

Denizens of the o'dark hours

I wish there were a term like "gloaming" for the early morning. Gloaming is twilight or dusk. I want a word for early in the morning, just as the east is starting to get a little bit light but before it's really clearly day.

I run early in the morning. If I'm not out the door by 5, I'm running very late. Throughout my running years, that's the time of day I like best for running. It starts out the day nicely and I don't have to think all day about when I'm going to fit it in or whether I'll still have the energy for it by the end of the day.

I like it because it's early. It's my time. Nobody else in my family is up by then (well, on good days, anyway) and I don't have to worry about anyone else. It's just me and my running. The other reason I like it, though, is because of the people who are also out at that hour.

I haven't met anyone first thing in the morning who is clearly unhappy. I say good morning and they say it back. Some of them also carry on brief conversations with me, always (so far!) positive. During the day, in the bright sun, I've said hello to people and gotten sworn at, but in that delicate time between full dark and sunrise, it almost feels like everyone has put the bad part of the day on hold for a little while. The sun isn't anything more than a suggestion in the sky yet and the day, for those of us out walking, running, or biking, is full of promise and possibility.

My mornings are better for running. I am happier for these brief interactions with people who are simply out and moving, maybe going to work, maybe getting some exercise. I can often hear the smile in someone's voice as they respond to my greeting. I hope they can hear the smile in my voice, too.

The denizens of the time before dawn are, by and large, good

people. I like that.

Home!

I'm finally home! Nyx, Loki, and I moved last weekend. It was ridiculously hot, to the point where just sitting on our patio would make me break out in a sweat. It was muggy. I was exhausted. I was, however, extremely happy because I was finally in our new home with the rest of my family.

The new apartment is quite wonderful. Nine foot ceilings give a sensation of space. The kitchen is beautiful: deep granite countertops, an island, a gas stove, lots of cupboard space, and under-cupboard lighting all combine to make me happy. There's a swimming pool, which is great on hot days. Nyx is still adjusting to having people living above and next to us but she's doing reasonably well. We still have a ridiculous number of boxes that need to be unpacked. We're making progress slowly. Since we're only really home much on weekends, though, that is just going to take a while.

I won't talk about my job much, any more than I did with my last one, but I'm very happy. I'm overwhelmed and the learning curve is very steep, but the people are amazingly nice and I actually like going to work in the morning. Because of my work schedule, I don't even have a very bad commute.

Katja's new preschool is good, too. The only problem is getting her to come home at the end of the day. She's having so much fun that she doesn't want to leave at the end of the day. She is talking a lot and I think she grew an inch in the three weeks I was still in the old house.

I have a lot of adjusting to do. I guess we all do. It's nice

to be here, though, and I'm looking forward to exploring a new place and learning a lot of new things.

One more move

Tomorrow morning, early, I'll be packing up the little truck with the help of a friend, coaxing the dog in behind the seats, stuffing a very unhappy cat into her carrier, and driving for much of the day to see my family again. I haven't seen Xander or Katja since August 24 other than through Skype, which, while nice, is no substitute for hugs and snuggles.

I am hoping that the cat either settles down or gets the kitty version of laryngitis because that many hours in a car with "Mrooow...meow...MRRROW!" followed by scratching at the carrier while continuing to yowl is not really my idea of a good time. Not that moving is ever a good time, but I don't think I'm allowed to wear earplugs or a noise cancelling headset while driving.

I can say that the past three weeks have been good in some ways. I have started meditating. My stress hives are not nearly as bad as they were. The house is in good shape and I had time to sell off the bits of furniture we decided we didn't need. I spent a lot of time reading, including Kameron Hurley's excellent new book, *The Mirror Empire*, the first book in the *Worldbreaker Saga*. It's a riveting read, her world building is very well done, and I cared about the characters. I am looking forward to the next book in the series! I also read *The Burning Dark* by Adam Christopher, which, since I often think in images, freaked me out a bit. I didn't actually sleep with the light on but I definitely thought about it. Moving shadows with hostile intent are definitely on my list

of freaky things. I haven't read this much in so little time in months. I generally read a lot, but job hunting, working, and normal family life get in the way quite often. Reading more is a habit I'd like to get back to. I'm not sure how the new schedule will work out, but I think there will be a little more time available. If nothing else, I can listen to audio books in the car on the way to and from work.

This move will be my last for a little while. We may switch to a bigger apartment in the same complex in a year or two, but we might just stay put. I picked the place we're living with an eye to possibly living there for several years without getting frustrated with it, so a nice kitchen was a necessity. Access to a swimming pool so Katja can learn how to swim makes me happy. It isn't big enough for laps, but if I need to, I can do water exercises. It's close to a lot of useful places and walking distance from at least a couple of restaurants. I get to explore new running routes, too, which will be fun. I think it will be good for all of us to be in a more multicultural setting, too.

It's a move, a long drive, a new beginning, a job I'm looking forward to, and a huge vista of possible new experiences. People periodically ask what we're planning to do after Xander finishes his PhD; for the moment, I'm just happy if I can plan more than a couple of weeks in advance. That should get better once we're settled in to the new place, but for now all I really want to think about is getting to see my family again.

Sleep adjustments

For too long, I have allowed myself the luxury of having an awful day after not getting enough sleep. I'm working on

changing my mindset, accepting that some days will be hard, and not allowing my exhaustion to color my interactions with everyone around me.

When Katja was tiny and she had a bad night, I could grumble and complain and it didn't really have much of an effect on anyone except Xander. He knows me well enough to tell me to go take a nap or to go to bed early when I'm too tired. He also is good at ignoring my complete lack of a sense of humor when I'm short on sleep. Katja is bigger now, though. If I snap at her for something minor, it upsets her. I can accept getting irritated for something that really is a problem, like when she was in a foul mood and smacked me. I felt justified at sending her to her room for that one. If I end up in the depths of irritation because she won't stop touching me, though, I am hurting her feelings because I'm letting myself react irrationally when she needs attention.

This isn't to say that she always gets what she wants. I'm just trying to learn to moderate my responses when I know I'm having a bad day.

Yesterday was one of those days. Today is likely to be one, too. Katja is going through a phase where she has nightmares. Sometimes she'll be fine for days. Sometimes, like this week, we'll have a couple of nights in a row broken by a screaming toddler running into our bedroom. That gives me a huge rush of adrenaline which is not exactly conducive to getting back to sleep. I have learned to handle it at work and to not snap at co-workers, but I've let myself be crabby at home.

I think being a parent is forcing me to grow up in a lot of little ways. I'm capable of holding it together, of being careful of my reactions, and of being kind even when I don't feel like it. If I'm willing to put forth that level of effort at work, I need to also be willing to do it for the people I love most in the world. If I need a break, I can ask for one, go wash my face, take a few deep breaths, and try again to be

more careful of my words and my tone. If I can't stand being touched for a few minutes, I can use my words, as we're often encouraging Katja to do.

It's easy to forget sometimes how much of an effect my words and tone have on the people around me. When I get tired, I get wrapped up inside my head. My ability to have empathy is severely limited. I can decide to break out of that, though. If I end up exhausted at the end of a long day, well, I would have been exhausted anyway. At least this approach won't leave anyone else with hurt feelings.

I'm not going to be perfect at this. I woke up this morning, much earlier than planned, and realized I wasn't going to be able to get back to sleep. I started feeling angry about being forced to be up, and then I realized (again) that my reactions are my choice. Yes, it's a pain to be woken up an hour earlier than I expected. Yes, I'll be tired today and my stomach will likely be upset because of sleep deprivation. How I handle it is my choice, though, and I'd prefer to be able to give Katja her kiss and hug at the end of the day and feel my usual upswelling of love for this little person rather than feeling residual irritation.

Today I will work on being very aware of how I'm reacting. Tomorrow is Saturday; if I still need a nap, I'll take one then.

[Crappy Day Presents](#)

I signed up for a gift exchange called [Crappy Day Presents](#). You send neat stuff to the person who is assigned to you and you get a package from someone else. It's an exceptionally neat idea and I'm having a lot of fun with

it.

The people who are sending presents, though, don't necessarily know me, so I'm going to list a bunch of random things about me and things that I like.

1: I like tea. I mostly like herbal teas, since I don't need much caffeine. I ended up drinking teas when I stopped being able to drink hot chocolate due to my dairy issues.

2: Puns are good.

3: Pretty much anything kitchen or cooking related will make me happy.

4: I have a sweet tooth, but not for things that stick to my teeth. Saltwater taffy makes me very unhappy. Chocolate is good. Caramels are good, too. They don't stick in quite the same way.

5: I don't wear makeup or paint my nails, so I'm rather boring in that respect.

6: I have very short hair, so anything hair related will get used on my daughter.

7: Interesting spices are good. A friend of mine gave us an assortment of spices from Africa and we had a lot of fun experimenting!

8: We eat popcorn, air popped, when we don't feel like making dinner.

9: I read a lot. Murder mysteries, science fiction, nonfiction – if it's printed, I can't help reading it.

10: My hobbies over the past several years have included aerobatic flying, dog training, belly dancing, gardening, cooking, and running.

I can't think of much else right now. I hope that helps

whoever is data mining for ideas!

Tuesday tidbits

Katja is almost over the last of her cold. I still have the cough, but I'm getting better. Xander is still working through it, but I'm trying to make it a bit easier on him. It isn't a pleasant cold.

When Katja is half asleep, she sometimes pulls her pacifier out of her mouth. She tries to put it back in her mouth, but since she's half asleep her motor skills aren't quite up to snuff, so instead she waves her arm up and down quite energetically. It's highly amusing.

I am happy. Not content, exactly; there is too much to do, too many possibilities. Happy, though, I seem to have managed. I look at Xander and I smile. I have a wonderful little person asleep on me. Cats and a dog are curled up nearby. I am learning to accept life a little better. I can't plan much at the moment, but that's all right, at least for now.

It's a little corner of peace. We have built home here, together. It isn't always easy, but it is good.

30 Days of truth: Day 19

Day 19 → What do you think of religion? Or what do you think of politics?

Religion and politics are things I'm happy to discuss, calmly, in person. I'm an atheist and I deeply dislike having people shove their views down my throat. I don't shove mine down anyone else's. I'm socially liberal but somewhat fiscally conservative (by which I mean that I don't think we should be massively in debt and I don't think we should be adding to that debt outside of budgeted money).

That about sums it up. I'll talk about religion (well, lack thereof) on this blog. I won't necessarily talk much about politics other than to encourage people to vote, whatever stripe they may be, because citizen involvement is important.

Next: Day 20 → Your views on drugs and alcohol.

[30 Days of truth: Day 18](#)

Day 18 → Your views on gay marriage.

Gay marriage? What's the problem with it? There isn't one. A bunch of frightened people who don't have the courage to try to understand differences, who react with fear instead of trying to overcome it, have made a huge deal out of this. It's a stupid problem. For a long time, people who were different from each other couldn't marry – people who were of different races, for instance. Now people are fussing because people who are the same want to marry.

People are people. People love people. There is no reason why people who love each other should not be able to promise to love each other for the rest of their lives. If it's legally binding for me and my husband, it should be legally binding for friends of ours who happen to both be men. They love each other. They are in a stable relationship. They are in it for

the long haul. Their relationship improves their world and the world of people around them. They are better people together than apart, as are Xander and I.

Oh, and if you want to make the argument that people who can't have children together should not be married? Shove it. We can't have kids and no one seems to have a problem with our marriage. A lot of married people don't have kids. That doesn't make the marriage any less valid.

Gay marriage should be normal. Marriage between two consenting adults should be normal and accepted and no big deal. Unless you have very compelling arguments I haven't heard yet ("god said so" doesn't count, and I've heard pretty much all of the arguments and none of them hold up to scrutiny) I'm going to have to say "You're wrong. You're afraid. Get over it. It isn't hurting you."

Come on, people. Everyone is not just like you. Stop being afraid, stop trying to limit other peoples' lives and rights, and focus on living your life without hurting other people.

Next: Day 19 → What do you think of religion? Or what do you think of politics?

30 Days of truth: Day 17

Day 17 → A book you've read that changed your views on something.

I've read a lot of books that have changed my views on things. I've read books that make me angry, books that I love, and books that make me roll my eyes. I think the most recent is *The Drunkard's Walk*, which I wrote about a while ago. I am

still trying to wrap my brain around some of the ideas in the book. They make sense, but they go completely against what I feel ought to be right, so they are somewhat hard to digest. Humans aren't really good at dealing with logic or predictions. That's one of the reasons why gambling is so lucrative – people think they'll win, they feel lucky, they're wearing their lucky shorts or earrings or whatever, and they end up giving casinos a whole lot of money.

I read Count Me In, which made me cry and laugh and understand my brother a little more.

The books which have made the most difference in my life are those who have stretched my understanding past my comfort level into places I didn't expect to go. There are a lot of books like that in the world, but sometimes you have to read a lot of books that don't challenge you or stretch your understanding before you find one that does.

Next: Day 18 → Your views on gay marriage.

30 Days of truth: Day 16

Day 16 → Someone or something you definitely could live without.

I could live without a lot of things. I think a lot of them come down to one thing: mean people. Unfortunately, most people can't imagine themselves as the bad guy, so they always have a reason why their behavior is perfectly valid. I would like to live in a world where people thought about the effect their actions were having on others. Of course, then we might have a world in which no one does anything because they were too afraid to move for fear of hurting someone inadvertently.

I don't know. Try to be good to others today, okay?

Next: Day 17 → A book you've read that changed your views on something.