

## Early morning

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Here are my kids at 6:30 AM. This is mid-stage in our usual morning routine. Usually I let Alfie out at 6:15 or so, after he wakes up and woofs quietly from his bed at the foot of mine, more a kind of throat-clearing that means, "Ahem, hate to bother you but.." So I take him downstairs, encountering Lulu en route...(I never know where she sleeps, but she is not allowed to sleep in my bedroom because sometimes she goes into nocturnal-beast mode in the middle of the night and turns into a panther and attacks my feet)...and let him out. (Lulu is an indoor cat, much as she would prefer otherwise. There are too many predators out there: coyotes, fishers, eagles, hawks, and an occasional car) Then I feed them both and...this is the embarrassing part: we all go back to bed. Zzzzz. Till 8 or even 8:30.

So this picture was taken at 6:30, after Alfie had come back in, and before I fed them both. While they were both eating, I had a sudden enlightened moment: the awareness that I didn't *need* to go back to bed. I was up. Awake. I could STAY up and awake. I stood there a moment, in my bedroom after we had gone back upstairs, aware that Vice and Virtue live very close together. Vice=bed. Virtue=shower. I wavered. Alfie was already curled up in his own bed, watching me. And ta DA! I went and turned the shower on. I stayed up. And now I am in my office, with coffee and NPR and a feeling of self-worth, and it is still early morning.

Last week I had three friends here and it was fun but meant that I didn't spend much time at my desk. There was too much fun stuff to do. Even when I was at my desk, tending my email or reading the NYT online, I was thinking: *If I pick up some pine nuts I could make that good cauliflower thing for dinner* or *We could go up to North Waterford and have lunch at Melby's*

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But now I am by myself and for this week, anyway, I won't indulge in such appealing distractions, at least during the day. Yesterday I worked on my manuscript, and last night I flopped down in front of the TV, as I usually do when I am by myself. Sometimes I find myself, alone in the evening, watching some completely mindless show, as if I am really interested in the British family with identical quintuplets...or worse: there is a channel that shows old game shows, one after another, and once I found myself actually watching Family Feud for several hours, really caring briefly whether the overweight cousins all dressed in red shirts would get more points than the husband-wife-and-inlaws from Arkansas. I should not do this. It makes me go to bed afflicted with guilt and a feeling of serious tastelessness.

But last night I flipped the channel-changer to AMC, hoping that it would not once again be showing The Shawshank Redemption. Actually I think TSR is a good movie but it is re-run entirely too often. Last night I was in luck. OPEN RANGE! Kevin Costner, in my opinion, can be forgiven for having made The Postman and Waterworld—two of the worst movies of all time; I went to The Postman with my daughter-in-law, and after about 20 minutes, we looked at each other and without saying a word, got up and left the theater—because he made Open Range and cast Robert Duvall and Annette Bening in it. Everyone knows about Dances with Wolves and Field of Dreams and Bull Durham; but Open Range is right up there with the best of them, and it was a treat to watch it last night, and with captions occasionally giving bits of information about the making of it.

Finally: Ginger ice cream with fresh strawberries on it...both ice cream and strawberries from Sherman Farm...is a dessert so good that it should almost be illegal...or maybe one should be allowed to have it only after passing some test of virtuousness. Just saying.

Tags: Untagged