



In the Twinkling of an Eye

Sarah Ellis, editor



The Big Nap

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Adult detective fiction has cachet. Academics read murder mysteries on airplanes. People who would never dream of reading a western or a romance or a sword-and-sorcery fantasy can discuss minute details in the plots of Elizabeth George or Tony Hillerman.

Children's mysteries have never achieved such cachet. In an attempt to remedy this oversight, I suggest a series in the "mean streets" genre, translated into juvenile terms. For example, what if Robert B. Parker's Spenser were a preschooler?

Morning. Another day on planet earth. I do a few Cheerios and catch the opening of Barney. The purple veneer barely conceals his existential despair. This is no world for puppets, believe me, sweetheart. I put on my Oshkoshes, slip my Masters of the Universe laser stungun into the waist and pull out my Thomas the Tank Engine t-shirt so the bulge won't show. Grab my Spot backpack. Snap myself into my car seat. The mean streets are wet with rain. The wheels on the buses go round and round.

Arrive at daycare. Mrs. Bell is wearing her panda earrings. Foxy, very foxy. There's a new kid, name of Brandon. Bratz outfit, junior Doc Martens, puppy Tamaguchi, you know the type. The puppy is not long for this world. It's a steep learning curve here at the Bide-a-Wee Preschool and, believe me sweetheart, we don't do virtual. Brandon puts his lunchkit in my cubby. We have a "discussion". I am very ...persuasive.

Circle time. Mrs. Bell tells us that Wendy the goldfish died in the night. Today was my turn to feed Wendy. Wendy and I had a thing, a preschooler/fish thing. She was a fish with class. I stare at my thumb. I gave up thumb-sucking three, four months ago, time of the big orthodontia scare, but it is looking good at this moment, seriously good.

Storytime is Goodnight Moon. Goodnight noises everywhere, the long dark naptime of the soul. Christ, nobody says it like Margaret Wise Brown says it.

Snacktime I puncture a pack of Five Alive and spread some peanut butter on a banana round. The universe starts to look better. At the sand table Tiffany admits as to how she might be going to Tiny Tot Tutu's after Christmas. I allow myself the luxury of picturing Tiffany in a tutu. I give her a long slow look. She meets my gaze. I like that in a girl.

I tear my gaze away and look at the bubbles rising in the aquarium. Seaweed, little castle, no Wendy. Something doesn't smell right here, and we're not talking the playdough. Someone's going to pay, Wendy sweetheart. Someone's going to pay, bigtime.
