

Small Good Things

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This summer, as I waited for the official publication of SON, I wrote...what is it, the sixth? Yes, the sixth, I think...book of the Gooney Bird series, the one set in the month of March, as this series follows a second grade class through each month of its school year. For the first time, in writing this short book, I used the computer program called "Scrivener," which I had been told had so many handy shortcuts and gimmicks for writers. And it was true. It did. I began to like Scrivener, to think "Hi there, Scrivener," with a warm affection when I opened up that manuscript each day. Trouble is, Scrivener turned on me in the end, not unlike a gentle, affectionate dog who unexpectedly snarls and snaps. Maybe it had gotten a bad virus or something, or was easing into a dementia. At any rate, when I tried to send the manuscript off to my editor, Scrivener was no longer my BFF.

And so, this week, when I received the manuscript from the copy editor, with a note asking me to respond any suggestions, I was aghast to find that the poor copy editor had been forced to address hideous deformities of formatting: un-indented paragraphs, large gaps in the midst of dialogue, an occasional completely blank page.

"None of that is my fault!" I wanted to whine, like a six year old. "Scrivener did it! Blame Scrivener!"

But in the same way that I have learned, in my old age, to just get on with it, and to not waste time with blaming and finger-pointing, I sucked it up and dealt with the occasional issues that *were* in fact my responsibility: the fact that on one page a character is wearing green earmuffs, but two pages later, a blue knitted hat.

And today I have mailed back the completed, adjusted manuscript without any self-justifying laments. But I have vowed not to use Scrivener again, at least not until I find someone who can teach me to use it properly.

Good things have happened since I posted last. No, I did not win the Nobel prize, or even teach a new trick to my dog. But the election is over—that's a biggie.

And a lot of small good things:

I went to Maine for the weekend and found that John, my house painter, has completed my house and it looks pretty spiffy for a 241-year-old house.

I took good friends to a wonderful concert—Nanci Griffith—at the Stone Mountain Arts Center, one of my favorite places in this world, and we didn't get lost (well, okay, there was that one place where we missed the left fork; but we re-grouped easily).

Today, in Cambridge, the contractor showed up and it appears that my house, which still has gaping wounds from the tree falling on it two weeks ago, will be getting much-needed attention and eventually I will be able to sleep in my own bedroom again.

This afternoon I went to WBUR and recorded an interview show for Radio Boston, and hit it off nicely with the host (or do you call a radio host a *hostess* if she happens to be female?) so it was not a grueling experience, which sometimes those things can be.

The Patriots won Sunday, though it was an undeserved win, and they *gotta* do something about their defense.

HOMELAND has only five more episodes in Season Two, and they are able to maintain the suspense, which I know as a writer is a hard thing to do.

And I got the new Ian MacEwan book: Sweet Tooth.

That is a lot of Small Good Things.

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