

Out of Chaos: Coherence!

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Spring is finally coming, I think. My lawn is dappled with scylla and I can see a robin tugging at a worm this very moment, from my office window.

I returned from Michigan Monday after watching a terrific performance on Sunday of THE GIVER, with staging very different from any of the productions I've seen in other cities. And: a female GIVER! First time I've seen that, but it worked just fine.

And yesterday I signed books and spoke briefly about "The Willoughbys" at Porter Square Books in Cambridge, where I live. A lot of school groups there so the store was packed and they were great kids: attentive, interested. Most unusual question: "What kind of tea do you like?"

Ah, Earl Grey.

And that reminds me of a recent email, with a PS: "What is your favorite ice cream flavor?" and then: PPS: "You don't have to answer that if you are lactose intolerant."

Late yesterday afternoon, two guys in coveralls were in my yard repairing the underground sprinkler system...finding leaks, digging things up, appearing at the door now and then to announce, "Another valve needs replacing. it'll be another \$60 (or \$75, or \$125)...okay?"

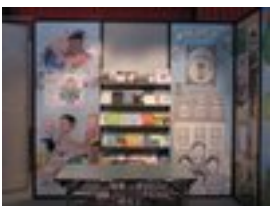
At the same time, I was grappling with a computer problem that made it impossible for me to send e-mail. So I had called and left a message with my computer guru.

So: all at once, the phone rang, and it was someone at NPR, telling me that a piece I had written and recorded would be played during "All Things Considered" in the next 15 minutes. So I turned on the radio waited, and indeed, there was my voice beginning to talk. Then the phone rang; it was my computer guy, ready to walk me through a fix for my problem. So I was listening to myself on the radio, listening to Computer Guy say, "Okay, go to Entourage preferences.." and then the front doorbell rang, and it was Lawn Guy, holding up yet one more broken valve; and then the BACK doorbell rang, and there was nephew Michael (to whom, years ago, my book "The One Hundredth Thing about Caroline" was dedicated) in from New York briefly, stopping by to say hello...

Eventually, everything emerged out of chaos. The NPR piece ended (you can hear it by googling "You Must Read This" which will take you to the website). Lawn Guys finished and departed. Computer Guy successfully got me through my glitch-fix. And Michael waited patiently until we could sit down and pour a glass of wine and have a brief visit.

In retrospect this reminds me a little of the point in writing a novel where a lot of fragments begin to meet and be relevant, connecting to each other. My particular fragments yesterday had no real connection. If they had been written into a novel, Lawn Guy would have overheard the NPR segment, which was about books, of course, and he would have said, "Hey, I've written a novel! Would you—" ; I would have said to Nephew Michael, "Sorry, I have to finish this phone call with Computer Guy Ben Lowengard; and Michael would have said: "Ben Lowengard? Is that the same Ben Lowengard who—?" and so on and on. Connecting.

Here's a picture of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt's booth at the recent Bologna Book Fair, which is where American publishers go in order to sell foreign rights, and foreign publishers go in order to sell their books to American publishers. You can see that HMH was featuring "The Willoughbys," among others.



The doctor who lives across the street from me has just gone into the park to walk his two dogs; and here comes Sophie, the German Shepherd who lives up the street, arriving to play with Alfie. So the day begins.

Tags: Untagged