

# Bento 23

**A zine for Corflu XXX — May 2013**  
**by David Levine & Kate Yule**



## **Howdy, Y'all**

Welcome back to Bento, the Mini Cooper of fanzines. We hope something within inspires you to write back.

## **Art Credits**

Cover and Smashed Penny by David. Enjoying Autumn by Brad W. Foster. Cat In The Box and two Bento The Box cartoons by Teddy Harvia. Český Krumlov by Karel Čapek. All the rest snurched from the Internet.

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New! David's SF writing website: [www.daviddlevine.com](http://www.daviddlevine.com)

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*"What's this credit card transaction?"*

*"Oh, that's the wombat."*

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## So, then. Bentocon.

David and I both turned 50 in 2011. We also had our 20th wedding anniversary, and David decided that all of this called for a Really Big Party. A mini-convention. A convention + square dance! (We stopped there, before it became a convention/square dance/software development conference/10K fun run.)

We had precedents. Elise Matthesen's Birthdaycon. Janecon, for Jane Hawkins' 40th. CroneCon, when three very hospitable people were turning 50 at once and decided it would be cool to investigate whether it was possible to have Too Much Chocolate, or too much good conversation.

CroneCon used a loft apartment rendered suddenly cheap by the dot-com bubble-burst. Our hotel search turned up a gem: the former Hotel Multnomah. There is a splendid spacious lobby with clusters of comfy chairs. On the mezzanine above, two right-sized function rooms—one each for the dance and the track of con programming—next to (next to!) paired hospitality suites. \$139 room rate including breakfast. All of downtown Portland on the doorstep.

Cherry on top of the cake: the Hotel Multnomah was the site of the 1950 World Science Fiction Convention.

Oh, yeah.

BentoCon went off like a charm. The one big mistake I'm aware of was the wheelchair-inaccessible venue for a group lunch. I am mortified that we didn't even notice until

the last second. Various smaller mistakes, like not noticing we didn't technically have the Reg area when we thought, or underestimating the extent of Ye Hosts' fatigue on arrival, were surmountable.

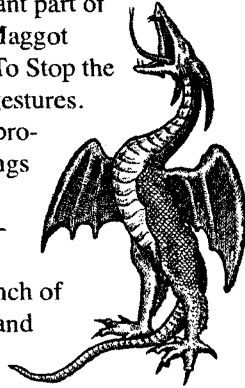
Friday afternoon saw a choice of walking tours: chocolate, or "Keep Portland Weird". That evening we welcomed the gathered multitude with cake and the singing of rounds, then started the convention per se with a pair of panels on "intro to SF fandom for non-fans" and "intro to gay square dance culture for non-dancers" that got everyone on the same page. The latter, surprisingly lively, could have gone on for another hour if my niece hadn't pointed out that the schedule said Charades now and why were we still talking?? silly grown-ups.

We had a single track of programming: readings by the authors present; the "embarrass David and Kate hour" with baby pictures and anecdotes by the relatives; discussions of archaeology, great women SF writers, Saturday morning cartoons. Each item seemed to get right around twenty-five or thirty people. Warm body count for the weekend, just under a hundred.



Singing was a surprisingly important part of the event. We opened with the Apple Maggot Quarantine Song from Bento #1 and "To Stop the Train" from Bento #4, complete with gestures.

Saturday saw a group singalong, with projected videos and lyrics, of favorite songs from Tom Lehrer, Jonathan Coulton, Queen, and so on. And David's old college roommate Kurt Gollhardt brought out his guitar on Saturday; a mixed bunch of fans and dancers sang Beatles, Simon and Garfunkel, and show tunes until the wee small hours. (While others played House on Haunted Hill to a soundtrack by Dave Howell.)



As I said, it went off like a charm. The SF people and the square dance people and our families didn't separate out into clumps. Programming went well, hotel staff were great (one of them even suggested taking the door off the beer bathroom for better access), the weather, the food, everything.

95% of that I attribute to (a) the quality bunch of people that showed up, and (b) Karen Schaffer's hospitality suite. We have amazing friends.

Some of what worked well along the way:

- Yahoo mailing list pre-con, to link up roommates and toss ideas around
- David's programming survey, with separate tick-boxes for "want to attend" and "want to talk"

- the physical layout, including two adjoining Hospitality suites with a wide doorway between. Food service in one; games, puzzles, and creativity in the other.
- given the many large-format beers, a place for bottles-in-progress.
- clearly labeled “Badge decorating station” where people could sit down & be creative. Geri Sullivan sent along a never-ending packet of stickers.
- claiming an end of the big table for jigsaw puzzles by opening one and laying out the pieces before the suite opened. (Whereupon it was self-sustaining.)

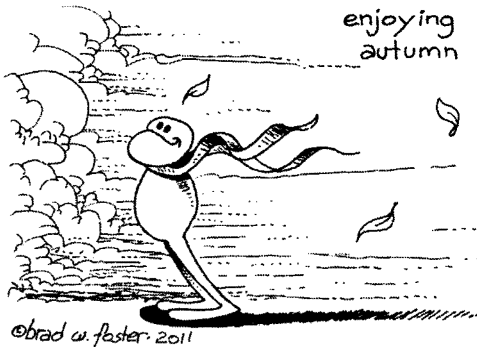
Debbie Notkin suggested bringing in dinner to the suite Sunday night, “for the survivors” as we put it. I didn’t expect nearly a third of the convention to take us up on it, nor did I expect the impact it had on Sunday’s dynamic. Formal programming ended at 12:30. Some people went home. Others went out exploring, or settled into the con suite to play games and eat leftover cake. You could leave without feeling that you were walking out on a convention in progress; you could stay without feeling that you were aboard a sinking ship. This was most excellent.

Saturday’s hoedown hoedown was a hit. It might have been nerve-wracking that there were all of four people in the hall at 7:35, including me, the caller, and his husband. I kept telling myself, everything had been starting a comfortable 10-15 minutes late all weekend; why should this be any different?

Maybe a dozen people from our square dance club showed up, and enough of the weekend guests to have, dunno, forty people on the floor at any given point. Not as many as I'd hoped, but enough for a lively energy level. The dancers enjoyed caller Bill Eyster and vice versa. He looked kinda stunned at what happens when you play the "Time Warp" for a room full of SF fans. (Especially since that was before Janna Silverstein broke her foot.) Just 'cause we're geeks doesn't mean we don't have moves!

Lise Eisenberg said she kept thinking of one particular Hugo Award acceptance speech, where the fellow cradled his new rocketship and said to his brother in the audience, "Now you can go home and tell Mom you've met my imaginary friends." The square dancers met the fans, and the fans met the family, and a good time was had by all.

— KY



## **Grimm Realities**

Two major network shows have been filming in Portland: *Leverage* (now canceled) and *Grimm*. We watch them avidly, playing “name that restaurant” or spotting where multiple sites have been frankenstitched into a unified scene. Even more: we signed up with the agency that provides their “background actors.”

Working as a television extra has much in common with jury service. David says of both that he “dressed nicely, filled out paperwork, was issued a badge, sat on a hard chair for a long time, chatted with interesting people, was called down to the place where the business was done, got to watch it happen from the sidelines, and was paid a pittance.”

You might, if you look carefully, glimpse us in:

- *Leverage*: The First Contact Job (K and D)
- *Leverage*: The Low, Low Price Job (K)
- *Grimm*: Let Your Hair Down (D)
- *Grimm*: Last Grimm Standing (D and a bit of K)

## **How Not To Appear On Television**

Many people have asked me how to achieve frustration by not appearing on television as an extra. Here’s an overview of all the methods I’m aware of, their pros and cons, and the different levels of frustration produced by each.

The simplest and best way not to appear on television is



**don't want to.** This method is easy, straightforward, and not frustrating at all. Unfortunately, it is not available to everyone.

If you are one of the millions bitten by the television bug, the most highly recommended way to not appear on television is **don't try.** This option is available to anyone, no matter where you are, and costs nothing. However, the frustration produced by this method is mild and fleeting.

If you happen to live within reasonable commuting distance of a city where television shows are filmed, you have several additional options, the easiest of which is to **sign up with an agency and never get called.** This option requires a bit of research, but is often available at no charge. I've tried this method several times and the frustration it produces is moderate, but diminishes quickly with time; after several months you may even forget you have tried it.

If you have tried the previous method and been unsatisfied by the frustration received, I suggest that you **get called, but for a time you are not available.** This option works very well for anyone with a life, and produces a unique frustration that actually rises with each repeated occurrence. You can increase your chances even more



by signing up with an agency that charges for premium placement in searches.

The frustration produced when you can **be available for a job and then be told “never mind”** is still greater, especially if you are not notified until the night before and have canceled other plans. This option produces quite a high level of frustration and is surprisingly easy to achieve.

If that is not sufficient, you can also **be selected for a job which is then rescheduled** for a time when you are unavailable. That happened to me for a role in which I was cast because I already owned a fabulous and appropriate costume!

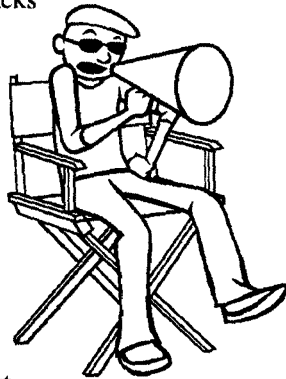
Having exhausted the options above, if you still seek greater frustration you can **actually work a job without stepping in front of the camera**. This option takes a lot of time—a full working day or more—and, although the frustration produced is deliciously piquant, you may find that it is dulled by the simultaneous satisfaction of seeing a television show being made, up close and personal, and getting paid for the privilege.

Possibly the most frustrating way to not appear on television as an extra is to **wind up on the cutting room floor**, a quaint pre-digital term for working a job, in front of the camera, but having none of your appearances actually be broadcast. The frustration involved is exquisite, coming as it does at the end of weeks or months of happy anticipation. (If you are unable to cope, you may be able to moderate the frustration by spotting yourself through a combination of freeze-frame, turn-

ing up the brightness on the television, and knowing exactly where you were standing when the scene was filmed.)

An advanced technique of not appearing on television, not available to everyone, is to **be called as a stand-in**. Stand-ins are selected based on their similarity in height, build, and coloring to a featured actor. If you are called as a stand-in, you will be on set whenever the actor is, and your job will be to take the actor's place while lights and cameras are being adjusted. You will know from the beginning that you will not appear on television, which results in a low, dull, throbbing frustration, but the real benefit of stand-in work is that you may be treated like a real cast member in some ways, such as being allowed to eat the snacks on the craft table. This results in a delayed but supremely heightened frustration the next time you work as an extra.

Those are all the ways I know of to not appear on television. If you've tried all of them and failed, that means you have actually appeared on television as an extra. If this should happen to you, do not lose heart! Keep trying, because you could very well be rejected next time. Good luck!



— DDL

**What? And leave show business??**

Hurry up and wait  
Unobtrusive, obedient  
We provide...background

Crew belts sag, laden  
Who knew there were so many  
colors of duct tape?

My inner fan girl  
is on hold. We're professional.  
SQUEEE will have to wait

Prop purse, real knitting  
and fresh hair spray—I'm ready  
for my lack of close-up now

They want us to be  
Journalists bored with waiting.  
We'll give it our best.

Epitome of  
cognitive dissonance: an  
albino Saudi

“You folks are in shot!!”  
“You left us here” probably  
impolitic, eh?

Students ebb and flow  
curious about our suits  
but not much

We want you here! Now!  
But not here here  
and not now now

As the Stars go out  
chairs shed their special nature  
swapped for blank canvas

The crew was here first;  
twelve hours later, check us out—  
and still have work to do.

— KY

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*“I have thoughts about Brechtian alienation and  
the history of American fascism, but they are being  
drowned by a cat screaming for chicken tikka.”*

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## Keep Portland Weird

Or so they say. We borrowed the slogan from Austin, which can use all the help it can get, being surrounded by Texas and all. My problem with it is that it presupposes that Portland currently *is* weird, of which I'm not at all sure.

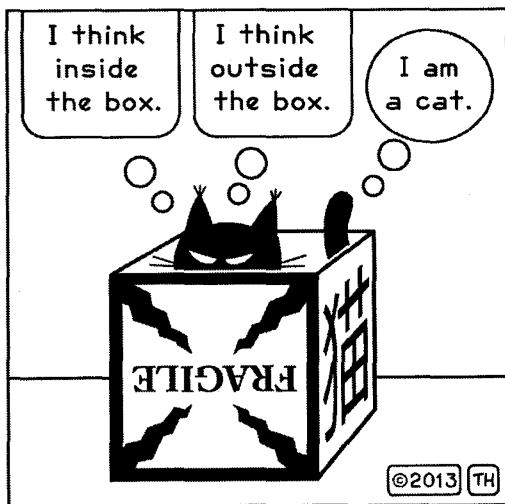
Granted, not every city has a bagpipe-playing unicyclist who sometimes dons Darth Vader garb over his Utilikilt, or ~~four~~ five adult marching bands. But surely everyplace has its quirks?\* Cincinnati five-way chili. In Detroit they throw perfectly good octopus onto hockey rinks. Miami, Las Vegas, and Flint, Michigan all have more tattoo parlors per capita than Portland. Chicago has, well, Cubs fans. Explain that!

Hmm. The more I look for examples of other cities' civic quirkiness, the more fingers point to Portland. I guess I'll take your word for it. Living here, "we're soaking in it"; we just can't tell. Watching the opening scene of *Portlandia*, as Fred Armisen's character described, wide-eyed, the strange Brigadoon he'd found, David and I were puzzled. Skateboards as transportation, yep. Used CD shops, check. Piercings, pirates—what's his point?

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\* Just as every locale has its own characteristic natural disasters. Severity is usually in inverse proportion to frequency, for a certain nationwide equilibrium of hazardousness, excepting barrier islands and the Mississippi delta. Here, ours are ice storms and volcanic eruptions.

Apparently we're strange for seriously using cars less, for making and mending, for hundreds of gourmet food trucks, and no sales tax. Works for me! In fact, I'd like to see Portland not be "weird"—because everywhere else has joined in! Let's make some quirks universal—civic composting, for instance—and for the rest of it, be universally quirky! Neighborhood barbershop quartets. Dog carts, parasols! Artisan pretzels! Your town could make it a thing to know ASL, how cool would that be? And you, yours could be into astronomy and dark skies. There's plenty of weird to go around. — KY

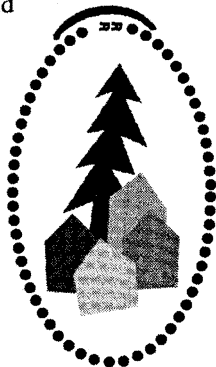


## Your Abbreviated Field Guide to Coin Collectors

*by Janna Silverstein*

I've been going to science fiction conventions my entire adult life. When you go to conventions regularly, you begin to recognize other members of the tribe, even without the telltale badges or obvious costumes that mark your cohort. Sometimes it's the T-shirt; sometimes it's the pocket protector; sometimes it's in the personal presentation—glasses, beanie hat, tote bag, button-festooned vest, what have you.

I've also collected elongated coins—smashed pennies—for nearly 20 years now and have been involved in the coin collecting community pretty seriously. Smashed pennies are those flattened oval souvenirs you can get at zoos, museums, and souvenir stores. You stick a penny and two quarters into a slider in the machine, slide it home, and then turn a crank. The machine rolls out a flattened coin with a new design on it. I'm a member of The Elongated Collectors (TEC for short), about 700 members strong from all over the world, have edited its newsletter, and am currently on the club's Board of Governors. As such, twice now I've attended the World's Fair of Money, the coin-collecting equivalent of the WorldCon, with its bourse (dealer's





room), numismatic theater (programming), and club meetings. And though coin collectors are what the fannish might refer to as mundane, I've learned to recognize their tells. Geekitude comes in many forms.

There are the Business Men (high-end dealers, coin-grading professionals, auctioneers, mint representatives, and so on), who come to these things in business suits with chunky, locked briefcases on roller frames. There are the Serious Collectors who show up in slacks and short-sleeved button-down shirts or polo shirts. These guys have money and they can get pretty grim-faced on the bourse when they're focused. They'll pull thick rolls of hundred-dollar bills out of their pockets to buy high-end, crazy-expensive, graded, slabbed coins as investments that they store in boxes that they never open.

There are the club representatives, most of whom are older men in colorful clothes (like the Florida United Numismatists—the FUN people—who wear bright orange blazers at every show they attend). There are the Numismatic Ambassadors, men who wear Google-blue jackets, shaking hands, giving out samples and introducing you to their clubs. There are the Young Numismatists or YNs, geeky kids of a certain age who are clearly straight-A students, shepherded around the shows by their stage parents, directing people to their meticulously researched entries in the Exhibit area, and who are impressively self-possessed and knowledgeable. And then there are the rest of us.

I came to coin collecting through elongated coins but have branched out into collecting Lincoln cents, state quarters, trade dollars, and transit tokens. I am first and foremost, however, a smashed-penny collector. As such, I don't get a lot of respect in the numismatic community. After all, to produce that which I collect, I mutilate coins that might someday be worth something to some mainstream coin collector. And while I have enough numismatic knowledge to pass, my passion isn't learning about rarities or coin grading.

How do people know me for a collector when they see me? At coin shows I'll wear a loupe (a magnifying device) on a lanyard around my neck (which is kind of like the pocket protector of the coin collector set). I'll wear my American Numismatic Association 5-year member pin. And I'll wear a medal pinned to my chest: an elongated quarter hung from a multi-colored ribbon. That's my tell: I collect elongated coins and I'm sticking to it. — JS

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*Whereas I was at the clothing-optional drag show.*

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## **Hither, Yon, Pierce, Fenner, & Bean**

At parties and conventions people ask "What have you been up to?" I generally stammer something vague, or respond with what David has been up to, which always seems more interesting. "Weren't you just traveling?" Well, yes. That doesn't actually narrow it down.

Last weekend we walked with llamas. It was a short day hike at dramatic Smith Rock State Park with lunch at the midpoint, all food, chairs, etc. having been packed in on llama-back. They stand about the same height as a person, so the walk is punctuated with warm whuffs of llama breath against one's neck. Not, surprisingly, juniper-scented, despite their love for browsing along the way.

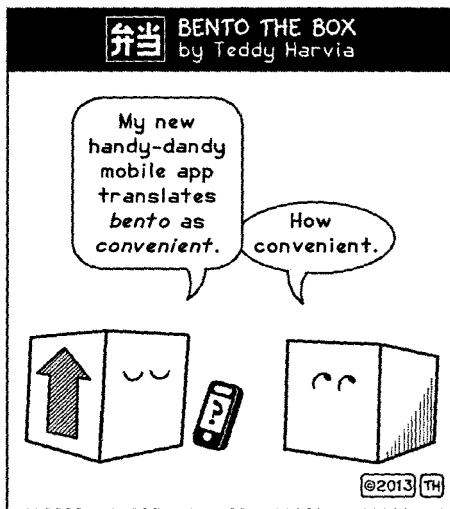
I took my 14-yr-old niece to Washington, DC during spring break. It was cold, and the predicted date for "peak bloom" on the cherry blossoms kept retreating from us day by day like an ebb tide. I made a conscious effort to give ourselves white space: head back to the hotel *before* we hit the wall each day instead of taking in "just one more exhibit." Even so, we saw the Lincoln Memorial by night; the National Cathedral; Gallaudet; minerals and mammals at Natural History; a roomful of Amelia Earhart at the Portrait Gallery; a performance of *Hello, Dolly* at Ford's Theatre; Girl Scouts and the Greensboro lunch counter at American History; behind the scenes in the Library of Congress map room. Izzy pogo'd for happiness in anticipation of the "Operation Spy" experience at the International Spy Museum. Reality did not disappoint.

In our down time, she introduced me to the world of *Sherlock* fanfic, and to a genre where gamers record their commentary as they play an RPG, then create new animation to the audio. I think. Or is it the original game imagery? I do not know. I am a dinosaur.

A dinosaur determined to keep learning new tricks! In January I went to Steamboat Springs, Colorado for classes from knitting whiz Lucy Neatby — and a day at the Bridgestone Winter Driving School. Because it was there! The other driving students were three cops and eight guys who drive heavy machinery for the oil industry. “<crackle> Car 5, you’re coming into turn #3 a little high <fzzzz>”

We continue to run our own personal Amazing Race.

— KY



## The Language of Vegetables

You might be familiar with “The Language of Flowers,” sometimes called floriography, in which flowers are given specific meanings as a means of expressing emotion without speech. Some of these meanings are traditional and well-known even today, such as red roses for romance and rosemary for remembrance, but in the 1700s and 1800s there were numerous volumes of floral meanings, some rather absurd (such as lobelia indicating malevolence and asphodel meaning “my regrets follow you to the grave”), and the practice reached a peak of popularity in the Victorian era.

Personally, I doubt that most people ever agreed on more than a handful of the most traditional meanings for flowers, and that most of the rest were never used except in the most literary and self-referential poetry and in little booklets handed out by florists in order to increase sales. (“What are we going to do with this sodding huge load of camellias?” “I’ll tell Lady Sarah they mean ‘unpretending excellence.’ They’ll all be gone by Tuesday.”) You know how the Chinese restaurant placemat tells you that, based on nothing but your birth year, you’re an Ox and you should marry only a Rabbit? Do you think anyone in China believes that? Same thing.

However, the other day I saw a truck from a local vegetarian hummus company, and one of the letters in the company name painted



on the side was a carrot. Why a carrot? There are no carrots in their hummus. I realized after some thought that in this context the carrot is a symbol for vegetarianism. How many times have you seen a menu with a little carrot printed next to certain items to indicate that they're vegetarian? Oh, sometimes you'll see a V or some other symbol, but it's often a carrot and never, for example, a lime.

After a while I realized that there is a whole vocabulary of vegetables and fruits that, while never written down or formalized, is generally understood by most people raised in this culture. Here are some examples.

**Acorns** represent thrift, referring to the well-known habit of squirrels to "squirrel away" nuts for the winter and to the proverb of "mighty oaks from little acorns grow." Images of acorns and oak trees are often seen on banks and investment firms.

The **apple** is a symbol of health in general ("an apple a day keeps the doctor away") and dentistry in particular (referring to the necessity of strong teeth to eat one) as well as education (a reference to the traditional apple given to the teacher on the first day of school).

The **coconut** represents the tropics, and occasionally a difficult conundrum ("a tough nut to crack") or insanity.

**Watermelons** are associated with summer, picnics, and fun. Images of watermelons, both whole and sliced, appear in July to conjure up the ideas of a sweet, cool relief from the heat and casual seed-spitting from the back porch. (Watermel-

ons can be racially charged, so must be used with care.)  
**Strawberries** also epitomize summer, and at any season the picture of a strawberry may be used to represent the concept of dessert in general.

**Pumpkins** appear in October and November to signify harvest and plenty, and are often seen carved into jack-o'-lanterns as the symbol of Halloween.

The **orange** is a year-round emblem of sunshine and, especially, the states of California and Florida; the **peach** is likewise the emblem of Georgia and specifically the city of Atlanta.

Finally, the **cherry**, like the strawberry, is a symbol of sweetness, but while the strawberry is associated with jams and baked goods, the cherry is associated with ice cream and candy. The image of a cherry can also represent a treat, reward, or lagniappe—referring to the proverbial “cherry on top,” a little something extra that puts the crowning touch on a dessert.



Next time: The Language of Arthropods.

— DDL

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*They just kept cutting off branches  
 until the moose fell out.*

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## A Year Ago Today...

...we were in Bologna, as part of a month-long trip in Central Europe. It began in Venice, magical Venice, about which we had been saying for years, "I want to go back." Nothing has changed: we want to go back. From my journal:

*Left Venice by train yesterday morning in the pouring rain. It made parting easier. By the time we were settled in our new hotel, blue skies beckoned. Bologna is old, very old, with one of the earliest universities ever, and a cluster of notable scientific connections. Cassini laid out a brass-and-stone meridian line in the massive church of St Petronius—I forget when, but it was renovated in 1776! Add in a well-placed hole high above in the church structure, and you have a boffo astronomical tool. We made a point of getting back to St Petronius at local solar noon (about 1:15) to see the circle of sunlight on the floor cross the meridian line.*

*St Petronius closes for lunch at 1:15. Every day.*

*Italy can really make a person crazy.*

*The streets of historic central Bologna are lined with arcades, or porticos. Miles upon miles of them, wide enough to walk at least 3 or 4 abreast. They are both convenient and inconvenient, blocking as they do a clear view of storefronts unless you are right there. Welcome shade can tip over into gloom. They make the town look unlike any other.*

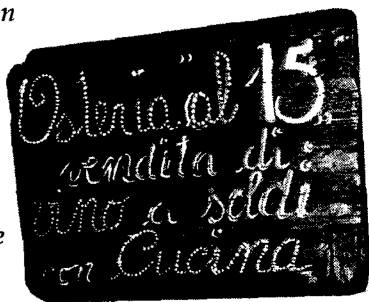
*The lovely smooth terrazzo of those arcade walkways camouflages minor changes in slope. That was my downfall*



yesterday. I stepped onto nothingness, and WHAM. Actually I'm rather pleased with my unthinking reaction: somehow I managed to keep moving forward as I fell, using up momentum that would otherwise have gone into downward impact. Also, no broken wrists, elbows, forearms—I must have done a Superman imitation. Took the impact with my well-padded chest and thighs, mostly. And my cranky right knee, which now resembles a prune Danish, rings of purple bruise. Iced it throughout dinner. I let Google Translate come up with "I have fallen outside; it is possible to have some ice for my knee?" The waiter was visibly relieved when I got across the concept "not on your doorstep."

That dinner, at Osteria al 15: Fresh ricotta to start, drizzled with balsamic vinegar reduced to the point that when I dripped some on my shirtfront, it balled up without leaving a mark. That came with puffs of miraculously non-greasy fry bread.

David had Tagliatelli con Ragu, the classic Bolognese meat sauce, emphatically not to be confused with any spag bol you may have had elsewhere. My Gramigna w/Sausage was the Platonic ideal of which Chef Boyardee canned macaroni is the rubbing of the shadow on the



*wall of the cave. We split a dish that was "just" a piece of rare beef with peppercorns. Replete, we repeatedly waved away suggestions of coffee or grappa. The proprietor would have none of this. He set down two glasses and poured. "You drink." Strawberry elixir.*

We had five nights each in Venice, Vienna, Prague, and Berlin; two each in Bologna and Dresden; plus (deep breath) Znojmo, Jinřichův Hradec, and Āeské Budějovice. Travel was primarily by train. One special week, we had a driver and a private guide. David said, "It's like like having a mom and dad who will take you to Gator Land, and stop for ice cream whenever you want!" That was in the Czech Republic. Rajec Travel—don't know how I stumbled across them, they don't have much web presence—is a small Slovakian company. Their itineraries described a magical landscape but none of the tours fit our timing. I took the daring step of asking about customization.

We ended up booking an itinerary heavily tweaked from their "Castles and Towns of S. Bohemia." The price was comparable to the small-



group excursion we took in the Australian outback, or a few days on a cruise ship. Again, from my journal:

*Somehow I'd pictured the three of us tooling around back roads in a little white car. Instead we are 4, in a small van, the Driving and Talking functions being handled separately; perhaps wise.*

*The fee we paid covers all of the transportation between Wien and Prague, Monika's guide services, our accommodations (w/breakfast), and entrance fees to any museums, castles, etc. in the agreed-on itinerary. On our first day, when we had no Czech coins yet, this last stretched to include 5 Kc for admission to the loo.*

*The landscape is beautiful, the towns and towers are beautiful. Yesterday we drove past hedgerows entirely of lilacs in bloom. The top of the old City Hall in Znojmo looks like two stacked green copper jester hats. We are hearing lots of history, from the Hapsburgs to the Velvet Revolution of 1989.*

*Somewhere on line I came across a trip report from a small group tour of craft enthusiasts. The writer described a visit to a family-owned woolen mill...serendipitously situated along our route. I asked Monika, she asked the owner, and today we spent a couple of hours being shown all over the place by father and son, 5th- and 6th-generation weavers! It was fascinating, both like and unlike the much vaster operation we saw at Pendleton last summer.*

*When the son explained that these two bobbins here are for the very beginning and end of some process because "those*

*are always no good", we said, "Oh! Just like the first pancake!" to general laughter and agreement.*

*We are on our own at mealtimes, and tackle the menu with the combined assistance of a phrasebook and 2 or 3 apps. So far there has always been at least a German menu, & maybe English, French, even Italian & Dutch! This is not as much help as it might seem, for their description of dish XYZ in French is of course not the actual French name, but a re-translation out of Czech. Cross-correlating is both useful & entertaining.*

*David was helpless with laughter at lunch today; according to his dictionary, pizza #7 contained floodplain. Also ermines. I ordered it just to find out!*

*(Cheese. And cheese.)*

We "only" saw five or six castles, adding in a lot of very local color: a puppet museum, the House of Tapestries, the Rococo theater attached to Cesky Krumlov instead of the palace itself. Pelhrimov's "Museum of Records and Curiosities" has to be seen to be believed, and another small-town museum has the largest mechanical folk nativity scene in the world. Many of these were as new to Monika as they were to us. Stick with us, we'll take you places—even if you're a professional tour guide!

Prague, Dresden, Berlin.... By the end of our trip, history both ancient and modern was weighing heavily on us, and we were ready for home. But it was a grand adventure.

If you'd like to read more, or see pictures, go to [davidlevine.livejournal.com](http://davidlevine.livejournal.com) or [kateyule.livejournal.com](http://kateyule.livejournal.com) and choose "Archive" to find entries from April/May 2012. — KY

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*"Isn't it great being reactionary old farts together?" "Not as good as it used to be..."*

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*"Because there aren't nearly enough pop songs about Carthaginians."*

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## LoCs

It's been two years since the last issue, so let's just say that we heard from **Michael Layne Heath** ("at a zine panel a few days ago hosted by the irrepressible Mister Chris J Garcia, a number of zines previously unknown to me were singled out for quality work. One of them being *Bento*"), **Jerry Kaufman** ("I helped Suzle to make corn bread for a dinner gathering years ago, by measuring ingredients. I thought the corn meal was a little pale. Although it was unorthodox, everyone was surprised by how well cous cous bread went with chili"), **Lloyd Penney**, **Brad W. Foster** ("Regarding The Matter of Cake, I cast my vote with David: some 'chocolate-on-chocolate' cake action is always welcome"), **Murray Moore** ("Mary Ellen and I are in a trial marriage: we married in 1980: the jury is still out"), **Andrew Klossner** ("How I Met Your Editor' was the best part of a rom com, distilled down to its essence, and made me happy"), **Kat Ice** ("I have negatives of every roll of film I have ever shot in my life and if the fire proof box really is fireproof even a house fire won't deprive me of my photographs and memories!"), **Terry Garry & Denny Lien** ("adored the quote 'Don't do anything Laverne & Shirley would do'"), **Laurraine Tutihasi**, and **Joseph Nicholas**.

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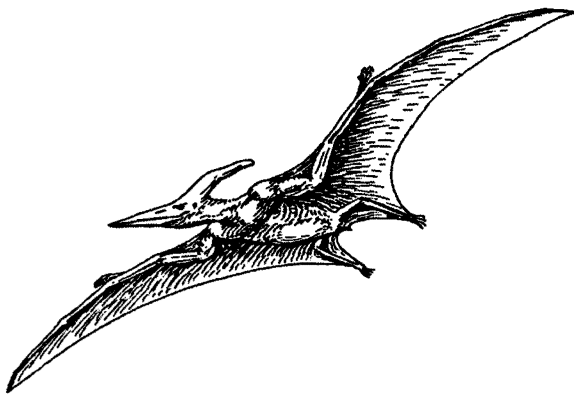
*"It tastes oddly of breakfast."*

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*Of course I've been robbed, but that's not the point.  
I've lost my dog!*

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*"Crustaceans vs. leeches? My money's on the  
crustaceans."*

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*I have found you adorable and annoying since you  
were 18 years old, and the proportions haven't  
changed.*

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