As an aside, when I was in my twenties I was on a date with a girl I had gone with a lot. The song came on the radio and she said, "Listen to that." When the song was over she said, "That is you if you think I love you." So I remember the song well...)

Shelby, that was *cold!* And slightly depressing. Where are we going here?

ShelVy: ... And while I remember the song, Laurie - I can't remember the name of the gal what dumped me! I cried a lot when Betsy died. At first, it was with my wife; then, wanting to appear strong, I would go off by myself to cry, sometimes at the cemetery... So I unnerstand the crying; it isn't a sign of weakness, but of real grief. BUT - While time DOESN'T heal all wounds, it does make the hurt ... bearable. I'm manfully resisting calling you and singing that song ... ANYwee, I think you're guilty of that; you're pretending to YOURSELF! You have convinced yourself you can't do anything to improve.

Improve what, specifically? I see a lot—too many, in fact—things that I need to improve.

Don't misunderstand; I am thoroughly aware of all your problems, and they are MANY - but I think you have the inner strength to overcome much of it.

Been visiting a smoking suite to prepare for CorFlu? Inner strength is a gift no one has ever said I had.

"Adrift in a world of my own/I play the game but to my real shame/You've left me to dream all alone." Yes, Bill is gone - but you're NOT alone!!! It will be a REAL shame if you don't push yourself even harder. DON'T GIVE UP!!!

I know I'm not alone; I'm not sure why I'm so morbid and lonely right now. I mean, one of my friends noted that I hadn't, as far as she could tell, really broken down. I'm not sure what crying three or more hours a night is. Maybe I am putting up a better front than I thought. I guess the question then becomes, is the front too much of a pretend?

On what should I be pushing myself?

ShelVy: ... I musta gone to bed about the time you sent your email. Had waited a bit, then started yawning. Been up since 8:30, so I optimistically crawled in ... and found myself - in my mind - singing the song. In an attempt to derail my thots, started thinking about NAG15 and then found myself thinking about a really GREAT bit of a story a new writer had sent me. Started expanding on the story ... then the song was going thru my mind again. Tossed. Turned. YOU know the drill! Told myself to go to sleep. You know how

much good THAT does! Finally got up, and found your response. Improve what? Your self-respect, mostly. I know you aren't Wonder Woman, so you have physical problems you can't rise above - but quit putting yourself down! Believe in your own self-worth. Regretfully, I see no solution to your attending Corflu without Kacey. My daughter, Cheryl, volunteered to help you while we're there - but we're getting there Friday afternoon and leaving Monday. Besides, that won't help in your trip to and from Vegas, which will be time-consuming. I really hate missing the chance to meet you again, but I see no solution. I guess I'VE been guilty of being a Great Pretender ... DRAT, ShelVy, you're getting maudlin! Let me mention something I bring up at the beginning of **NAG15**: After sending 14 off, I decided to double-check on the enormous number of hits on Joyce Katz...and only came up with around SIX million matches. Then I realized I was using Yahoo Search and switched to Google. Again, over forty-one million! Why the diff? I haven't the slightest idea! Then I tried Bill on Google ... and got a real puny match-up; shifted to Yahoo for Bill and there was the near one million five!!! Google was generous to Joyce; Yahoo was generous to Bill. Really weird! Yeah, yeah, I know they use different ways of Searching, but ... but ... All I can say is, Weird!!! Unnerstand. I'll go back to bed and try NOT to sing it to myself!!! <g> or possibly <ig>...

Probably a good idea. I'm not much company right now.

"Oh-oh, yes I'm the great pretender/Pretending that I'm doing well/My need is such/I pretend too much/I'm lonely but no one can tell//Oh-oh, yes I'm the great pretender/Adrift in a world of my own/I've played the game/but to my real shame/You've left me to grieve all alone//Too real is this feeling of make-believe/Too real when I feel/what my heart can't conceal//Yes I'm the great pretender/Just laughin' and gay like a clown/I seem to be/what I'm not, you see/I'm wearing my heart like a crown/Pretending that you're still around/Too real is this feeling of make-believe/Too real when I feel what my heart can't conceal//Yes I'm the great pretender/Just laughin' and gay like a clown/I seem to be what I'm not, you see/I'm wearing my heart like a crown/Pretending that you're still around" (Buck Ram)

Havin' A Heatwave ... A Tropical Heatwave. That's right, boys and girls! My little section of Southeast Michigan is currently at a warm 4-degrees accounting for windchill, and 19-degrees if you can find shelter from the wind. Watch out though: a mere 10 miles away, the temp is a mere 3-degrees WC and 16.1-degrees actual. Shed those parkas, grab a Hawaiian shirt, it's time to party on the beach!

ShelVy: Quit braggin', Laurie!!! <g> Last nite we had a hard freeze (thirty degrees) and tonite it's 'sposed to be a degree or two colder!

"I've got sunshine on a cloudy day./When it's cold outside, I got the month of May. ..." Seriously, though, I'm glad the cloud cover is breaking up, as tomorrow morning—between 3-5AM—is the FIRST meteor shower of the year: The Quadrantids ("Quad-RON-tihds"). The meteors will be coming out of the northern portion of the sky, between a somewhat obscure constellation called Boötes and the handle of the Big Dipper.

I loved the commentary from *Star & Telescope*: "... The second problem is that you're watching in the night's coldest hours, in the year's coldest time, under a wide-open clear sky that will also expose you to maximum radiational cooling. On top of that, if you're lying motionless in a reclining chair or on the ground (or the snow), you're not going to be generating much body heat.

"So make it an adventure! This year the morning of January 4th offers very good circumstances for North Americans, especially in the East. The Quadrantids are predicted to peak around 7h or 8h Universal Time, which is 2 or 3 a.m. Eastern Standard Time. The waxing gibbous Moon sets about 3 a.m. local time wherever you are, leaving the sky fully dark until dawn begins around 5:30 or 6.

"Plan a proper expedition. You want to be snug in many layers from head to feet with no pinches or thin spots. **An electric hot pad buttoned inside your coat will help, with a long extension cord back to the house.**" [emphasis mine]

ShelVy: Ah, yes; many's the time I've driven away from city lights to enjoy celestial lights... However, as I no longer drive, I'd need to talk my daughter Diane into it, and she's usually asleep at that time, recovering from the day's strenuous activities...

Tech support: How may I help you?

Customer: I'm writing my first email.

Tech support: OK, and what seems to be the problem?

Customer: Well, I have the letter 'a' in the address, but how do I get the little circle around it?

Danno and Wyatt came over to put the plywood under the mattress for me. They also brought in the UPS deliveries: I have my new drug box, and my new weekly holder! Yea! Means everything will be in one non-translucent box!!

"As winter strips the leaves from around us, so that we may see the distant regions they formerly concealed, so old age takes away our enjoyments only to enlarge the prospect of the coming eternity." (Jean Paul)

::snort:: Wyatt's little girlfriend was all over him the minute she heard him at the window. She sent him sprawling twice, then sat on his back and licked his ear. Danno was watching with barely concealed amusement as Wyatt sighed, snagged her, and rolled over onto his back while Peep wriggled with ecstasy. "Wy, does she do that all the time?"

"No, but I usually scoop her up when I come in, so she doesn't go out. This behavior is just 'cause she's feeling ignored. She's worse than some of the girls at school, but a little cuter, too."

At that, Danno started laughing.

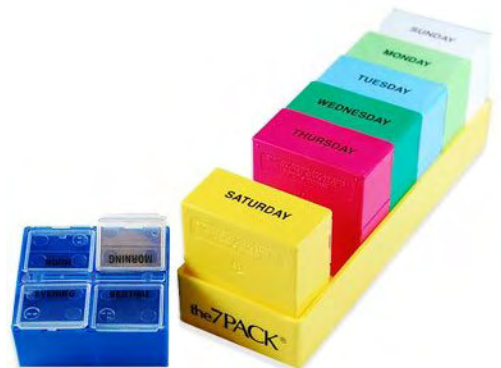
SheIVy: LOL!!!

Karen: LMAO! Thanks for the laugh! Oh, and I'm glad they put that plywood in so you can change your bed. Just saw an ad for Boost Nutritional Supplement drink, which says it has lots of vitamins and minerals. Thought you might want to compare it to that Ensure drink for content. Also see if you like the taste any better.

I don't; at Danto's they tried them all, and actually started a betting pool of how long I would keep each down. Ensure was the longest at nine minutes.

Ed: Nine minutes. Sounds like a record considering that stuff.

[04 Jan: I *love* my new weekly dispenser! I did my usual "knock the week's pills to the floor" routine, and they did *not* spill out. When I hesitantly picked the container up with the Unger, I was holding my breath, fearful that the individual days would tumble out and burst open, but it did not happen!]



"Autumn arrives in early morning, but spring at the close of a winter day." (Elizabeth Bowen)

Dave reviewed a half dozen or so movies, but the one that caught my attention was one I had wanted to record, but wasn't able to: *Daleks: Invasion Earth 2150 A.D.*

Dave: I have only seen little snippets of *Dr. Who* - the TV show. From that perspective, this was a funny (in a bad way) film with terrible special effects. The storyline is awful and the acting is only slightly better. I think *Dr. Who's* special effects are intentionally bad, but they could have spent a few bucks on making them passable. It didn't entertain me. If this is supposed to be 2150, I'm glad I won't be around.

You'd only be 194, Dave ... Are you certain you won't be around? Who knows what medical science may come up with!

Dave: Actually I'll be 183 or 184 (birthday is July 14). I'm not optimistic I'll be around.

Stephen: I always loved the Daleks. I imitate their automated speech whenever possible. The way they say "Hew-Mahns" makes me laugh every time. The episode in English parlance however, would be "silly." Why blast out earth's core, thereby destroying the planet when Earth is the perfect place to store your slaves? They're cute little Art-Deco Hoover vacuums, but intelligent?

Dave: I think companies hire Daleks to do the voices on their automated phone systems. I was on the phone today with one of them and laughed to myself. I'm a *Dr. Who* virgin so I was looking at the Daleks and thinking, "You're fucking kidding me. They blow deadly fire-extinguisher gas and look like vacuum cleaners. Also, they can be killed by flipping them over." Earthlings must have become incompetent in war by the mid-22nd century if these little things could take over. Yeah, don't get bogged down by the plot of the movie. There's no logical reason to destroy a planet you control.

Karen: The Daleks are a LOT more impressive in the current tv series. The early *Dr. Who* shows were known and loved for the campy cut rate special effects. :)

Ed: Thank you, Karen. I'm going to let you in on a few facts about the movie. I got them from an old issue of *Filmfax*, where there was an article about the *Dr. Who* films and

Peter Cushing. Cushing said the *Dr. Who* films were his favorites, because his children and grandchildren, not to mention many, many other children, loved them. Because his grandkids were so gung ho over him playing the good Doctor, Cushing took less than his usual rate. Both films were financial hits, but the company was run so haphazardly that financing was often difficult and a third film could not be financed. The *Dr. Who* shows were indeed known and loved for their rotten special effects, effects that made the ones in the original *Star Trek* seem impressive by comparison. BUT people didn't tune in to *Dr. Who* or *Star Trek* for the f/x. They tunes in for the characters and stories, which were oft times heads and tails above comparable shows. The Daleks were a definite influence on *Star Trek's* Borgs and R2D2 of *Star Wars*, George Lucas being a huge *Dr. Who* fan. Do not - ever- judge a movie's technical effects by today's standards.

Dave: I thought the series was known for its awful special effects and for being campy. But I would think they'd spend a little money on a movie. It looked like the studio spent as much money as a Poverty Row studio did. To be fair, I'm sure *Dr. Who* is an acquired taste and one best developed when young.

Karen: Thanks Ed.

04 Jan: Ed: The studio, Amicus, was the English equivalent of a Poverty Row studio. They gained fame in the 60s and 70s for a series of cheaply made horror films, especially anthology films, based on the Ealing model (*Dead of Night*). The studio was founded, I think, by Milton Subotsky and Max Rosenberg. Subotsky had worked for Sam Katzman, the L.B. Mayer of Z-movies. Their interpretation of *Dr. Who* was slipshod at best, with the only plus being that the films were made in technicolor, whereas the BBC series was still in B/W. In the series the Daleks' lights flashed when they were speaking, and in the films they just flashed because, in color, that made for a better effect. Cushing pointed this out, but was told to shut up and act. The money for Amicus films came from investors and each film needed to be backed by different investors, m it seems, because of sleight-of-hand accounting techniques. The company finally dissolved around 1976 or so, due to ongoing hostility between the partners. While they were around, however, they made many enjoyable episodes of celluloid trash. From what I read, the *Dr. Who* series was only supposed to last one season and it was budgeted low because of that. But the thing spread through word-of-mouth, and each new season was supposed to be the last. Finally, the BBC threw up their hands, admitted they had a hit on their hands and pumped more money into it, which is when it went from b/w to color. The bad part of all this is

that, now with a money-making hit on their hands, they began to supervise the writing, which always takes the creativity out. But it continued to survive nevertheless, because the writers and producer managed to get around the network bureaucrats. Oh, for those who did not know, the BBC has a long association with science fiction. In the 50s the six-part series was popular, with writers such as Nigel Kneale and Peter Key hammering out such classics as the Professor Quatermass series and others later made into feature films.

04 Jan: Dave: Thanks, Ed. Very interesting information.

Ah-HAH! Dave, I asked you when your birthday was awhile ago and you wouldn't tell. Sorry about aging you: Peep has discovered that pushing buttons on the calculator is a good way to make Mom put it down. (I totally freaked when I was trying to pay bills and couldn't figure out HOW a \$127 payment was going to overdraw my account. It wasn't until I took a good look at someone's stretching and did some reverse math to discover the \$127 had been turned into \$127,000. I was ready to call the gas company and yell at them about errors. Instead, we now have a new rule: only beings with opposable thumbs are allowed to touch the calculator.)

Karen: Excellent rule! My dog ordered thumbs from Amazon.com, but they are still on backorder. He's very disappointed. ;)

Dave: I didn't realize I was hiding my birthday. The French love me. They celebrate my birthday as a national holiday every year. For those who don't speak French, Bastille loosely translated into English means "We adore and worship David Skolnick so we are celebrating his birth." Strangely enough, the word "day" is the same in French and English.

I asked—and I can look it up, as it's in **B&B**—Dave. And, as someone who minored in history and French, I can tell you that Bastille Day is not called that in France. It's *jour de la prise de la Bastille* ::silly boy:: Mental Note: For birthday, get Dave French-English dictionary...

Dave: You're mistaken. The French love, honor, respect and admire me, and that holiday is about me.

David, I ... Well, hell ... ::*must be a nice person*:: ::*must be a nice person*:: ::*must be a nice person*:: ::*must be a nice person*:: I will not break a resolution three days in ... ::*must be a nice person*:: ::*must be a nice person*:: ::*must be a nice person*:: ::*must be a nice person*::

Karen: Pssst! Laurie - I think Dave is under the delusion that he is Jerry Lewis

There is a slight potential for resemblance to that concept—were one to ponder that carefully. (That was said nicely, right?)

Karen: LOL! Of course!

04 Jan: Thank you, Karen.

Ed: *Qui est plus fou?* The person who thinks all France loves him (Jerry Lewis Syndrome) or the person who quotes her blog as the final authority on reality?

Dave: A toss-up but I'll go with the latter.

Tu désires jouer avec quelqu'un qui est remise un question de sa santé mentale? Est que sage, Ed? Vraiment? J'ai retiré de cette Susan, et a ajouté ShelVy, car il suffit que mon questionnement Sur sa santé mentale séjour parmi les Quorum Sanity mini. En fait, Ed, tu n'as pas répondu à croire que mon loup garou fidèle accepte j'ai beson d'être commis.

Il est fou. Je peuvent être vraiment fous; mais, tu es ridicules. L'évitement de der quand son anniversaire est a été l'enregistrement de Dave choisissant de ne pas répondre à la question.

Ed: *En fait, je suis celui qui est fou pour même répondre à la déclaration originale. C'est encore encore 10 minutes de ma vie que je ne verrai jamais de nouveau.*

Salaud insensible. Après vanter comment aurais eu devenir un psy, je demander de l'aide, et tu choisit de ne pas répondre, puis le rejete que dix minutes tu n'obteindras pas de retour! Ce que l'enfer? J'essaie de trouver un thérapeute pour venir à la maison pour évaluer mon etre mental, et tu décides d'agir dans le cul! Félicitations, salaud! Tu es maintenant sur la même niveau que ma mère. Je n'ai pas dormi, et tu as maintenant je pleure a nouveau. J'espère que tu es heureux. Je ne parle pas avec tu pendant un certain temps. Salaud!

Ed: As a practicing bastard, I can only offer that "Hell is Other People." (Huis Clos)

You may stop practicing; you've achieved the lows of the profession.

ShelVy: ...But how can you PRACTICE being a bastard, Ed? Either your mother was married or she wasn't...<g>

Ed: I'll keep practicing until I get it right.

"Even in winter an isolated patch of snow has a special quality. (Andy Goldsworthy)

Disney Princess Recovery Programs: Not Just For Kids

Soraya Chemaly

Photos: [Dina Goldstein](#)

Posted: 12/30/11 02:30 PM ET

One morning early this year, I was in my kitchen with my three daughters, at least two of whom were simultaneously singing while the third was talking. So I was surprised when they suddenly stopped making any sounds at all. The TV was on, and Peggy Orenstein was being interviewed about her book, "Cinderella Ate My Daughter." My girls stared at me suspiciously.

"What's wrong?" I asked.

"Did you pay her to write this book, Mom?" one of them asked.

"Does she pay you to talk about it?" said another.

Neither was the case, but either could have been.

Ms. Orenstein's book chronicled her daughter's descent into what I think is a seductive, subversive, frilly pink princess hell. What starts off as sweet, cute and innocent in a three-year old ends up as narcissistic and shallow in an adult. And, as Orenstein points out, the confluence of technology and mass marketing has enabled a qualitatively different type of effect: a distillation of the princess stereotype to the exclusion of almost all else. (Yes, I know, we have three female supreme court justices ... they make for great toddler dress-up.)

Now, as the year ends, we have in response, Jennifer Hartstein's new book, *Princess Recovery*, an excellent how-to guide to empowering girls and freeing them from the oppressive messages being sent by a society obsessed with appearances and determined to sexualize girls at every turn. Hartstein clearly outlines the messages being sent to girls and boys by our princess saturated culture, namely:

- That girls and boys are fundamentally different
- That girls should be pretty
- That more stuff makes you a better person
- That girls will get rescued and don't have to take care of themselves
- That being hot is very, very important

The thing is, "princesses"—the toys, clothes, movies, games—are just the fuchsia-tinted tip of the iceberg. Look at the Annenberg School's recent media study or the movie "Miss Representation." Even though the movement for women's equality has yielded much success, media representations of women have remained

essentially as rigid and narrowly defined as they were in 1946. Women, especially young women, are marginalized and depicted first and foremost as sexual objects. Often, the protagonist's main weakness requires rescue. Girls are sexualized earlier and earlier and the deleterious effects are clear.

There are very few—if any—real, viable alternative role models for girls growing up in a \$4 billion dollar a year, 26,000 princess product world (and that's just Disney). Parents, adults are literally buying it, in movies, books, games, clothes hook, line and sinker.

Take a look at this media kit target market description from the Disney Princess magazine for 3-8 year old girls who "dream about being little princesses."

- "She loves princesses, fairy tales and uses her imagination a lot! She enjoys doing activities with her parents.
- She is connected, through cable television (72 percent), the Internet (60 percent) and her mobile phone (62 percent).
- She shops with her parents at the mall (92 percent) and helps them choose which brands to buy (76 percent)
- She sees the brands she wants to buy through Disney's Princess magazine (62 percent).
- She loves reading Disney's Princess and does the activities with her mommy (72 percent). They even love joining promos from advertisers (90 percent)!
- She (or mommy) will surely buy the next issue of Disney's *Princess* magazine (96 percent)"

And now, Disney has a new princess, Sofia the First. Like the rest of the princesses she features a curvy bod (no internal organs here) and apparently real-life problems that toddler girls can understand. According to Nancy Kanter, SVP Original Programming and General Manager of Disney Junior Worldwide, Sofia the First will be a "peer-to-peer princess." Millions of people are going to put their daughters in front of TVs, computers and Ipads so she can take advantage of Disney's new educational program. Then, they're going to buy the clothes, toys, books and other products for an even younger set of girls. What red-blooded American girlhood is complete without at least one sparkly tiara?



Forget girls, parents are the people who need a Princess Recovery Program. Disney knows that little girls aren't buying their products alone. Moms, dads, grandparents, aunts, uncles, well-meaning friends—these are the market for these products. How many times have you heard the words "Look at that little princess"? How often is a little girl deluged by the oppressive pink toy, game or dress of the day because "everyone knows" that girls are born dreaming, as Disney says, "about being little princesses"? It doesn't take much extrapolation, particularly in the age of celebutants, Khardashians and *America's Next Top Model*(s) to understand that adult women are just these little girls all grown up ... and they'd like to stay princesses.

As for moms, last week, I wrote that we should strongly consider finding bonding experiences with daughters that aren't based in beauty rituals like spa treatments, shopping trips, manicure parties and toddler pedicures. These activities seem like fun, but they may have long-term effects that aren't so desirable—many of which Hartstein describes to great effect in her book.

No one really tells girls the story of what happens once the princess grows up. But, girls figure that out on their own. Lots of girls, as they move from girlhood to adulthood, feel the need to move from one stereotype to another. And then what? They start rejecting the "innocent" pink princesses of their childhood in favor of self-objectified "sexy," "bad girl" models that represents "adult" female sexuality in mainstream mass culture. Then we get to slut-shame them.

Canadian photographer Dina Goldstein also spurred by her three-year old daughter's fixation on princesses during a time when her own mother was ill, created her powerful and fascinating series *Fallen Princesses*. These photos, featuring, for example, a harried, exhausted Snow White drowning in babies and household

chaos, a boozy Cinderella sitting, dejected, in a honky tonk bar and a machine-gun toting Jasmine standing in an exploding, desert battlefield, tell the story of what happens after the prince rescues the princess. Goldstein's images are photographic narratives that subvert of the myth of happiness and force viewers to reconsider the "ever after."

Which is where adults come in again. It's why Hartstein's *Princess Recovery* program is just as relevant, if not more so, for women who are experiencing much of what she describes in her book. Take a look, for example, at our culture's endless quest for youth and beauty, particularly in women.

In the 2006 book, *Beauty Junkies*, *New York Times* writer Alex Kuczynski wrote not only about her personal addiction to plastic surgery, but about the culture in which a \$15 billion

dollar a year cosmetic surgery industry was exploding. Last week's Muff March in London, raising awareness of the growing popularity of "the Barbie" vaginal cosmetic surgery, highlights how far that trend has gone in recent years.

Is it just a coincidence that during roughly the same decade that the Princess market exploded, the nation saw a fivefold increase in (unnecessary) cosmetic procedures?

Most parents want to find ways for their children, both boys and girls, to be strong, self-sufficient, confident, kind and empathetic people. Yet, their investment in what they think of as "harmless" toys, movies, clothes and games is subverting their very efforts. We persist in supporting a culture that undermines these very goals and pretend that one thing has nothing to do with the other. Throughout the course of my daughters' young lives, I, like many other like-minded "overly serious" parents, was repeatedly told "Lighten up!" "It's just a toy," "What's the harm?" and made to feel like a humorless, stick in the mud for my efforts. Good thing I like mud.

Harstein's book is an exceptionally useful tool for helping parents navigate these issues—both on behalf of their daughters and themselves.

"I have never seen snow and do not know what winter means." (Duke Kahanamoku)

I think ~~our~~ my oldest son might be gay—not that there's anything wrong with that! Bill and I had discussed this possibility when we caught him mounting Bopper in Las Vegas multiple times; he never touched Speckle.

Juan has said he'll be watching things around here carefully. He regretted those words almost five minutes later. He had come down just to give me the receipt and cash from doing the credit union run. He looked at me quizzically when he saw my face, and then scrambled to pick up Typo. "Dude! That's your bro! You don't mount a bro!!!"

He then went home to get Soph off the bus and about three hours later he was back with pizza and tenders. I told him thank you, and reminded him that he and Kacey were not responsible for my meals. "Yeah, but I—we—I don't like you eating so late."

All of a sudden, Reep let out a screech that I'm certain Dave possibly heard in Ohio! Juan whirled and scooped up both boys, dropping Reep in my lap, and holding Typo in the air. "Bud, I told you: keep that thing put away! Do I need to take you to a strip club or ... Nevermind! Just keep it holstered, Dude!" My face was buried in Reep's fur. "I'm going to go clean their box now, Aunt Laurie. C'mon, Perv!"

The frightening part: Typo followed him!

"I have been one acquainted with the night/I have walked out in rain—and back in rain/I have out-walked the furthest city light//I have looked down the saddest city lane/I have passed by the watchman on his beat/And dropped my eyes, unwilling to explain//I have stood still and stopped the sound of feet/When far away an interrupted cry/Came over houses from another street,//But not to call me back or say goodbye;/And further still at an unearthly height;/One luminary clock against the sky//Proclaimed the time was neither wrong nor right./I have been one acquainted with the night." (Robert Frost, *Acquainted with the Night*)

Wednesday, 04 January: Today's winner of the Feline Daybreak 500: Mom; race cancelled due to no participants!

Ponderence of the Day: "Get fit. Don't get fat. Give up smoking. Take up running. It's that time again when many make New Year's resolutions, often to find them sadly neglected soon after they've been made. Now I think this is frequently because we have unrealistically high hopes for the changes we hope to see in ourselves, and probably underestimate the stubbornness of the human brain. Sometimes it

can feel as though it's taking super-human effort to shift behaviours that have become ingrained habits. That's why I like the stance that our friends at [Action for Happiness](#) have taken on resolutions, which is to recognise that you're more likely to stick to something that makes you feel pretty good, pretty immediately. In particular they draw attention to actions you can take right now which will boost your mood today (and tomorrow). Nothing like an instant win, is there? The Director of Action for Happiness, Mark Williamson, has overseen the drawing up of ten excellent (and more certain to be kept) resolutions from which to take your pick. They include excellent ideas such as finding ways to make exercise fun and sociable, and writing down three good things that happen each day. You'll find the whole list [here](#). I reckon you'll like the cut of their jib. I know I do."

Goal for the Day: Do a 'stress rehearsal.' Prepare for stressful events by imagining yourself feeling calm and handling the situation well.

Today I'm grateful for: a) Sumatriptan; b) Sleep mask; c) Excedrin Migraine; d) Ear plugs; and e) Pepsi.

"On the eleventh day of Christmas, my true love sent to me: eleven Pipers Piping, ten Lords a Leaping, nine Ladies Dancing, eight Maids a-Milking, seven Swans a-Swimming, six Geese a-Laying, five Golden Rings, four Calling Birds, three French Hens, two Turtle Doves, and a Partridge in a Pear Tree."

Moodscope Score (out of 100): "Right Laurie. This is how it's looking. Your score today is **2%**, which is 55% below your best-ever result of 57%. Life appears to have been fairly level for you since you last took the test and scored 2%. These are not the best of times for you, but looking on the bright side at least matters haven't got any worse. By applying yourself you'll find that you can make things better for yourself once more. This will only be the case once you agree to let the light back in again. A challenge, but you have been a lot better in times past and can get back there again. In spite of having a score that's below your average of 24.6%, take comfort that it hasn't dropped since last time. You've not been lower than this before. Let's hope things are looking better for you next time."

Whoooooo-Hooooo!!!! I stabilized!!!

Karen: Congratulations!

SheIVy: There y'are!!! Look for the good side of EVerything! <g>

Don't I usually? Or has that been slipping, too?

Ed: Nothing is slipping.

Thank you, Ed.

ShelVy: Of COURSE you do, Laurie!!! I wuz just congratulating you on keeping up a Good Thing!!! <g>

Okay, she said doubtfully.

"The snow is lying very deep./My house is sheltered from the blast./I hear each muffled step outside,/I hear each voice go past./But I'll not venture in the drift/Out of this bright security,/Till enough footsteps come and go/To make a path for me." (Agnes Lee)

It's Dave's Day! I know this because it is National Trivia Day!! (It's also National Spaghetti Day!)

ShelVy: ... and I read somewhere that YESTERDAY was National Science Fiction Day ...

Karen: LOL! That might be more appropriate!

It was on the second; it's always on Asimov's purported birthday. Check out: [National Science Fiction Day](#).

Karen: Thanks! :)

Ed: You're welcome! :)

"I prefer winter and fall, when you feel the bone structure of the landscape. Something waits beneath it; the whole story doesn't show. " (Andrew Wyeth)

I apologize for keeping yesterday's discussion in French. When I was little, it was a way my Dad had to allow me to get downright furious without (totally) breaking my mom's rule that young ladies don't express themselves through their tempers. Mom didn't understand any French, so she knew that I was upset, but not how much. My Dad was surprised only in how quickly I picked up on that; he was also surprised how much I picked up from him language-wise. Bill learned—relatively quickly—that a French profanity equaled a crossing point where I didn't need to be at, so, that's when he would call a

break and we'd go for a walk. I don't resort to French often, but when I do, it means that I have one nerve left, and the person the French is directed toward is on it and needs to back off.

Anyway, Ed triggered way too many buttons with his "*Qui est plus fou?* [Who is crazier?] The person who thinks all France loves him (Jerry Lewis Syndrome) or the person who quotes her blog as the final authority on reality?"

Since I had emailed him privately several times regarding my mental state, tossing around the word "crazy"—even as he meant Dave ::grin::—was too much. And, I didn't mean to imply that my journal is "the final authority on reality" as it isn't. Hell, I'm not sure it totally tracks my reality; but I knew it would be faster to do a search in **B&B** for the rough time period of when I asked Dave when his birthday is than in the mountain of electrons in email we'd disturbed since I had asked.

As for the French, I'm certain I put in wrong tenses, as my finger was moving faster than my brain and it's been awhile (1997) since I've had conversations with anyone in French. What I tried to say: "You want to play with someone who is questioning her sanity? Is that wise, Ed? Really? I removed Susan and added ShelVy because I'd just as soon keep this among the mini Sanity Quorum [for now]. In fact, Ed, you haven't responded to my emails leaving me to believe that my faithful werewolf believes I should be committed. He [Dave] is crazy. I may be truly crazy; but you are ridiculous. Not saying when his birthday was, when I have the record of the question, was Dave choosing to avoid the question."

Ed's response of "In fact, I'm the one who's crazy to even address the original statement. It is still another ten minutes of my life that I will never see again."

And, in truth, having him be letter-perfect with his French, when I knew mine was garbled, didn't help my mood. "Insensitive bastard! After boasting about how you could have become a shrink, and I ask you for help, and you choose not to respond, and then bemoan that talking to me is ten minutes of your life you won't get back! What the hell? You know I'm trying to find a therapist to come to the house to evaluate my mental health, and you decide to act the ass! Congratulations, bastard, you're now on a level with my mother. I can't sleep and you now have me crying. I hope you're happy. I don't want to talk with you for awhile. Bastard!"

So, for a bit, until my nose stops bleeding and my head stops pounding, I'm leaving Ed off *this* [discussion], hence the subject name change.

ShelVy: Unnerstand all too well, Laurie - And here I'm off on my 'blessed be' attitude again, but I DO see good in Ed - and not just 'cos he agrees with me politically! I won't say, 'Cut him some slack,' not exactly - but, well, count to ten (ten thousand???) As far as sanity goes, I think it's a given we are ALL a tad 'over the edge'; it's just a matter of degree. Personally I feel you're as sane as I am. For what that's worth ...

I do see good in Ed. I will always love Ed. I just needed a sanity break, and that's what I'm taking.

ShelVy: Good!!!

Karen: Yeah, I understand completely. Take lots of deep breaths, listen to some soothing music if you can, and try to relax. Ed is overly fond of aggravating others, and pushing their buttons - I know it's not easy, but try to forget about that and think of pleasant things. Hugs!!

Anyway, thank you Karen. And I truly am sorry for going off on Ed in front of all of you. I should have just let the comment go, but it just hit too close to home. Or taken the dispute to just him. I am sorry; I will try to handle him better in the future, I promise.

"If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?" (Percy Bysshe Shelley)

Right now, I'm trying to get rid of my migraine. When Paige came in at 11:30AM, she noted my eye-mask was being half worn by Peep, and asked how bad it is. I told her, and she immediately jumped on the Pepsi as the cause, even though I hadn't had any Pepsi for eight hours. (She wants me down to 12oz of Pepsi a day. Oh so not happening. And I do drink juice and water, but the water has to be really cold, and that doesn't work at 5PM after being out since noon.

Karen: Well, sodas are one of the worst things for you, so this is one time I wish you'd listen to Paige. But I know it's hard to quit something you really enjoy, especially when you don't have that many things to look forward to in your day. Hope your migraine is gone soon.

ShelVy: My wife had migraines and we were FLOORED at the number of things that could cause 'em! There was a book on migraines by a doctor who, of all things, had the name 'Brain'!

I know Pepsi isn't the greatest thing for me, and I do realize that three 16.9 ounces a day is a lot. On the other hand, before February 2010, it would be nothing for me to go through five 16.9 oz bottles *and* a 44 oz Super Big Gulp—or three—a day. Bill noted I had Pepsi, not blood, in my veins. So, from *that* perspective, Bill was pleased with my new soda amount.

ShelVy: ... I sometimes put away a ten-cup pot of coffee a day ...

I'll let Paige yell at you. Kacey thought it was amusing.

ShelVy: ... well, not often ... and, believe it or not, before my accident I could drink a cup of coffee, go to bed, and go immediately to sleep!!! Honest!!!

I am like that with the Pepsi. What frustrates the hell out of me, though, is Paige wants me to trade in the Pepsi for tea, because it's *HEALTH-I-ER!!*

Now, check me on this: a 12-ounce can of Pepsi contains 38mg of caffeine, or 3.2mg per ounce. So, a 16.9-ounce bottle of Pepsi has, roughly 54mg of caffeine, which does sound like a lot; *but* a 5-ounce cup of tea contains 25-110mg of caffeine, or 5-22mg per ounce.

The last time I checked, 3.2mg was less than 5mg, and is *certainly* less than 22mg, so why is tea *HEALTH-I-ER!!* to drink?

Karen: Tea definitely is high in caffeine, higher than coffee, too, but it's also high in anti-oxidants, especially green tea. On the other hand, you can get those same anti-oxidants from various fruits and vegetables, with the added bonus of fiber, vitamins, and no caffeine. Melon (especially cantaloupe), blueberries, cranberries, strawberries, asparagus, and several others are excellent for you. You could try substituting fruit juice mixed with club soda if you like the bubbles. That would be better for you than the tea.

Ghoddess knows the amount of sugar I have to add to it isn't healthier. Bill, upon watching me pour five packets of sugar into Denny's tea: "Well, it's one packet less than that horrible coffee, but tell me, Laur, would you like some tea with your sugar?"

ShelVy: When I put my fourth spoon of sugar into my coffee, I get the same comment from others watching... (HAVE gone to FIVE.) <g>

Karen: I used to be able to drink coffee before bed and sleep with no problems, but that stopped around the time I hit 40.

My sleeping problems started on 4 September. There's nothing—not anything—but time that will resolve my sleeplessness.

ShelVy: Unfortunately, I can only agree. Reminds me; I have said to irritating jerks, "Time wounds all heels ..." (No, Laurie, you are NOT irritating!!!) <g>

Part of the reason I was prescribed the Elavil at Danto's was because I missed having Bill next to me. I'd reach out, and he wouldn't be there. I'd come awake, sit upright, and call him to make sure he was okay—and that I was okay without him. He'd talk me back to sleep.

ShelVy: Very understandable. I'm sure he DID talk you back to sleep!

Or played the guitar, or the keyboard. Or read to me. One night, on her 30-minute round, one of the nurses realized I'd fallen asleep with the phone under my ear. She took it out, and started to whisper to Bill that I was asleep, and realized he was snoring on the other end. She also noted that I was patting the bed, and she hastily put the phone back, and I resnuggled in. When I woke up the next morning a note was over my bed: "If asleep with phone, leave it alone!!

Karen: That was a very nice nurse. I bet there aren't many who'd do the same.

ShelVy: Aahhhhhhhhh...so sweet!

Yes; amusingly, he even said that he slept better.

"In seed time learn, in harvest teach, in winter enjoy." (William Blake)

::snort:: Wyatt was dropped off today to work on his algebra mid-term study sheet. He came in with a bemused smile that seemed out of character for someone sentenced to spending time with me studying algebra, so I just quirked my eyebrow and waited.

"Grandma told me when I walked in their door this afternoon that Dad had called and asked her to bring me out for tutoring. I told her I knew that last night. Then all ~~hel~~ heck broke out! She wanted to know why I was here, and I told her that Dad and I put plywood between the mattress for you. She then

wanted to know if you were going to be sleeping in there. I told her I didn't ask because it didn't seem like it was any of my business. She then said, 'Well ask her, because I want to know.'" Wyatt paused for a breath and then more words came tumbling out: "Grandma, I heard you and Sharon talking about Laurie not being part of the family any more, so won't she think it odd that you want to know? Grandma *exploded*, Laur, you shoulda heard it! 'Don't tell her that *I* want to know!' she scolded me. Wait, I said, you want me to ask an adult what she's going to do in her bedroom? Uh, no! I can't do that! I need her help to pass this year ... and next year ... and, probably, the year after that, and definitely my senior year! And, honestly, Grandma, even if she was seeing men as frequently as my mom, I don't wanna know! So, could you ask her, or see if Dad will ask her, or just use your imagination or something, cause that's embarrassing!!!"

Karen: Why would Marilyn care? It's VERY creepy that either one of them cares that much about what bed you are in. It's as if they have some interest in keeping you where you are now. Is there any chance they are spying on you through that window?

I can't imagine any valid reason they would have for caring so much which bed you are in. The whole thing creeps me out, and apparently it creeps out Wyatt & Danno too.

SheIVy: Wyatt is a REAL GEM!!! RotFLMAO!!! He told his grandma off in a very elegant way that also kept him outta trouble!!! ...Well, I HOPE it did, anyway.

They really couldn't punish him. I told Danno about it, and he's furious with his mother. He is proud of Wyatt for not pointing out the hypocrisy since the stated rule since Marilyn and Kathi were together is that what adults do behind closed doors is their business and no one else's.

SheIVy: GOOD!!!

Karen: Yes, very good! Your mother is getting creepier and creepier. I hope you move into that other bed VERY soon! And good for Wyatt! He's a tough, caring kid.

The problem is that I don't know if Marilyn was satisfying her own curiosity or if she was digging for mom. Wyatt also said that both of them have gotten creepy since my mom had surgery. Wyatt is a good kid, and he always makes me laugh.

SheIVy: "Good kid" for sure!!!

Karen: Those are two very strange women.

Ed: Geez, poor kid. He gets it from both barrels.

I'm doing my damndest to keep him *out* of the line of fire, he just won't cooperate and let me take the hits.

Karen: I think what he did is for the best. I doubt they'll try to use him to spy on you anymore. It's good that he stood up to them - they'd only treat him worse if he backed down.

I asked Wy if he wanted me to call the house and see if I could call off the dogs, but Wy refused. "They can't do anything to me," he said shaking his head, "but you, they could hurt you. And I care about you too much and I liked Bill too much to give them that opportunity. Bill said in his will that 'if we ever cared about him, to be there for' you, and that's what I'm gonna do. Besides, I'm a teenager; I'm supposed to be difficult and scatter-brained. I can confuse them so much, they won't know what hit them!"

Karen: That's a great kid! And I agree, you should NOT call them. That would just give your mother the satisfaction of upsetting you more. Just move to the other bed ASAP!

ShelVy: 'Steady 'Poor Wyatt', this should be GREAT Wyatt!!! <g>

Karen: I agree! :)

"In the depth of winter I finally learned that there was in me an invincible summer." (Albert Camus)

Okay, I will grant that I'm *not* an expert *nor* do I play one on TV, but isn't "predigested" a *bad* thing??

ShelVy: ... Welllllll ... Guess that makes it easier on your digestive system! <g>

Karen: I think that must be intended for people with serious digestive issues, maybe like Crohn's Disease or something?

Well, it says for the elderly and sick, so I guess that would be me...

Ed: Me, too. I'm sick of being elderly.

Okay ... while looking at the predigested protein tablets, I found two pills that, as a kid, I was told I needed: Happy Pills and Happy Camper pills—but I don't want to look like Pinocchio!

SheIVy: I've known a few pipples who really needed the Happy Camper pills!!!
ESPECIALLY after they went camping... <g>

Ed: Yea, happy pills!

Karen: Well, I don't know how it could hurt you. But what you really need is vitamins and minerals.

Ed: Karen is right. Listen to her.

RotBL! Ed, you removed Dave, not Karen, from an email saying that Karen was right! ::chortle:: On a serious note, I've asked Juan to pick up the Immunity Health the next time he goes to Meijer's; I can't ask Paige, as she'll get the extra protein.

Karen: Good idea - Juan will listen. I can't figure out why Paige is so hyped up on the extra protein. What does she think it's going to do for you? It's not magic.

"On a frosty morning I went out/And a handkerchief faced me on a bush./I reach to put it in my pocket,/But it slid from me for it was frozen./No living cloth jumped from my grasp/But a thing that died last night on a bush,/And I went searching in my mind/Till I found its real equivalent:/The day I kissed a woman of my kindred/And she in the coffin, frozen, stretched." (Sean Ó Riordáin)

Losing My Religion: If I'm So Done With Faith, Why Do I Still Feel Its Loss?

Margaret Wheeler Johnson, Women's Editor

Posted: 12/29/11 08:18 AM ET

New York City is, from many perspectives, an ideal haven for the newly godless. It is a stronghold of American secularism, its flagship store, if you will. Religion is mostly not discussed, at least not among the twenty- and thirty- somethings I've met over the last six years, except perhaps as a political force, a cause of explosions in distant marketplaces. I have never heard anyone at a gathering here casually reference his or her faith in any god—not my Jewish friends when discussing their plans for the High Holy days, and especially not my friends raised Christian. Even the unlapsed, I suspect, fear seeming naive at best, at worst, evangelical.

So we do not talk about faith, even though New York is also a city teeming with believers—Muslims and Sikhs, Jews and Jains, Wiccans and Jehovah's Witnesses, all practicing openly. In the almost subterranean studio I occupied on First Street in the East Village a while back, I had the Catholic Workers across the street, the Hari Krishnas around the corner, and, three blocks up, the Hell's Angels. The broker who helped me find that apartment confided in me without an ounce of embarrassment on the way up to the lease signing that she had known I was going to beat out other applicants because the Virgin Mother had appeared to her in a manhole cover on 2nd Avenue and told her so. A couple of years ago when I was reporting a story on the United States' only and now defunct Kosher Gym, I saw a man spread a small rug between two parked cars on Coney Island Avenue, kneel facing Mecca, and prostrate himself. I envied all of them their devotions.

I grew up in New Orleans, a city steeped in Catholicism, with all of its ritual and guilt and the convenient offer of regular absolution. I gave up my religion around the time I went to college, and tried not to think too much about it. I had recognized years before I did not believe Catholicism's most defining dogma, that at mass the bread and wine were physically, not metaphorically, transubstantiated into the body and blood of Christ. There was also the problem that I saw little difference between the faith of the first followers of Jesus of Nazareth and those taken in by modern cults, and I could no longer honestly claim that the marvels I had always named as proof of the existence of a benevolent, omniscient creator—the human body, spring—are examples of anything but the order into which, marvelously indeed but following to no master plan, evolution channels entropy.

The irony of my experience with religion was that it first instilled in me the aversion to dishonesty that eventually made it impossible to maintain faith. That doesn't mean losing your religion is easy. In an extended 2006 online debate with Andrew Sullivan, a believer, Sam Harris, an atheist, wrote, "Not lying to oneself and others takes discipline." I thought I had summoned that discipline when I stopped attending mass with my father and stopped taking communion when mass couldn't be avoided. I consigned myself to the ranks of the lapsed, got my degree, moved to New York, which is where you go if you have a diploma and no place reserved for you anywhere else, and let faith slip my mind. Almost unbelievably, I managed to live in the city for two years, floating in the passive secular, without it once occurring to me that I had so recently been a believer.

I was reminded at exactly noon on a weekday in the spring of 2007. I woke up in the bed of the first woman I had been with (another reason not to think about religion), to the sound of recorded bells ..." a nearby church. The hymn was one I had thought unique to the small Catholic girls school I attended growing up. The song was addressed to Mater, the school's image of the Blessed Mother as a young girl, pre-annunciation, before all hell broke loose for her. We sang the song once a year during a May ceremony in which the girl in each class voted the nicest—never me—processed up the aisle of the sunlit chapel and adorned a statue of the virgin with flowers.

I had been back to that chapel since for the weddings of alumnae brides, but had not remembered myself as a student, sitting in the diminutive pews always varnished to a lacquer, bowing my head over my folded hands, talking to God. The synthetic bells in Brooklyn transported me back not just to the many assemblies and masses I attended in that space but the times in high school when I used to steal down there alone at lunchtime and kneel in my uniform and take solace in the sense that Something was watching over me.

That was all magical thinking, of course. I was no less alone then than I am now, and those who watched over me were a group of doting teachers, mostly lay people, who probably knew about my trips to the chapel because they cared. Still, the sudden surfacing of the memory, the heady safety of belief and of someone knowing where I was going and that it was right, made my life since relinquishing it to reason feel like a wasteland in comparison, a frolic in the land of false idols.

Case in point: On a Saturday evening in late December, the med student, the editor, the Ph.D. candidate, the startup manager, and the non-profit crowd around a too-small wooden table with its requisite votive. A look around the small bistro and the one next door and the one next door to it would confirm that we are doing the same thing that everyone else our age and station is doing at this moment up and down the avenues. Behind so many storefronts, at so many altars, we the unbelievers try to summon what being young in New York supposedly felt like to previous generations, a something-in-the-air sense of our own limitless potential, and that we participated in some important cultural moment. While we wait to feel it we drink wine, we order small plates. Endive and stilton. Patatas bravas. Carciofi al Judaia. We were here.

Afterwards we ride or walk back to our respective apartments, which do not feel like home, and on the way peer into store and restaurant windows, gazing at the human forms inside, the mannequins and the animate, and resist feeling all kinds of empty that we can't name and can't begin to fill and which has given rise to whole new myths: that we can do more than one thing at a time, that it will only take twenty minutes to get there, that sleep is for the weak and the dead, that we'll pay it off next month, that it doesn't get any better than this.

It's hard to believe that the suspension of disbelief that faith involved didn't serve me better than these new myths. And yet there is no turning back. I am no longer a Catholic, and it would be an insult to the faithful I respect to sit among them and say the words just to be comforted by the familiar cadence. But it does not feel like a victory, and always, always, there is the temptation to play along once more, to take shelter in the words that, aside from a few conflicts between translations, good, intelligent people have believed for two thousand years are the right words. It is hard, too, to resist the gestures. Growing up I used to make the sign of the cross whenever an ambulance or fire truck passed in a feeble gesture of solidarity with the people whose lives the siren was about to scream through and more selfishly in an attempt to cope with the constant possibility of pain we can't foresee and can't necessarily prevent or quell. There are times in New York when I have to make a conscious effort not to go through that motion. When I visit my parents in New Orleans, where I am unlikely to run into someone from my adult life—to be caught playing at faith—I sometimes let it happen. Sometimes even in New York, when I'm at my wit's end, I find myself sending up a plea for help. And afterwards, in the face of all reason, I sometimes feel relief.

"I have been one acquainted with the night/I have walked out in rain—and back in rain/I have out-walked the furthest city light//I have looked down the saddest city lane/I have passed by the watchman on his beat/And dropped my eyes, unwilling to explain//I have stood still and stopped the sound of feet/When far away an interrupted cry/Came over houses from another street,//But not to call me back or say goodbye;/And further still at an unearthly height;/One luminary clock against the sky//Proclaimed the time was neither wrong nor right./I have been one acquainted with the night." (Robert Frost, *Acquainted with the Night*)

Thursday, 05 January: Today's winner of the Feline Daybreak 500: Reepicheep.

Ponderence of the Day: "As I sat down to write this, an email pinged in from the Blackberry of Sarah, a friend on her way to work, on the train. The rail schedule had been reduced to rack and ruin by chaotic weather conditions and all around her people were quietly seething about the indignity of it all. Some of them not so quietly. Not Sarah though. Armed with a coffee and the day's newspapers, she chose to view it as a brief period of calm, a little oasis in which to simply enjoy the moment. One set of circumstances.

Two (at least) ways of viewing it. All too often I reckon we forget that there's more than one way of thinking about the things which happen to us. If you're stuck in traffic, you might fume. Alternatively you could find something fascinating on the radio, or perhaps treat yourself to a few minutes thinking about something or someone that makes you happy. To put a common phrase somewhat more politely, bad stuff happens. It's always going to. But when it does, there's much to be said for remembering that you have the power to react to it in all sorts of ways. Some of them not so, well, bad."

Goal for the Day: Discover the 'elf' in yourself. Learn to have fun.

"On the twelfth day of Christmas, my true love sent to me: twelve Drummers Drumming, eleven Pipers Piping, ten Lords a Leaping, nine Ladies Dancing, eight Maids a-Milking, seven Swans a-Swimming, six Geese a-Laying, five Golden Rings, four Calling Birds, three French Hens, two Turtle Doves, and a Partridge in a Pear Tree."

Moodscope Score (out of 100): "Right Laurie. This is how it's looking. Today you have a score of **1%**, which is 56% below your all-time maximum of 57%. Things appear to have been fairly steady for you since the last time you took the test and scored 2%. It's clear that this is not a very good time for you, and matters look as if they've got worse. You may find you'll benefit from talking about how you feel with someone close. Should that not be practical, how about asking for help from your doctor? Don't attempt to untangle this without help, but do remember that you've been better in the past and will get back up there again in the future. Your score has fallen since last time and you're actually beneath your average result of 22.0%. This is the lowest score you've received. Let's hope for better things next time."

::sigh:: I keep thinking it's all downhill from here, but maybe not. I'm going to try to get some rest, so I'll be out-of-pocket (I hope!!) for a bit.

Karen: Hope you get some good sleep!

Well, an hour and twenty-six minutes from when I last looked at the clock until I woke up (mom was calling) is not good, but is better than nothing!

SheVY: It **WOULD** be your mom that woke you!

Well, it makes for **four** hours total since midnight, so I may not need to sleep for weeks!

SheVY: Geeee ... **FOUR** hours!!!

Hey, that's a lot of sleep in one day for me!

ShelVy: Well, when you put it THAT way... <g>

I told you: I always look for the positive first. For example, when I took mom's call, I told myself That there would be 86,400,000 milliseconds before I heard that ringtone again!

ShelVy: I like you putting it that way <g> - and multimillion seconds makes it see SOOOO much longer...

Well, time *is* relative, in more ways than one. Her ringtone is "Lorrie's Song"; family members I like—Jimmy, Kacey, Cookie, Stu, Charlene, Ed, and you, for example—are "Home on the Range." I'm considering ordering a pizza ...

ShelVy: ... well, yeah, like it or not, she IS a relative ...

"Through bare trees/I can see all the rickety lean-tos/and sheds, and the outhouse/with the half-moon on the door,/once modestly covered in/summer's greenery.//Through bare trees/I can watch the hawk/perched on a distant branch,/black silhouetted wings/shaking feathers and snow,/ and so can its prey.//Through bare trees/I can be winter's innocence,/ unashamed needfulness,/the thin and reaching limbs/of a beggar, longing to touch/but the hem of the sun." (Lisa Lindsey, *Bare Trees*)

Don't mind me today, folks, my left leg is really hurting. I have four blisters on it, and they itch like crazy, and Paige has ordered me, as she was going out the door, to not scratch.

Karen: Sorry about that, and Paige is right, do NOT scratch the blisters

I'm not, but man, they are itching. This is the third dose on Nystatin I've put on, as per her instructions, and given what I've cleaned up, at least one popped, so, I put Neosporin pain relief on that. I wonder what's causing it, since I haven't had anything like this since my memory returned on 01 September 2010. Paige said I must have an infection, but I actually feel good—tired, but I've never known tiredness to cause blisters and ghoddess knows I would have had blisters galore in college!

Karen: I don't know a lot about blisters, but her advice sounds good. If they get worse, I suggest seeing a doctor. Since Dr. Idiot isn't likely to respond, you ought to consider the emergency room. Especially if there's ANY sign of infection.

You could try the Neosporin pain relief on all of them - maybe the pain relief would help reduce the itching. Some pain relief things do reduce itching, with the numbing effect.

"Winter is the time for comfort, for good food and warmth, for the touch of a friendly hand and for a talk beside the fire: it is the time for home." (Edith Sitwell)

I had just snagged a Mandarin orange to eat when the phone rang. I dropped the orange on my lap and turned to answer the phone. In those mere seconds Disaster Peep struck. Her reasoning wasn't totally faulty: it's round, it's little, it's a toy for ME!! She rolled it down my leg to her sleeping mat, and I rolled back in time to see her pounce, with front claws extended, onto the orange. I'd say the orange gave as good as it got, but based on Peep's howls, the orange *won*. Peep got cleaned up by me, although the drips of juice from her ear were cute; meanwhile she's wrapped in my arm, while the boys—who leapt up here at first howl—are still pacing the bed looking for the offender. (They've walked past it now 17 times, but have dismissed it as the culprit.)

ShelVy: Well, cats DO have their own way of looking at/interpreting things ... <g> ...
They should lick each other clean ...

Karen: ROTFLMAO! Love it!

Well, after canvassing every square millimeter of the bed, the Junior Investigator came over to the Victim and took a report (touched her nose). He stepped back, shook his head a couple of times and then rescanned the report, and he gave me a long look. He went and reported back to his Senior Officer (oops, almost said Superior Officer), who also gave the Victim and Person of Interest a long look. The two then advanced on the Suspect. The Suspect attempted to roll away, but the Senior Officer put the Suspect in a chokehold, causing him to assault the Junior Officer. The Suspect's remains were removed from the scene and are currently at the Bedside Repository awaiting final dispersal.

Responding Officers are now at the station cleaning up.

Karen: Love it!

ShelVy: Ahhh! Real medical, as there were cat-scans doing on... <g>

Karen: LMAO!

"January brings the snow,/Makes our feet and fingers glow." (Sara Coleridge, "Pretty Lessons in Verse")

ShelVy, do you have the ability to take a PDF and copy the info into an editable document?

ShelVy: Do it all the time ... but from PDFs made with WordPerfect5X. MIGHT work on others, tho We can give it a try ... WAITAMINNIT!!! I'll try it on one of the **B&B** PDFs and let you know.

Okay, I was going to ask if you could undo **B&B** 2-7...

ShelVy: Didn't work. Well, not the way I wanted, anyway; there was ONE thing I tried that told me it was password protected. Dunno if it meant YOUR password or wot, but passwords I tried didn't work ... But I'm still fiddlin' around ... UNDO 2 - 7??? How come??? (And my additional fiddlin' had no success either.)

Not password protected from this end. *sigh* I'll have to use Bill's computer—assuming he didn't uninstall the program I installed on it last year. Just trying to compile them together for the eventual shrink appointment.

ShelVy: ... Sorry 'bout that! AHHH!!!

I was the idiot who didn't think ahead.

ShelVy: So you made a mistake! Hey, welcome to the human race!!! <g>

"That grand old poem called Winter" (Henry David Thoreau)

::chortle, snort:: I was just about to call Hungry Howie's when the phone rang. It was the owner of our local Chinese restaurant, wanting to know if there had been any problems with our last order on 1 September, and if there was anything they could do to regain our patronage.

I had to explain that there had been nothing wrong with the dish and that the eater had wholeheartedly enjoyed it. But since he had passed away, and Chinese food isn't one of my favorites, that's why we hadn't ordered recently.

He expressed his condolences and then started to say something, stopped, started again, and stopped. Trying to be nice, I gently asked if there was something else I could help him with. "I see he ordered the Kung Pao Chicken, and he normally didn't. That didn't hurt him, did it?"

I started giggling and reassured him that Bill's time of death was 36 hours after eating, so it had nothing to do with it, honest.

SheVY: ROTFLMAO!!!! Also <g><g><g>

Karen: Poor guy! He must have been really sweating for a few minutes.

I know! I felt horrible about it, but I had forgotten about the Kung Pao.

Karen: LOL! Well, at least you put him at ease. :)

"The vineyard country, russet, reddish, carmine-brown in this season. A blue outline of hills above a fertile valley. It's warm as long as the sun does not set, in the shade cold returns. A strong sauna and then swimming in a pool surrounded by trees. Dark redwoods, transparent pale-leaved birches. In their delicate network, a sliver of the moon. I describe this for I have learned to doubt philosophy, and the visible world is all that remains." (Czeslaw Milosz, *December 1st*)

Friday, 06 January: Happy Little Christmas! Today's winner of the Feline Daybreak 500: Peepiceek.

Weather Factoid: "The blackest month in all the year/Is the month of Janiveer."

Ponderence of the Day: "Is there a stage between all and nothing? You know, I think there is. As we've learnt from our data, this time of year (at least in the northern hemisphere) is not always the happiest. Your mood may have a tendency to be low. Your health could be ropey (just think about all those coughs and sneezes which spread diseases). And the spring, let alone the summer, can seem a long way off. The thing is though, it's pretty likely that you have responsibilities. Stuff you have to do. Places you have to go. People who depend on you. That type of thing. So how do you do cope when you're feeling below

par but still have mountains to move? Let's face it, the mountains are staying right where they are. But that needn't necessarily mean slumping at their foot in a state of giving-upness. Maybe you could get up to base camp? No more, no less. But from there, your mission will be much easier when you're feeling more up to it. Doing what you can makes sense. Doing too much is impossible. Doing absolutely nothing may just make you feel worse. So if it all seems a bit much today, be kind to yourself. Make a little steady progress if you can. Then pitch your tent."

Goal for the Day: Live a healthy lifestyle (eat well, exercise and get sufficient sleep).

Today I'm grateful for: a) the ability to find even dark humor; b) candles; c) remote controls; d) ring tones; and e) other people's patience.

"A full moon hangs high in the chilly sky,/All say it's the same everywhere, round and bright./But how can one be sure thousands of miles away/Wind and perhaps rain may not be marring the night?" (Li Qiao, *The Mid-Autumn Moon*)

Moodscope Score (out of 100): "Right then Laurie. Things look like this. You have a score today of **1%**, which is 56% below your all-time maximum of 57%. Things appear to have been fairly steady for you since you last took the test and scored 1%. These are not the happiest of times for you, but it's notable that matters haven't declined any further. By applying yourself you'll find that you can make things better for yourself once more. That will only happen if you decide to make way for your old positive self again. A challenge, but you have been a lot better in times past and should find yourself there again. Although your score today is beneath your average of 19.9%, be comforted that it hasn't fallen since last time. You've not been lower than this before. Here's to a better result next time."

SheIVy: Talk about making bad look good! "*Things appear to have been fairly steady for you since you last took the test and scored 1%.*" Of course, they are right! <g>

Well, I didn't hit zero, so one isn't bad ... I'm a member of the 1% ... I could be next to be Occupied!

Karen: That would probably be fun for you! :)

It would, I truly admit it.

"You darkness, that I come from,/I love you more than all the fires/that fence in the world,/for the fire makes/a circle of light for everyone,/and then no one outside learns of

you.//But the darkness pulls in everything;/shapes and fires, animals and myself,/how easily it gathers them!—/powers and people—/and it is possible a great energy/is moving near me./I have faith in nights." (Rainer Maria Rilke, *On Darkness*)

Reflections on Ponderence: RotBLMAO!!!! I felt like I was reading a deranged Dr. Seuss: "... coughs and sneezes which spread diseases." Of course, it was to avoid the real query in the piece: *So how do you do cope when you're feeling below par but still have mountains to move?*

How do I cope? Just looking over the last 123 days, I want to say "not well!" but, since that does *not* answer the actual question, I can't say that. I don't know. I'm plodding forward with a lot of help, but I'm not sure how. I guess maybe it's in knowing that I have no options. I find it doubtful that any of the Gang of Six, plus Em, would release me from my promise, let alone all six of them, so I have to continue plodding forward and hoping—almost against hope—that at some point the pain I feel will dull.

Karen: LOL! It may read like pabulum, but the advice is still not bad. They should have added, "Take your vitamins!". :)

ShelVy: All I can say, Laurie, is <g><g><G>!!!

The fun is that while I was starting to read aloud to Typo and the 'eeps (yeah, that doesn't sound too much like a bad boy band name!!!), both 'eeps sneezed in my face.

Karen: LOL! Cute!

ShelVy: Marvelous feline comprehension!!! <g>

A woman customer called the Canon help desk with a problem with her printer.

Tech support: Are you running it under windows?

Customer: No, my desk is next to the door, but that is a good point. The man sitting in the cubicle next to me is under a window, and his printer is working fine.

Paige—and her oldest son (middle child)—were here late last night. They were here from 8:40-10:20PM (the son didn't come in until 9PM). Paige put the pizza I hadn't eaten away, and asked if I wanted any real food. I pointed out that pizza meets all four food groups, thus it is "real" food. Deion *liked* that. Deion also liked my asking his mom if she was ready to take her math test; and her howl of "no!" He did

not like my turning my attention to him and the ASVAB exam; however, I opted to go there. I asked if he had started on the ASVAB vocab yet, and was told that he hadn't renewed his library card, yet. (Pontiac has started putting expiration dates on the cards; no clue as to why.) "No, I'm certain I know all of the words, since there's only 30 on the test."

Paige and I looked at each other, and I raised my eyebrow questioningly. "You do what you gotta do! I'm tired of him bugging his eyes out on television and whining that he's bored. I just wanna *watch* this!"

"Deion? Do you honestly believe that you know which 30 words of the minimum quarter of a million words in the English language are going to be used?"

"How many?" he squeaked.

"Well, it's impossible to count the number of words in a language, because it's so hard to decide what actually counts as a word. For example is 'dog' one word, or two (a noun meaning 'a kind of animal', and a verb meaning 'to follow persistently')? If we count it as two, then do we count inflections separately too (e.g. 'dogs' = plural noun, 'dogs' = present tense of the verb). Is 'dog-tired, a word, or just two other words joined together? Is 'hot dog' really two words, since it might also be written with a hyphen or even without a space? The Second Edition of the 20-volume *The Oxford English Dictionary* contains full entries for 171,476 words in current use, and 47,156 obsolete words. To this may be added around 9,500 derivative words included as subentries. Over half of these words are nouns, about a quarter adjectives, and about a seventh verbs; the rest is made up of exclamations, conjunctions, prepositions, suffixes, etc. And these figures don't take account of entries with senses for different word classes (such as noun and adjective). [Bill was amused when I memorized this during my less-than-cognitive time.]

"It's also difficult to decide what counts as 'English'. What about medical and scientific terms? Latin words used in law, French words used in cooking, German words used in academic writing, Japanese words used in martial arts? Do you count Scots dialect? Teenage slang? Abbreviations?"

"This suggests that there are, at the very least, a quarter of a million distinct English words, excluding inflections, and words from technical and regional vocabulary not covered by the *OED*, or words not yet added to the published dictionary, of which perhaps 20 percent are no longer in current use. If distinct senses were counted, the total would probably approach three-quarters of a million. So, do you think you know the 30 words that the ASVAB will use?"

Deion: "No ma'am!"

"And, you do know that if you do *not* pass it, you cannot retake it for six months; so, what do you plan to do then, because I can guarantee you that your mom is not going to let you warm the couch for another six months, since you've been stalling on starting this prep since 01 July."

"Six *months*?? I thought I could take it like a week later!"

"Not according to the military websites *I* went to."

"Well, the words can't be that hard! You just have to be in good physical shape, and then they'll teach you what you don't know!"

"Let's test that theory, Deion. If you score 70%, I'll tell your mom that you should 'go with God and take the test.' if not, then, I'm thinking that perhaps your afternoon television time should be reworked."

"Okay, but where are you gonna get the words?"

"I'm going to give you the ASVAB sample test that I sent home with you back in June."

"Oh. Umm, shouldn't I have time to study?"

"Seven months didn't do it for 16 words?"

"Okay, okay, I'm ready!"

He wasn't. Of the words—abhorrence, boisterous, civic, detain, effect, fallible, grim, hale (I spelled it), impromptu, jubilant, livid, malicious, nominal, outright, picayune, and spry—he hazarded *one* guess, and it was incorrect. He defined 'affect,' not 'effect.' Paige smacked him in the back of the head, when he said that 'grim' was a really cool show. After she did that, I asked her the definition of 'hale' and she said a weather condition. I pointed out that the correct choice was healthy. I also, given that the first definition was 'discolored by a bruise,' gave her three different choices for the word 'livid,' than I did Deion, and they both guessed incorrectly. (Deion: "But *last* time the answer was A!" L: "Yes, and this time it was C. What's your point?")

Karen: You are truly eeeevil! ;)

Thank you. I *do* resemble that remark!!

SheIVy: LOVED that scene! And Deion's mention that 'A' was right the LAST time reminds me of something I long ago came up with about multiple choice answers: If one choice is longer by far than the other choices, Go For It! Also, if (barring what I just mentioned) you always choose 'C', you will pass ... 'Affect'/'effect' has long been one of my pet peeves.

And, even tho I spend most of my time with words, I'm not at all sure how I would do on one of those tests ...

Of COURSE pizza is Real Food; vegetables, starch, protein, etc. ...

"You can't get too much winter in the winter." (Robert Frost)

Steve McGarrett *is* Joe Friday ... With better suits, better hair, and better working conditions, but, this mini-lecture to Danno ("And They Painted Daisies on His Coffin," Season 01:05) could have come out of Friday's mouth:

"... You were there; that gun didn't just get up and walk away. ... A cop pulls his gun, he'd better remember every single detail. There's always trouble when you pull a gun; more if you fire it. You hit somebody, and you're up to your hip pockets in it. And, if a cop kills somebody, every single fact better jive, or he gets nailed to the wall. He's guilty until he proves himself innocent. Now that's backwards, ugly and unfair, but that's the way it is. ... So think, Danno!"

SheIVy: Yeah!!! Watching Arnold Shwattsisname in *Commando*. They're putting in little comments at the bottom of the screen. Just now, in a menacing way, Arnold tells one of the bad guys, "I'll be back!" Comment mentions he said that in *Terminator* plus another movie - and as Governor of California. <g>

"The Snow-drop, Winter's timid child,/Awakes to life, bedew'd with tears." (Mary Robinson)

Sometimes web surfing when dealing with insomnia isn't a good thing. For example, at 1:25AM, did I really *need* to know that I've been alive 14.393 billion seconds? OTOH, it did stop my pondering how many seconds I'd been awake.

ShelVy: ... and there were definitely several million HAPPY seconds...!

Without a doubt. It's just amazing the crap I find when I am trying to bore myself to sleep. It's no wonder I fail *miserably* at boring myself to sleep!!!! On the bright side, however, according to the Word Dynamo tests on Dictionary.com, I'm able to define approximately 27,000 words ... and I've only just begun!

ShelVy: That's the problem, Laurie: You were TRYING! <g> (As long as my mind is on ANYthing, I can't sleep; I'll be trying to follow it...)

Customer: My keyboard is not working anymore.

Tech support: Are you sure it's plugged into the computer?

Customer: No. I can't get behind the computer.

Tech support: Pick up your keyboard and walk 10 paces back.

Customer: OK

Tech support: Did the keyboard come with you?

Customer: Yes

Tech support: That means the keyboard is not plugged in.

While looking for a recipe for an Epiphany tart, I found a very interesting [site](#). It won my heart with the old quip about the Fourth Wise Man. As I was taught the saw by my dad: the Magi traversed from afar with gifts for the newborn King. Each Magi dismounted his camel, and brought his offering to the Christ child. He gurgled at the gold, reached for the myrrh, and sniffed the frankincense. But the fourth gift, that gift caused the Infant to cry; thus, the Magi and his fruitcake were turned out of the stable!

Stephen: I guess you knew as soon as I saw the words "Old Foodie" I had to check out this site, and it is fascinating. One may have to go back in time for some of the ingredients, but it sounds good. I'm on the side of the fruitcake and find it much maligned. There was a by Knotts Berry Farm that I loved. It was truly a FRUIT cake, not a fruit CAKE if you know what I mean. This Old Foodie ended 2011 with a new restaurant (number 2,442) and will be starting the New Year with an old restaurant, Delmonico's (one of the few to which I keep returning). I remember its old glory, watched it sink into cigarette stuffiness, and then rise from its own ashes.

On the topic of sleep, I guess you may have tried this technique, and it only works if you're able to concentrate, but it involves relaxing your body part by part starting from the bottom up. Once you're convinced a part is relaxed, you move up to the next part and by the time you get to your head you should (in theory) be ready to fall asleep. Or you can have a really wild bout of sex - works for me.

I like *fruitcake*, but *fruitcake* tends to be too alcoholic for my meds. I have tried the relaxation technique; it works when I'm not sneezing like crazy! Sex is difficult without a partner ... and I'm not ready to think about that right now.

"All the leaves are brown/And the sky is grey/I went for a walk/On a winter's day/I'd be safe and warm/If I was in L.A./California dreamin'/On such a winter's day." (Mammas and Pappas, *California Dreamin'*)

Alberta Kelley, Grandma, says She Was Tricked Into Growing Pot By Bearded Stranger

Associated Press

First Posted: 1/6/12 02:23 PM ET

Updated: 1/6/12 02:23 PM ET

UNIONTOWN, Pa. -- A southwestern Pennsylvania grandmother says she's no marijuana grower, just a woman who wanted something that would look pretty next to her tomatoes.

A Fayette County jury cleared 67-year-old Alberta Kelley of drug possession and manufacture charges on Wednesday after she told them she simply tossed a handful of seeds into her garden after a bearded stranger gave them to her.

Connellsville police charged Kelley a year ago after receiving a tip about Kelley's garden. Investigators say they found seven well-cultivated, four-foot marijuana plants behind her home.

But Kelley claimed she didn't know what she was growing. She said she'd been given the seeds by a stranger in a pointy hat who told her they were flower seeds.

Kelley tells WTAE-TV that to her, "weeds are weeds."

::snort:: Good thing they weren't magic beans ... But the picture shows nice plants

SheIVy: Where's Jack when you need him ... ?

"Laughter is the sun that drives winter from the human face." (Victor Hugo)

Dear Vegrants, We've survived the Season, and successfully ushered in a New Year. That's as much effort as we need to put in, right at this time, to keep the world turning. So, take a break, and come on over to the Vegrants Meeting this Saturday night, anytime after 7:30, at the Katz' house. Hope to see everyone then, to help me celebrate! Best wishes, Joyce

Happy early birthday! It's on my calendar to call you Monday, but

Joyce: Thanks, Laurie. I'll be 73. *sigh* Worse still, I feel every year of it. Oh, well. Might as well make the best of it. ... Love, Joyce

Joyce, I remembered the year correctly! Yea, me! (It's been an interesting test of what I remember and what I don't. For example, I remember our Spyglass alarm passcode and security word, but do *not* remember them for here.)

I am sorry about the pain you're experiencing, but as ShelVy reminds me daily, if not more frequently, it's better than the alternative. After 04 September, I don't agree, but I promised Charlene, Cookie, Kacey, Mercedes, and ShelVy that I would quit attempting suicide.

Try to have a happy day, please?

ShelVy: Since you've abandoned suicide, let me quote: "The only way to win is cheat/ And lay it down before I'm beat/and to another give my seat/for that's the only painless feat." And then, of course, "Suicide is painless..." and the rest of the *M*A*S*H* theme. I just mentioned it 'cos I know you're not a cheater!!!

My Moodscope score went up 'cos I spent a lot of time today on the phone with Jerry Page, my co-editor who has temporarily withdrawn from *PS* - but promised he'd be back soon! And I got in two illos from a new artist who is TALENTED. Once I format the story and add his illos, I'll send you a link. I THINK you're read the story: "Doolittle PI"?

I didn't abandon it; it's just too many people made me promise, and all I have in this world to give others is my personal bond. It is the only thing that gives me value to others.

Kacey called Charlene after Kacey made me promise to not cut myself anymore after she found me slowly bleeding from my right wrist on 11 September; that was my second suicide attempt. However,

she realized later that that left too many options open, so she called Charlene for reinforcement. Charlene and I had an unsatisfactory discussion, so she called Cookie, and they conference called me and extracted a "no more suicide attempts, period" promise. To further reinforce it, Cookie then called Mercedes who extracted the same promise from me. And, of course, I promised you. The person who actually made my promise absolutely soul-crushingly binding was Emilie, who came in from outside crying, and while I was comforting her and putting some healing salve on her black eye, she threw her arms around me and told me that "I had to be her bestest friend forever and not leave her like Uncle Bill left both her and Soph, 'cause without me the world would be gray." And, I promised I would not *willingly* leave her. Thus, I'm stuck where I don't want to be because of an 8YO. The rest of you would, eventually, forgive/forget me with little harm to your psyches, but, Em ... I can't destroy a child.

I don't remember "Doolittle, PI."

ShelVy: Don't tell ME I'd 'easily forget' you, Laurie Kunkel!!! Em is by far the most important, but I will NEVER forget you, nor would I forgive you! Now, on a happier note, I've attached the fully formatted, fully illustrated "Doolittle PI." How could I have NEVER sent this to you???

From **ShelVy:** It was a small town and the patrolman was making his evening rounds. As he was checking a used car lot, he came upon two little old ladies sitting in a used car. He stopped and asked them why they were sitting there in the car or were they trying to steal it?

'Heavens no, we bought it.'

'Then why don't you drive it away.'

'We can't drive.'

'Then why did you buy it?'

'We were told that if we bought a used car here we'd get screwed ... so we're just waiting.'

Below is an actual police report from the Mason police department. The *Lansing State Journal* will publish occasional blotter items from around the region that are newsy, quirky or humorous.

Mason Police Department

January 1 - A Mason resident called to report receiving subliminal messages he detected while watching a pornographic movie purchased in Jackson.

The complainant replayed the portion of the DVD in slow motion for the officer, who did note four words he could read and a series of other words that passed so quickly they could not be read.

The complainant stated he reported the incident only because he had read where Al Qaeda was inserting messages into pornographic movies.

The Department has since learned Al Qaeda is not the only purveyor of subliminal messaging through pornographic movies and that this is also an outlaw gang-related tactic.

Ingham County is home to a number of Michigan Militia HQs

Karen: LOL! Weird stuff

ShelVy: RoTFLMAO!!! ... Isn't owning porn movies illegal there??? It is in some places ...

Thus far, only kiddie porn is illegal in MI.

ShelVy: Ah me ... they're more (said in a GHOOD way) liberal in MI ... <g>

Since one bad joke deserves another, I shot this one back to ShelVy: A little boy asked his mother the following question: "Mom, why are wedding dresses white?"

The mother looks at her son and replies, "Son, this shows your friends and relatives that your bride is pure."

The little boy pondered that for a moment, and then decided to double-check this with his father. "Dad, why are wedding dresses white?"

The father looks at his son in surprise and says, "Son, all household appliances come in white."

The Thurber story tonight on *Countdown* wasn't one I remembered.

There's an Owl in My Room

By: James Thurber

I saw Gertrude Stein on the screen of a newsreel theater one afternoon and I heard her read that famous passage of hers about pigeons on the grass, alas (the sorrow is, as you know, Miss Stein's). After reading about the pigeons on the grass alas, Miss Stein said, "This is a simple description of a landscape I have seen many times." I don't really believe that that is true. Pigeons on the grass alas may be a simple description of Miss Stein's own consciousness, but it is not a simple description of a plot of grass on which pigeons have alighted, are alighting, or are going to alight. A truly simple description of the pigeons alighting on the grass of the Luxembourg Gardens (which, I believe, is where the pigeons alighted) would say of the pigeons alighting there only that they were pigeons alighting. Pigeons that alight anywhere are neither sad pigeons nor gay pigeons, they are simply pigeons.

It is neither just nor accurate to connect the word alas with pigeons. Pigeons are definitely not alas. They have nothing to do with alas and they have nothing to do with hooray (not even when you tie red, white, and blue ribbons on them and let them loose at band concerts); they have nothing to do with mercy me or isn't that fine, either. White rabbits, yes, and Scotch terriers, and blue-jays, and even hippopotamuses, but not pigeons. I happen to have studied pigeons very closely and carefully, and I have studied the effect, or rather the lack of effect, of pigeons very carefully. A number of pigeons alight from time to time on the sill of my hotel window when I am eating breakfast and staring out the window. They never alas me, they never make me feel alas; they never make me feel anything.

Nobody and no animal and no other bird can play a scene so far down as a pigeon can. For instance, when a pigeon on my window ledge becomes aware of me sitting there in a chair in my blue polka-dot dressing-gown, worrying, he pokes his head far out from his shoulders and peers sideways at me, for all the world (Miss Stein might surmise) like a timid man peering around the corner of a building trying to ascertain whether he is being followed by some hoofed fiend or only by the echo of his own footsteps. And yet it is not for all the world like a timid man peering around the corner of a building trying to ascertain whether he is being followed by a hoofed fiend or only by the echo of his own footsteps, at all. And that is because there is no emotion in the pigeon and no power to arouse emotion. A pigeon looking is just a pigeon looking. When it comes to emotion, a fish, compared to a pigeon, is practically beside himself.

A pigeon peering at me doesn't make me sad or glad or apprehensive or hopeful. With a horse or a cow or a dog it would be different. It would be especially different with a dog. Some dogs peer at me as if I had just gone completely crazy or as if they had just gone completely crazy. I can go so far as to say that most dogs peer at me that way. This creates in the consciousness of both me and the dog a feeling of alarm or downright terror and legitimately permits me to work into a description of the landscape, in which the dog and myself are figures, a note of emotion. Thus I should not have minded if Miss Stein had written: dogs on the grass, look out, dogs on the grass, look out, look out, dogs on the grass, look out Alice. That would be a simple description of dogs on the grass. But when any writer pretends that a pigeon makes him sad, or makes him anything else, I must instantly protest that this is a highly specialized fantastic impression created in an individual consciousness and that therefore it cannot fairly be presented as a simple description of what actually was to be seen.

People who do not understand pigeons—and pigeons can be understood only when you understand that there is nothing to understand about them—should not go around describing pigeons or the effect of pigeons. Pigeons come closer to a zero of impingement than any other birds. Hens embarrass me the way my old Aunt Hattie used to when I was twelve and she still insisted I wasn't big enough to bathe myself; owls disturb me; if I am with an eagle I always pretend that I am not with an eagle; and so on down to swallows at twilight who scare the hell out of me. But pigeons have absolutely no effect on me. They have

absolutely no effect on anybody. They couldn't even startle a child. That is why they are selected from among all birds to be let loose, with colored ribbons attached to them, at band concerts, library dedications, and christenings of new dirigibles. If anybody let loose a lot of owls on such an occasion there would be rioting and catcalls and whistling and fainting spells and throwing of chairs and the Lord only knows what else.

From where I am sitting now I can look out the window and see a pigeon being a pigeon on the roof of the Harvard Club. No other thing can be less what it is not than a pigeon can, and Miss Stein, of all people, should understand that simple fact. Behind the pigeon I am looking at, a blank wall of tired gray bricks is stolidly trying to sleep off oblivion; underneath the pigeon the cloistered windows of the Harvard Club are staring in horrified bewilderment at something they have seen across the street. The pigeon is just there on the roof being a pigeon, having been, and being, a pigeon and, what is more, always going to be, too. Nothing could be simpler than that. If you read that sentence aloud you will instantly see what I mean. It is a simple description of a pigeon on a roof. It is only with an effort that I am conscious of the pigeon, but I am acutely aware of a great sulky red iron pipe that is creeping up the side of the building intent on sneaking up on a slightly tipsy chimney which is shouting its head off.

There is nothing a pigeon can do or be that would make me feel sorry for it or for myself or for the people in the world, just as there is nothing I could do or be that would make a pigeon feel sorry for itself. Even if I plucked his feathers out it would not make him feel sorry for himself and it would not make me feel sorry for myself or for him. But try plucking the quills out of a porcupine or even plucking the fur out of a jackrabbit. There is nothing a pigeon could be, or can be, rather, which could get into my consciousness like a fumbling hand in a bureau drawer and disarrange my mind or pull anything out of it. I bar nothing at all. You could dress up a pigeon in a tiny suit of evening clothes and put a tiny silk hat on his head and a tiny gold-headed cane under his wing and send him walking into my room at night. It would make no impression on me. I would not shout, "Good god almighty, the birds are in charge!" But you could send an owl into my room, dressed only in the feathers it was born with, and no monkey business, and I would pull the covers over my head and scream.

No other thing in the world falls so far short of being able to do what it cannot do as a pigeon does. Of being unable to do what it can do, too, as far as that goes.

Customer: I can't get on the Internet.

Tech support: Are you sure you used the right password?

Customer: Yes, I'm sure. I saw my colleague do it.

Tech support: Can you tell me what the password was?

Customer: Five dots.

"Farewell, thy destiny is done,/Thy ebbing sands we tell,/Blended and set with centuries gone—/Thou dying year, farewell./Gifts from thy hand—Spring's joyous leaves,/And Summer's breathing flowers,/Autumn's bright fruit and bursting sheaves—/These blessings have been ours./They pass with thee and now they seem/Like gifts from fairy spells/Or like some sweet remembered dream—/We bid those gifts farewell." (Mrs. Jones, "Thou Dying Year, Farewell Montreal Vindicator," January 6, 1829)

Saturday, 07 January: Today's winner of the Feline Daybreak 500: Esmeralda.

Ponderence of the Day:/Goal for the Day: Not sent out.

Today I'm grateful for: beats the hell out of me.

"Earth, mountains, rivers—hidden in this nothingness./In this nothingness—earth, mountains, rivers revealed./Spring flowers, winter snows:/There's no being or non-being, nor denial itself." (Saisho)

Moodscope Score (out of 100): Here we go Laurie. Here's how it looks. Today you have a score of **7%**, which is 50% below your best-ever result of 57%. You should be feeling that things have taken a turn for the better since you last took the test and scored 1%. You are reasonably certain to be feeling low, but it's vital to acknowledge that your state of mind is actually a little more positive. You should take this as a clear sign that recovery is possible, and it could make you see that a little progress every day will gradually see you feeling good again. In spite of your score being beneath your average of 18.7%, you've made progress since last time. You are however above your lowest ever result of 1%. You have made progress since then.

Karen: Glad you're doing a little better. I hope now that you have the right meds, you'll sleep more and your scores will improve each day.

Yeah, I'd like to hit ShelVy's lowest score of 73-percent someday. Now that he's hitting 90s regularly, well, that's another good reason for me to go to CorFlu.

Karen: We're all pulling for you!

ShelVy: <g> I'll gleefully and willingly take credit for that!!! REALLY wanta see you at Corflu.

I'm working on it, ShelVy, honest!

ShelVy: Hey, that's one reason to watch *Sesame Street*! They believe strongly in optimism ... <g> Wouldn't moving from '1' to '7' be a seventy percent improvement???
<g> Congrats!

Yes, but that would be just a bit too optimistic for them. Congrats on your 91%, btw.

ShelVy: Thankee thankee! I've maintained for years that I'm an optimist. I know, I know; the pessimist is 'sposed to have the advantage, as they're not disappointed when things turn out lousy, and an optimist is 'sposed to always be just 'asking' for disappointment...but Hey! I even used to belong to the local Optimist club!!! <g>

"From December to March, there are for many of us three gardens—the garden outdoors, the garden of pots and bowls in the house, and the garden of the mind's eye." (Katherine S. White)

I still remember the first Latin I ever learned. It was a punishment writing assignment given to me in first grade for not sharing something with another child, something that both Sr. Corrine (my teacher) and Sr. Mary Margaret (the principled principal) were surprised by, since sharing was something I usually did wholeheartedly. This person, however, was one of my tormentors and had spent the preceding four hours making me sad, so to not share with her was a pleasure. Even if it meant writing '*Ego sum pauper. Nihil habeo. Cor meum dabo.*' five hundred times.

The exact translation, as I knew from my cousins and **their** writing assignments, is: "*I am poor. I have nothing. I share my heart.*" But, perhaps, a better working translation would be: "*I have little or next to nothing, but if what I have benefits you in any way, consider it yours.*" That less-than-formal translation, figured out on a cold, snowy retreat in ninth grade, has been one of my humanity building blocks. When I tracked down Sr. Corrine, she was delighted that one of her students had managed to get to the heart of the assignment, even if it was **eight** years later.

Perhaps overlooking small mistakes other people make might be a talent—something that makes it possible for all of us flawed humans to live with each other. But is it a talent I possess?

"Long stormy spring-time, wet contentious April, winter chilling the lap of very May; but at length the season of summer does come." (Thomas Carlyle)

I'm obviously becoming too predictable ...

Shelvy: Sleeping? I hope! Went to bed a tad before midnite. Woke up ten, fifteen minutes ago but couldn't go back to sleep. Checked, expecting message/s from you. Nuttin'! Hope that means you're asleep. I'll tippy-toe away...

::Note: I added Karen, simply because it was easier than rewriting this; and because I knew you two would notice my absence most::

I took the Elavil last night at 11:05PM, when Paige gave me dinner; AOL crashed at 12:30AMish, I last remember looking at the microwave clock at 12:43AM. I woke up when the floor lamp hit me in the head at 9:03AM; thank you, Miss Esme. I skimmed through the 286 subject lines in my inbox, and started a reply, and dozed back to sleep for 90 minutes until Paige rang the doorbell at 11:15AM.

And, honestly, I could, and likely will, go back to sleep. My migraine is back to being the dull roar that it used to be—sort of like hearing the sound of the ocean in a conch shell—instead of being the sound of standing on the flight deck of an aircraft carrier during takeoff time.

So, I wouldn't expect much from me today.

ShelVy: If I recall correctly (and I just got up after five hours' sleep, so don't rely on my 'memory') that is the med you sed you needed. In any case, congrats! Enjoy! Don't worry about your 'temporary absence'!

The Elavil is indeed the med I needed. I am still awake but with three cats sacked out on me, the bed known as Mom is drifting toward sleepiness.

Karen: Hey, you got some good sleep and it looks like you're going to get some more! That sounds like reason to be happy!!!

Oh, it is. Trust me, it is and I am ...

ShelVy: "Good luck!" he whispered...

Karen: Yay!!!

"Nature has undoubtedly mastered the art of winter gardening and even the most experienced gardener can learn from the unrestrained beauty around them." (Vincent A. Simeone)

This is a test of the Muppet Identification Network!!! All right, all right, true, MIN does *not* exist, but who the heck is Pepe??? Amazing what looking for clear nail polish will produce. Good thing I am awake, or I might have ordered more than Rainbow Connection. Gone Gonzo looked very inviting, as did Fresh Frog of Bel Aire

ShelVy: LOL! Lovely. And I don't recall Pepe either ... of course, with my daughters being in their forties, it's been awhile since I've seen much of *Sesame Street* ...

I stopped watching the new *Muppets* when Henson died in 1990. I was here, on a quick mandatory grandparent visit to help clean out the attic and listen to my grandfather tell me what a disappointment I was, when Henson passed. I had a Kermit button—among many—attached to my backpack, and I went downstairs, snagged a piece of electrical tape and put it on the button. It was still there when I met Bill 1 month later. He noted that that was when he knew he definitely wanted to get to know me better!

ShelVy: Yes, there can be no REAL Muppets without Henson!!!

Stephen: Pepe is a Shrimp Muppet with a French accent. He can be hilarious sometimes, annoying most others.

My hero! Now I can silence the querulous voices of Statler and Waldorf in my head.

Karen: Oh, I remember him, but I didn't know his name. And yes, he can be very annoying. Thanks, Stephen!

I went and looked at him. I see *no* purple on him at all. And given such an obscure character, I think they'd been better off naming it Piggy's Purple Passion. I'm just saying ... I mean, that they use Beaker "Meep Meep Meep" as a color. Otherwise, it's Miss Piggy, Kermit, Fozzie, Gonzo, Animal, and ... Pepe ... And I forgot my manners, thank you so much for the information! I was clueless and kept getting information on Pepe LePeu. Putting in Pepe the Shrimp yielded pictures!

Stephen: I also just realized something. Pepe's accent is not just French, it's Cajun. Sort of makes it funnier that he's a shrimp (like Rizzo the Rat). I still can't figure why they

made a purple nail polish with his name. You're right. I can see Missy Piggy in a purple gown more readily.

"Beauty is in the eye of the beholder and it may be necessary from time to time to give a stupid or misinformed beholder a black eye." ("Miss Piggy"/Jim Henson)

You know, I think that if, when you were born, you were given the entire collection of [X,]XXX [Activities, Places, Etc.] to [Experience] Before You Die and the mission to complete each title, you would actually live forever.

I'm just saying

ShelVy: Reminds me, Laurie, of Way Back When. At MetLife I was a financial planner and had noticed how many, many people would retire - and die shortly thereafter. Researched and found out why: They had been in one particular field (around here, usually military) for most of their lives. When they retired, their drive, their main interest in life, was gone. They no longer had anything to live for! So I started preaching to my clients that they should have PLANS for retirement, something of interest to look forward to, something, in other words, to look forward to.

Well, as with so many other goals of my life, I ignored my own advice. Didn't WANT to retire. Then, after forced retirement, got deep into computers and PhotoShop and writing and **Planetary Stories** and have a life FULL of Things I Want To Do ...

And I'm 83, going on 100!

Karen: Hooray for you!

"Winter lies too long in country towns; hangs on until it is stale and shabby, old and sullen." (Willa Cather)

::snort:: Paige went shopping for me today and called to say she was curious as to why I wanted bottles of Pepsi instead of cans. "They sent the floor lamp crashing into my **head** and you wonder why I have an open container ban in this house?"

"Oh, right. So, the Pepsi just has to be in recloseable bottles, right?"

"Right." It didn't occur to me until *after* she left the store that I had likely done A Bad Thing. And when she arrived here, I realized I was correct. Instead of the 16.9-ounce bottles, she bought the 12-ounce. The problem, Bill, Jimmy, Kacey, Juan, and I had discovered, with the smaller bottles is that I cannot position my now slightly deformed hands on them properly to give me a good grip. I can do it, but it takes me a good thirty minutes to open the bottle—as opposed to no more than five for the 16.9-ounce.

Karen: Since you're stuck with these for now, can you get someone to open and reclose them for you?

Yes, I just have Paige or Juan make the initial crack for me. Paige's comment: "Wow! Why are these harder than the 16.9-ounce?"

Me: "Just lucky, I guess!"

Karen: So they were harder for her, too? Wow! I'm not a soda drinker, so I never noticed. Not saying I never drink soda at all, just not very often. Most of my soda drinking is flat Coke or ginger ale if I have an upset stomach. I can't drink coffee if there's sugar in it, either, just milk. I can actually tell by the smell of the coffee that there's sugar in it. :)

ShelVy: Is it Absolutely Hopeless to get Paige to take 'em back to the store and exchange 'em??? (Why do I feel that's a useless question??? <g>)

Yes, it is. I just have to have Juan or Danno pick them up for me from now on.

ShelVy: Ah, well ... You remind me, with your opening of Pepsis, of a much more minor prob I have; ever since I broke my right wrist many years ago, my right hand is weaker than it usedta be. There are times when I can't twist open a cap. We have a pair of scissors with a cap-opener in the handle, which I then apply.

And I use the capped bottles 'steada the cans 'cos I'm a naturally sloppy kinda guy; replaceable caps save the contents when I knock the drink over...<g>

Karen: That sounds like a good thing for Laurie to have - do you remember where you got it?

I had a plastic bottle top opener from Tupperware, plus a pair of kitchen shears with the opener. And, until February 2010, I even knew where they were. Now? Not so much!

ShelVy: Actually, DIANE got it. Was part of a mini-warehouse contents she purchased Long Ago... I say 'long ago' becoss she rarely does it any more. After TV has been deluged about such auctions, she seldom has a chance -- or even the inclination!!! Owners of those businesses now ransack contents before putting the delinquent unit up for auction!

Karen: Yeah, I always figured they went through the contents anyway, or at least gave them a quick looking over. Never watched those shows - IMO you need more than greed to make a show interesting. :)

ShelVy: So true! I've watched 'em 'cos it's ... kinda ... part of Diane's life - or, it WAS once.

"One must have a mind of winter/
To regard the frost and the boughs/
Of the pine-trees crusted with snow;
And have been cold a long time/
To behold the junipers shagged with ice,
The spruces rough in the distant glitter/
Of the January sun; and not to think/
Of any misery in the sound of the wind,
In the sound of a few leaves,
Which is the sound of the land/
Full of the same wind/
That is blowing in the same bare place/
For the listener, who listens in the snow,
And, nothing himself, beholds/
Nothing that is not there and the
nothing that is." (Wallace Stevens, *Snow Man*)

Sunday, 08 January: Today's winner of the Feline Daybreak 500: Peepiceek.

Ponderence of the Day: I'd like to thank my manager, my agent, my parents, my next-door neighbours, the man who sells me a newspaper in the morning. We're all familiar with the Academy Award winners' speeches, during which it's evidently *de rigueur* to publicly express your undying gratitude to all the people you've ever rubbed shoulders with. Nice for those thanked, I'm sure, but maybe a bit meaningless to everyone else? Underneath it all, however, saying thank you is a fantastic thing to do for all concerned. It's wonderful to be thanked, of course. But there's much to be gained by the thanker, too. A while ago I bought myself a dozen 'no message' greetings cards which I carried around wherever I went. Then whenever I had a few spare minutes, I wrote a few words of thanks to someone who'd made a difference to me on one of them and popped it in the post. It was fun (and easy) to do, and the cards seemed to go down well with their recipients. So why not give it a try yourself? They don't all have to

be big thank you either. I'm sure the man who sells you a newspaper in the morning will be tickled pink to get one.

Goal for the Day: Don't let your emotions get 'bottled up' inside. Appropriately share your feelings with others.

Today I'm grateful for: a) Sunshine; b) Rainbows; c) Prisms; d) Ear worms; and e) Tylenol.

Tech support: What anti-virus program do you use?

Customer: Netscape.

Tech support: That's not an anti-virus program.

Customer: Oh, sorry ... Internet Explorer ...

Moodscope Score (out of 100): Right then Laurie. Here's how it looks. Today's score for you is **16%**, which is 41% less than your highest result to date of 57%. You should be feeling that things have taken a turn for the better since the last time you took the test with a score of 7%. Whilst you probably wouldn't claim to be feeling the best you've ever been today, you are in a better place now than you were for sure. It's great progress and if you can keep up the momentum, it shouldn't be long before you're back on top again. See if you can discover the reason for your progress and set out to maintain it. Despite being below your average of 18.5%, you have actually made progress since last time. But you're above your all-time minimum score of 1%. You have journeyed a bit since that time.

"Winter lingered so long in the lap of Spring that it occasioned a great deal of talk." (Bill Nye)

I just got off the phone with Ed. His infection is back—and kicking him in the rump—and the streptomycin isn't working, so he's thinking more hospital time is in his near future.

I did make him laugh, and he said that was a plus.

Karen: That stinks, but I hope he goes to the hospital right away. If he waits too long, it just makes it harder for him to recover.

Uh, Karen? I did say we were talking about Ed, right?

ShelVy: Sorry 'bout that! Should I send him some jokes 'r sumpin'?

It can't hurt.

Stephen: Jokes are good. Our support is better. I'd love to know how this keeps coming back.

That is the question. Of course, since I've been puzzling my own doctors—not including Dr. Idiot—since my thing started, I'm willing to bet that Ed is offering his own conundrums.

Dave: I just got off the phone with him. He's in very good spirits, but a return to the hospital is a decent possibility.

You know, Dave, I am slightly jealous that you get the reasonable human and I get the sulky werewolf! Of course, now I know how Bill felt! It's okay, Ed, I can handle your temper.

Tech support: Okay Bob, let's press the control and escape keys at the same time. That brings up a task list in the middle of the screen. Now type the letter 'P' to bring up the Program Manager.

Customer: I don't have a P.

Tech support: On your keyboard, Bob.

Customer: What do you mean?

Tech support: 'P' ... on your keyboard, Bob.

Customer: I'M NOT GOING TO DO THAT!

Monday, 09 January: Happy Birthday, Joyce!! Full moon—Cold Moon at 2:30AM. Today's winner of the Feline Daybreak 500: Peepiceek.

BTW, Joyce, ShelVy wanted to make *certain* I didn't forget:

On Mon, 01/02/12@11:43AM, ShelVy wrote: Reminder: Don't forget to wish Joyce a Happy Birthday!

On Mon, 01/02/12@11:54AM, Laurie wrote: It's a week away, on the 9th.

On Mon, 01/02/12@11:57AM, ShelVy wrote: Yup!

Ponderence of the Day: I'm sitting in my local coffee shop writing this, with three highly animated conversations going on around me. Each involves a pair of women. All seem fully engaged, leaning towards one other, with proper two-way dialogue taking place in all three. (I'm not listening, ladies, honest.) It's creating a pleasant buzz in the room, alongside the classical music soothing its way out of

the speakers. And what a powerful reminder of the joy of conversation, the power of dialogue, the absolute pleasure of a jolly good chat. I don't know about you, but I nearly always feel better after I've interacted with someone else. I think our connections have the potential to lift our spirits. Yet all too often we rely on chance for them to actually happen. Surely something this good shouldn't simply be left to serendipity? Just as the six women around me have clearly arranged to meet this morning—simply to talk—I reckon it makes sense for you to do the same. Who can you get together with? Where will you get together? And more importantly, when?

Goal for the Day: Balance work and play.

Today I'm grateful for: sigh ... drawing a blank.

"Many human beings say that they enjoy the winter, but what they really enjoy is feeling proof against it." (Richard Adams)

Moodscope Score (out of 100): Right Laurie. It's shaping up like this. Today's score for you is **20%**, which is 37% below your best-ever result of 57%. Life appears to have been fairly level for you since you took the test most recently and scored 16%. It appears that matters have seen a big improvement, leaving you in very good shape. Your mood was not particularly low, but you are definitely seeing things more positively today. Now's the perfect time to identify any cause of this turnaround in order that you could replay it if everything's not quite so rosy one day. Not only have you done better today than you did last time, you're also flying higher than your average of 18.6%. However you are scoring above your all-time lowest score of 1%. You have moved on since then.

"It is deep January. The sky is hard. The stalks are firmly rooted in ice." (Wallace Stevens, *No Possum, No Sop, No Taters*)

Dance Like No One Is Watching

Author: unknown

We convince ourselves that life will be better after we get married, have a baby, then another. Then we are frustrated that the kids aren't old enough and we'll be more content when they are.

After that, we're frustrated that we have teenagers to deal with. We will certainly be happy when they are out of that stage.

We tell ourselves that our life will be complete when our spouse gets his or her act together, when we get a nicer car, are able to go on a nice vacation, or when we retire.

The truth is, there's no better time to be happy than right now. If not now, when? Your life will always be filled with challenges. It's best to admit this to yourself and decide to be happy anyway. Happiness is the way. So, treasure every moment that you have and treasure it more because you shared it with someone special, special enough to spend your time with ... and remember that time waits for no one.

So, stop waiting

- until your car or home is paid off
- until you get a new car or home
- until your kids leave the house
- until you go back to school
- until you lose ten pounds
- until you gain ten pounds
- until you finish school
- until you get a divorce
- until you get married
- until you have kids
- until you retire
- until summer
- until spring
- until winter
- until fall
- until you die

There is no better time than RIGHT NOW to be happy. Happiness is a JOURNEY, not a destination. So work like you don't need money, Love like you've never been hurt, And dance like no one's watching.

"January is here, with eyes that keenly glow,/A frost-mailed warrior striding a shadowy steed of snow." (Edgar Fawcett)

Reflections on Ponderence: The problem is less about who I could get together with and more of my getting out and going to meet up with the person. It's times like today that I sort of wish I was not here in Michigan.

"Winter makes a bridge between one year and another and, in this case, one century and the next." (Andy Goldsworthy)

Excedrin, Bufferin, More Drugs Recalled: Novartis is recalling 1,645 lots of Excedrin, Bufferin, NoDoz, and Gas-X because they may contain other products, including prescription opiates. Some of the pills also may be broken or chipped.

It's probably not a sign of *my* mental health that I picked up my bottle of Excedrine Migraine and, before looking at the date, said no *wonder* you work so well. I was chagrined to see that my bottle expires in June 2014. But it still works....

ShelVy: I musta missed sumpin'; 2014 is still a coupla years away ...

The recall is based on the concept that contents *may* (no promises, mind you) include opiates, including, but not limited to, percocet.

Karen: And the expiration date is how they are identifying the affected bottles.

ShelVy: Ah! I see...

Stephen: On the one hand, you're getting more expensive drugs at a bargain price. On the other, it may be the last headache you ever had.

::chuckle::

"The leaves drift toward the earth like ships to land,/A voyage launched from timbers'
great lofty berths,/Toward harbors safe, concealed from raider bands,/Of icy galleons
coursing wintry dearth./Squirrels don thick coats against Wind's numbing dare,/Mount
last determined searches 'long the ground./Brown grass conceals the season's paltry fare./
As hopeful birds scratch for what may be found./Through frosted windows glow the
hearth's warm light,/As fading day casts shadows 'cross the lawn,/And grey meets grey as
winter gathers might,/Undaunted as the chimney starts to yawn./Farewell brave day as

twilight draweth nigh./Perchance on morrow sun will gather high." (Dan Young, *The End of a Winter Day*)
