

IT

Last Saturday night, because the temperature wasn't too bad, we went for an evening family walk and took the kids to Walgreens for milk. Even at just 6:00, it was already completely dark outside, and a dense fog was starting to settle in, so Hubby and I decided it was a perfect night to watch a scary movie. The only thing is that we watch A LOT of horror movies, and most of them just aren't scary anymore. Call it desensitization to the horror, or maybe it's the fact that we have 4 kids and it's difficult to find something scarier than say, 3 of them being wide awake at midnight or someone taking off their dirty diaper and making a mess with it. But whatever the reason, it's hard to find a movie that will actually scare either of us.

While we were trying to choose a suitable scary movie, we came across Stephen King's IT. My husband was skeptical, but I was certain it would be terrifying, so we gave it a try. And I was right, well partially right anyway – the first time Pennywise the horror clown was shown on the screen, it was so creepily done that my husband grabbed ME and not the other way around – which was only actually because I couldn't even watch it; it was so scary! Unfortunatley, my husband was no longer scared once Pennywise began to talk, but I was creeped out by the entire movie... well, at least until the end, when the big showdown scene completely disappointed me and took away my fear – that's all I'll say, don't want to spoil it if you haven't seen IT.



I like to research movies that I watch; I look them up on imdb.com to see if I'm correct when I recognize actors from other movies. When I looked up IT, I came across information that pointed to the theatrical release of an IT remake in the near future – I'm there!!

I think I might want to read Stephen King's IT the novel first before I see the remake maybe; I've been thinking about what to read after I finish the 2nd Harry Potter book, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*. It's going kind of slowly for me; I think I'm ready for a break from Hogwarts – some Stephen King should do the trick! Then again, maybe not, I've been having enough trouble sleeping as it is – matter of fact, I go in for a sleep study later today. That's all I need is to get my sleep problems under control and then give myself nightmares by reading scary books... But anyway, wish me luck – I'm a little nervous about the study (I don't know what I do in my sleep, and I don't know how I feel about **strangers** knowing what I do when I sleep – that's kind of personal! Plus I'm going to miss my family like crazy and worry about them. I hate sleeping in hospitals, but at least in the past, I've had a newborn baby to cuddle!).

[Click here](#) if you want to do more reading about the IT remake – but keep in mind that this article complains about the same spoiler at the end of IT that I hated, so if you don't want to know what happens, don't read it! And one more thing... I thought Tim Curry was just excellent in IT. He was

unrecognizable, which was probably part of the charm!

My Favorite Amphibian

Recently, a friend and fellow tangents blogger wrote a [blog post regarding her bucket list](#) – for those who haven't seen nor heard about the movie of said title, a bucket list is comprised of things you want to do before you die. Her post got me to thinking about my bucket list, and maybe I'll post it in the future. For now, I know that one of the items on my bucket list – or many items, depending upon how I write it – will involve seeing certain species of animals; many of them endangered and rare. If seeing rare animals is on my bucket list, then I can cross off one item – last week I got to see several specimens of the [Kihansi Spray Toad](#) – an animal that is considered *extinct* in the wild!



Given my intense fear of them, I never thought that a frog or a toad would be on my list of animals to see – but the Kihansi Spray Toad is actually kinda cute! For me, it seems that the more brown and dry the amphibian, the more it creeps me out – not including salamanders, which I don't have a problem with at all. I'm not at all frightened by the beautiful blue

Poison Dart frogs or other colorful species, which is strange since those are the ones that tend to be poisonous and harmful to humans. Weird. So anyway, I think the Kihansi Spray Toad is both extremely fascinating and very cute!

The Toledo Zoo is the only place in the entire world where people can view these special little toads who were first recognized as a species as recently as 1996. Not only that, it is estimated that over half of the earth's entire population of the toads live in Toledo. I am so glad I decided to venture over to the Museum of Science in the Toledo Zoo last week to see the spray toad! It was the highlight of my zoo visit; all of the other animals were kinda lethargic. Oh, there is one more thing – my 10-year-old daughter got pooped on by a bird in aviary! She was a really good sport about it, and it just **plucked** right out of her hair – no harm, no **fowl**. My daughter's unfortunate accident:



It was neat to see the local wildlife congregating in the unused Hippo-quarium. It's too cold for the hippos to be outside, but the ducks have a nice place to swim – who would have thought about what a group of ducks look like from under the water?



My 3 daughters fit into one giant egg!



This was taken on a different day, but I had to put in this cute picture of my 2 youngest. My little guy is learning to say "CHEESE!" for the camera ☺



Harry Potter – Reading Vs. Watching

Now that I've read the first installment in the Harry Potter series, I decided to watch the movie make the story come to life. I wasn't disappointed, but I much prefer the book – the movie leaves out a lot of details. It was obvious that was going to happen otherwise the movie would be about 12 hours long, but the excluded details were enough to make me prefer the book to the movie. Here is a run-down of thoughts I had while enjoying the movie last night:

- Did the beginning of the movie portray Professor McGonagall as a cat as she is in the book? I didn't notice it, but I also came into the movie a minute or two late due to an unplanned (though pleasant!) phone conversation. I would have liked to see her as a cat.
- I really liked seeing how the train station came to life, and especially how exactly they found platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$!
- Did the movie explain the resident ghosts of Hogwarts? I noticed lack of explanation for other characters as well – especially Neville! – but as stated before, it's a long movie, so maybe it was out of necessity that they had to cut some descriptions that were present in the book.
- The movie is well cast and directed. Everything is just like I pictured from the book, and that's a good thing. I had considered waiting to watch any of the Potter movies until I was finished reading the series for fear that movie would ruin my vision of Hogwarts, but I'm glad I didn't wait; the movie was very enjoyable. I was pleased to see that creatures like the Gringotts bank goblins, for example, looked just like the

sketches in the book which also helped to make my expectations match the movie.

- Visually, the invading troll was cool, although its extreme smelliness was completely downplayed in the movie – one of the things I wish was not.
- This movie would be so cool in 3D!!
- The character Hagrid gained about 50 IQ points for the movie. He was likable, but reads dumber than he acted in the movie. I think I would have liked to see him more like he was in the book.
- The movie is a good representation of the book brought to life, but how is it to watch it on its own if you haven't read the book? I will talk to my husband about this because he did just that. And for me – the movie almost went too fast for me. I saw events happen in minutes that in real time, took me weeks to read about! But then again, there are over 300 pages being shown in under 3 hours.
- The character Severus Snape stood out as being very well cast – I'm not remembering a very vivid depiction of him in the book, and the movie did not disappoint in this regard.

FOLLOWING MIGHT BE SPOILERS – YOU MIGHT NOT WANT TO READ ANY FURTHER IF YOU HAVEN'T SEEN OR READ HARRY POTTER AND THE SORCERER'S STONE

- Quirrell didn't seem to be stuttering much in the movie, which brings me to a minor complaint that I have about both the book and the movie. I felt that Professor's Quirrell's character was not elaborated upon enough to fully give the audience the big surprise ending. Sometimes I would even get Quirrell mixed up with Filch (while reading the book anyway), but I guess that could also be a side effect of reading while falling asleep!

- Did I miss something, or does neither the book nor the movie elaborate upon why Harry's scar hurts when he see Snape?

Overall, a very enjoyable movie-watching experience! Fun for everyone – the kids weren't scared by it and enjoyed it, and my husband liked it so much that he's been asking me when I'm going to finish the 2nd book because he wants to see the 2nd movie!

He Ate The Cheesy Fiesta Potatoes, And Then He Wore Them

I have an 18-month-old little boy, and the other day, he tried cheesy fiesta potatoes from Taco Bell. I think the title of this blog post pretty much says it all.



Learning The HARD Way

This guy learned the hard way that there was no escape from Lake County Illinois Sheriff's deputies. He fled from a courtroom, trying to escape, and well, it didn't go quite as planned...

Oops, I didn't have the time to try to figure out how to embed this video, so [click here to see it](#).

Easy Money

How I wish I were talking about real life, but 'Easy Money' is the title of a board game we've recently discovered. As you may have read in the past, my husband and I collect board games. We used to go to thrift stores and pick up any games we saw that were missing from our collection. We fashioned ourselves a large game closet where we keep them all, and there are some games in there that we haven't yet had the chance to try. A few weeks ago, we pulled out the board game Easy Money and gave it a whirl – we all loved it!

According to the instructions, the first thing you do to prepare the game is to count out millions of dollars (fake of course, but still too bad) and bundle them into various amounts. This does actually add a fun element to the game; for some reason, it's much more fun to bet a million dollar bundle than it is to wager a million dollar bill – go figure. Had we purchased this game new, we would have had to do all the money-bundling ourselves, and knowing our general lack of patience, we might have quit right there. But we're glad we purchased this game used since all of the money had been pre-bundled for us. What I don't understand, however, is why the

people who bundled all the money then got rid of the game, especially without seeming to play it much given the game's relatively good condition. Once the bundles of money are made, each player takes his or her turn, all moving the same pawn around the board until the bank runs out of money. Each player follows the instructions on the space they land upon, and usually some sort of gambling or betting is involved. I really like the game's Lottery concept, but the Wall Street spaces are not my favorite. I've played 3 games of Easy Money, and the Lottery was responsible for letting me win 2 of those games at the very last minute. When someone lands on the Wall Street space, every player has to predict whether the market will go up or down and bet accordingly. Since the chances of winning the Wall Street bets are 50-50, you'd think I would have made some money. But I have some sort of terrible Wall Street luck, and I'd bet (pun intended, hehe) that I've only won the Wall Street gamble under 5 times throughout all 3 games I've played. I take it in stride though, the rest of the game is so fun and great for the whole family. Its only negative is the fact that it only accommodates up to 4 players, therefore it is not a contender for the crowded game nights we have with friends.

Patience

Our new bird is so cute! Not having parakeets for years has made me forget how pleasant they are to have around. JJ chirps and sings, and even when he's quiet, he's adorable to look at. My husband (who is not known for his patience anyway) mentioned the other day that he's having trouble with his temptations to reach into the cage and grab the bird to play with him. It's partly his impatience, and it's partly because he's used to just reaching out and grabbing his

obnoxious parrot. But my husband knows that if he is disruptive to the training process I've chosen for JJ, there will be big trouble!

I'm having trouble being patient too, but I understand how innately nervous parakeets are. Once you build their trust, they can make wonderful interactive pets – but the key is taking it slow and being consistent. As much as I want to cuddle my baby bird, I can respect his need for space right now too. But try telling that to my excited kids. The older ones (ages 10, 5 and 3) are ok about it; for the most part, they're content to just stand there watching JJ and talking to him. But my 18 month old toddler is another story. He is fond of banging on metal cages because that's what makes the most noise, and the rats don't really mind. My poor little baby bird, on the other hand... We usually shut the door to our bedroom since that's where JJ lives, but the other day, we forgot. I figured shutting the gate at the bottom of the stairs would keep the dog away from our bedroom, but kids opened the gate. While the dog was fine (I don't think she even realizes there is another bird in the house), I found little Beeber (that was our then-2-year-old's nickname for her baby brother) next to JJ's cage, and he hasn't been the same since. He still chirps and acts happy, but he now tries to fly around the cage whenever I come near – he used to let me put my finger right up next to him... He was doing so well with the training, we were bound to take a step backward. I still have confidence that I can train JJ to be a nice family bird, or at the very least, a little buddy bird for me. We just need to have a little patience.

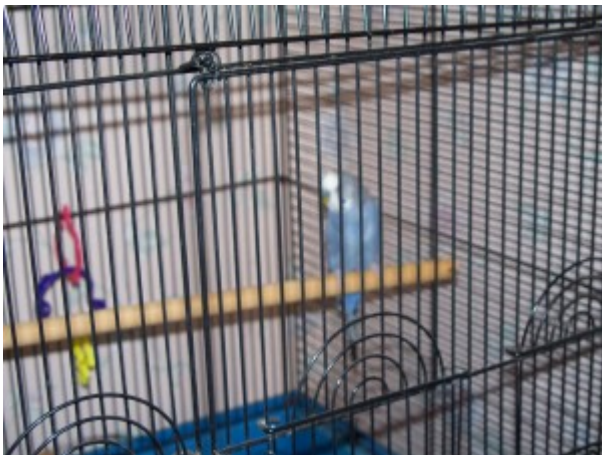
Missing The Office

Last week I really could have used a Thursday night pick-me-up from my favorite show, The Office, but alas, no new episode. I was sure I couldn't be disappointed two weeks in a row, but this week's ep is also a re-run! Then I started thinking about how it's been in the news lately that NBC is changing around their scheduling, most of it having to do with the Olympics and Jay Leno. Then I realized that if the Olympics are on NBC, the Office probably won't be on for the entire duration of the Winter Games! I did a quick search, and to my relief, I found that a new Office is scheduled to air on January 21 – not this week, but next week thankfully. We might have to wait out the entire airing of the Winter Olympics, but at least they're not going to make us wait until it's over and we'll have at least one new Office episode to enjoy in the meantime. Any other Office fans out there? Does anyone know how many more new episodes we get for the rest of the season, or at least how many we can expect to enjoy before the beginning of the Olympics? How long IS the Olympics, anyway? And fyi, the Jan. 21 episode of the Office is called, "The Banker", and the plot outline is this: When a prospective buyer for Dunder Mifflin visits, everyone looks to impress and Michael gets nostalgic.

Sounds hilarious, as usual! And don't get me wrong, this show is so great that reruns are tons of fun too. We were just watching the "Frame Toby" episode from season 5 last night, and we had to rewind 4 times to listen to Creed's classic line about the quarry – I'm not going to repeat it here because it's mostly the WAY he says it, but it has to be one of the funniest Office moments EVER! Which got me to thinking about a hypothetical situation – what if Creed were a character who came to our semi-regular game nights? HAHA!

Introducing... JJ!

As you might have read in an earlier blog post, I received a pet store gift certificate for Christmas from my husband. Today I spent it – I picked out the newest member of our family – JJ the parakeet!



When you adopt a pet parakeet from a pet store, the workers have to barge into the cage full of parakeets with a towel on their hand to grab your bird, and then they put it in a cardboard box for the ride home. This might sound like a mean thing to do, but in my experience (this is my fifth pet parakeet), the bird recovers very quickly; I wouldn't even use the word recover really; they always seem just fine. And JJ handled his transition like a pro! He actually seemed immediately happy in his cage! I put my finger in there, and he let me almost touch him, just a few hours after he got home! He didn't back away or anything! I am so excited to become friends with this little guy; he is so cute! It's been about 15 years since I've had a pet parakeet, and I've forgotten about how they just exude happiness! Already JJ moves his beak like he's trying to talk and responds to my voice. Hopefully I will make the time to train this little guy to be the little buddy I've always wanted in a bird – I

get jealous of my husband's relationship with his parrot. Wait, that doesn't sound quite how I meant to say it...

There's a fine line between training a bird, earning trust, and scaring him off for good. JJ seems very patient and ready to learn, and so am I – but getting to spend time with him while there is a trouble-prone toddler toddling around will be my greatest challenge, I think.

Many people have fun parakeet stories; they really are pleasant little birds. My dad and my uncle had a parakeet when they were kids named Tippy who would walk on their kitchen table. They would hold a hand of playing cards, and Tippy would walk up, choose a card, and then carry it in his beak to the edge of the table, let it go and watch it float down to the floor. I've heard that many (male) parakeets can talk, and of course they will sit on your shoulder and be your best friend. So yeah, I'm excited about this bird, and it's a nice feeling – can't say there's been a lot of that lately. Even if he isn't easily trained (defying all early indications), I've already tremendously enjoyed just looking at him and absorbing his pleasantness, something I look forward to doing in days to come... feeling a contentment that I haven't felt for awhile...

Just for the heck of it, here is a timeline of my other pet parakeets. I was a kid when I had them, so I don't remember dates or ages – each one lived for around 5-8 years, the usual parakeet lifespan. But it bugs the heck out of me that I can't remember which of my birds liked to ring his toy bell – Tippy, I think? I named him for my dad and uncle's childhood pet... The memories of the bell ringing bird have been replaced in my brain by the obscenely loud parrot we currently own who jangles his bell-shaped toy whenever he starts to get rowdy. Parakeets are actually in the same biological family as parrots and are in fact classified as parrots. So technically, we've gotten ourselves another parrot for our house, just what we needed, right? But

Squawky, the scarlet macaw (loud a**hole) parrot belongs to my husband (or my husband belongs to Squawky, depends upon who you ask), and JJ is mine – this is important since birds “mate” for life – I’m so happy to have MY bird!

So here’s that rundown of parakeets past:

Spunky – he was blue and fiesty, but we were really surprised when he she began to lay eggs!

Tweety – the only parakeet I had who was of the green / gold variety.

Tippy – named after my dad’s childhood bird; he was light blue.

Goat – my sister found him flying loose outside around her work. They took him in, and when no one claimed him, I named him “Goat” in honor of my dream pet at that time. He was pretty tame for a “wild bird”!

J.J. – dark blue, almost a gray to violet hue. And why is he named J.J.? It’s short for **Jungle Jack** Hanna, of course ☐

The Abyss

It took two nights, but we finally made it through the sci-fi 80’s thriller, [The Abyss](#). What is with me and all the science fiction lately? Not usually my cup of tea; I guess I’ve just been enjoying a change of scenery. One reason for wanting to watch the Abyss is that I was very impressed by director / writer James Cameron’s latest movie, Avatar. I enjoyed the movie in a little theater with old fashioned sound equipment, and I also got to catch it at a larger theater with awesome sound and in 3D – I REALLY enjoyed it! That doesn’t mean I’m

a James Cameron fan, however, and you couldn't pay me to sit through Titanic, whose concept I always thought sold out the disaster itself. I mean, for characters in the movie, there were over 2200 real Titanic passengers from which to choose – why spend millions of dollars to bring to life fictionalized accounts of such a horrible tragedy?

But back to The Abyss, another James Cameron water movie... Overall, this winner of the 1990 Oscar for visual effects was enjoyable, but I don't even know if I can say this is a watch-again-er for me. Reading the trivia on imdb.com about how the movie was filmed was almost more interesting than the movie itself, which tells the story of a group of oil workers who are hired to go on a dive search for a missing nuclear sub. Enter some Navy SEALs and a mysterious alien species, and you have enough action for a 138 minute movie. All of the diving and talk of the oceanic pressure kinda got to me after awhile; I don't think scuba diving is something I'm ever interested in doing. But I enjoyed the story and especially the visual effects, and without risking spoiling anything, let's just say that in typical 80's fashion, the plot was predictable. If you do happen to check this one out, or if it happens to be one of your old favorites, I highly recommend reading the trivia section on imdb.com to further your enjoyment.