

## The Woman in the Striped Pajamas

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I know. I know. The title, with a "boy" instead of a "woman"...has been used. Book. Movie.

And I shouldn't co-opt it. But this is only a blog post ("*only a flesh wound*"...*Monty Python*) and it is the obvious title, because I am going to illustrate this post with a picture of the actual striped pajamas.

They are striped in purple and white, and I was wearing them when I went to bed last night, taking my iPad with me because I was reading a book on it. I actually much prefer to read a "real" book, but I do use the Kindle app when I travel, and often...as now...I end up with a partly-read book which I then finish reading on the iPad. Last night, it was the new biography of Penelope Fitzgerald.

Fast forward to morning. I woke up, as I usually do, at 7:15 or so. I got up, fed the dog and cat, let the dog out, made myself a big cup of coffee, and noted on the outdoor thermometer that yesterday's springlike weather had turned to winter and it was now quite cold.. 28 or 30 (a little hard to tell exactly, looking from my kitchen window to the thermometer attached to a wooden fence about 20-30 feet away.)

(I am including details...the striped pajamas, the 20-30 feet, the wooden fence, because that is what we writers do, to make a story come to life; and this is turning into a story).

The dog came back in, and he followed me when I, carrying my coffee, returned to the bedroom. Ordinarily this is when I would doff the striped pajamas, take a shower, and get dressed. But Alfie, the dog, jumped up onto my still unmade bed, and curled up, looking very comfortable.

It occurred to me that I could do the same thing. Not the jumping up, but the curling up, on a cold morning. The getting comfortable.

So I did that. Got in, pulled the covers up, set my coffee on the table beside the bed, and picked up my iPad from where I had set it down the night before...on what I still think of, three and a half years after his death, as "Martin's pillow."

Lots of email. Many I could dump unanswered. Some needing a reply. One from a dear friend whose dear dog is very ill...later today she will get the news from the veterinary hospital to which she took Sophie late last night. One, a thank you email from a daughter for her Christmas gift. I read my way through them, answered those that wanted an answer, even replying to a few that didn't need a reply. Took my latest turn in the several games of WORDS WITH FRIENDS that I always have going.

You all know what a time-suck the internet is. The dog was still snoozing. The cat wandered into the bedroom and jumped up and curled up beside the dog. Somehow I wandered onto the Reading Rockets website, which contains a zillion interviews with authors and illustrators. There is one with me that I did, oh, probably 8 or even more years ago. I clicked on a couple and listened to people talking about books, and stories, and pictures, and their work. Each interview is fairly lengthy and I didn't listen to any one in full, just browsed about here and there, and ...

Suddenly...

Gooney Bird Greene, in the first book of that second-grade-setting series, tells her classmates that good stories always have a "suddenly" moment.

I had clicked on Jane Yolen. I have been with Jane a number of times at conferences, and so have heard her speak often before, and she is always eloquent and wise, and she was in this interview as well, and I was half-listening, and half-dozing, and maybe half-thinking about getting up, when...suddenly.

Suddenly my doorbell rang. It's pretty loud. It startled me and I jumped, and..that's why I have

this photo and this title to the blog post. Coffee flew everywhere. Sheets, blanket, pale yellow bedspread...and yes, striped pajamas.



Scared the dog. Scared the cat, I THINK...(cats never admit to being scared. She stood up, yawned, and strolled away with coffee on her head and an expression "I knew that would happen, and I am so bored by it")

...and I, after answering the door (the mailman, with a package that needed a signature), schlepped all the bedding, and the pajamas, into the laundry room, and got dressed, which I should have done at 7:30 AM.

Now here is an odd thing. And an editor would deem this a "credibility problem" because it is a mistake, a novice error, to use coincidence as part of the plot of a story.

But in the mail today, which I sat down and read after getting the laundry in order and getting dressed, was a card from a good friend, who had sent on to me a holiday card that she had received. On it was pictured a beautiful cross-stitched wall-hanging that her friend had designed and made for her daughter's Bat Mitzvah. It incorporated pictured themes from her 13-year-old daughter's favorite books.



(This piece, incidentally, was designed by Rachel E. Braun and is copyrighted)

On the far right...a little hard to see...at the top left of the Hebrew letter, is the necklace from "Number the Stars." And on the far left is a rose, from Jane Yolen's book "Briar Rose."

Happily ever after.

The End.

Tags: Untagged