

## A guy in a dog suit

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Very soon now I will stop obsessing about my new puppy and turn my attention back to my work. A new puppy IS one's work, for a while. Last night I moved Alfie's crate to the studio off the barn, farther away from my bedroom, so that I (and my neighbors) could hear less yowling, then I turned on the window AC in my bedroom...more masking noise..and then I slept all night and ignored whatever was taking place out there in terms of "Woe is me" noise. At 6 AM I went out to find him sitting there looking at me, no yelping at the sound of my approach, and a whirlwind greeting of tail and tongue when I opened the door of the crate, so he hadn't held a grudge. (though he had left a small memento in the crate)

Here's an interesting thing. The book GOSSAMER, which I am currently adapting to the stage, has a dog in it. I worried about that: does one find a dog trainer, create a canine actor a la "Annie" ...and how hard is THAT? But the theater director told me he intended using a human actor as the dog. Once the audience believes in it, he said, the rest falls into place.

Now, watching Alfie, his moods and postures, I can almost picture an adroit actor mimicking all of it: the tilted head, the "rub my belly" pose, the fake growl as, puzzled, he sees himself reflected in the glass of the door. At this moment he is doing battle with a squeaky rubber folded newspaper, pouncing on it, tossing it, then fake-ignoring it so it won't know that he is about to leap again.

When I go back to the play...as I will very soon...I will have a different vision of the dog, Toby. My late dog, Bandit, didn't give me that because he was so old; his reactions were slowed, his days passed mostly in resting. Toby, the book-dog, play-dog, will be someplace in between: no

longer a leaping, twirling puppy but not yet a tired relic. Toby will be an alert, interested, devoted dog. Okay, a guy in a dog suit.

And he will not ever, ever pee on the rug, as *SOMEONE WHOSE NAME BEGINS WITH "A"* *JUST DID!*

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