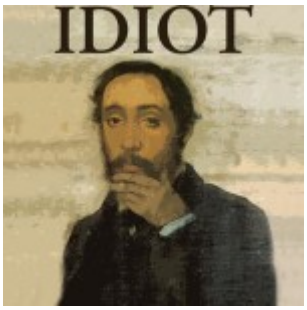
My Favorite World #8



I Like Big Books and I Cannot Lie

The astute follower of this blog<fn>The use if the definite article is pessimistically intentional.</fn> will have noticed that your Narrator loves books. Almost daily I add three or four titles to my “must read” list. It’s great to look at the list in anticipation of great reads to come. It is also to despair: so many books, so little time. We do what we can.

One of my favorite places of any kind is a good bookstore. When we lived on the other side of Lake Pontchartrain, the nearest bookstore was a Barnes and Nobles about 35 miles away. The family would sojourn there for a Friday night’s outing, and as soon as we opened the door, the smell of paper and glue and coffee would turn me into a ravenous book beast. Everybody went their separate way, and we would meet back at the cafe about 30 minutes later. Because the store was so far from home, I would turn up with an armload of books, because who knew how long it might be before I returned. Better safe than stuck without a book.

Occasionally we would travel and find ourselves in a town with a great, independent bookstore. In Asheville there was Malaprops, a truly magical place. Here, my frenzy was even more pronounced. Because who knew how long it would be until I found myself in a great, *indie* bookstore? Two armloads, minimum. Beach trips to the Forgotten Coast always begin with a trip to Sundog Books where everybody picks out their reads

for the vacation.

You get the idea.

When we moved to our current humble burg, no indie local store of this sort existed.<fn>Purely used book vendors are a different breed, and awesome on their own terms, but not what I'm talking about here.</fn> Sure, there was a Borders (now gone) and a B&N and a Books-A-Million.<fn>In my snark, renamed Books a Dozen and a bunch of other crap.</fn> But these are not especially appealing places for the book browser.<fn>B&N was at one time a terrific chain for book lovers, but the tchotchke-to-book ratio has taken a decided turn for the worse in recent years.</fn> For the book lover, the best option is the local library.

Our library is one of the things that makes this My Favorite World. The selection is terrific, the online reserving system easy and efficient. The place is well-laid out and well lighted. The staff, many of them volunteers, is helpful and cheerful. And if they don't have what you want, they will move mountains to find it through another library system. I've had books borrowed from libraries as far away as Miami and Houston, University of Chicago and Chapel Hill. Seriously, our library rocks.

But I miss the bookstore experience. I miss the feeling of finishing a book and placing it on my shelf – maybe to be read again, maybe not – and the conundrum of where to put a particular book. Did I like it so much it might displace a cherished hero volume? Does this belong in the philosophy section or science? Burning questions that fall to the wayside, because now when I finish a book I dump it, unceremoniously, into a slot in the wall at the library.

So while books, and the pursuit of books, and the dogged determination that *I will read every book in the world worth reading before I die*,<fn>Hubris is never pretty.</fn> are a

major element of MFW, I find myself in recent days wondering:

Why doesn’t our community have a great local bookstore?

Does our community really need one? Is it supportable?

Who has the stones/insanity/vision to create such a place? A place where people linger over the printed word and exchange ideas about what makes a book great; argue passionately about whether Oprah picks have ruined reading or saved it; quibble over whether the Booker Prize has gone soft by considering non-Brits; &c. Even more, a place that serves as a fulcrum for a vital community that values the inspirational and aspirational cocktail that comes from that luxe mixture of books and magazines and music and really excellent coffee.

Whoever that person is, s/he will be creating a vital component of My Favorite World. I’ll be waiting.

> ***V:****What’ll we do?*
>
> ***E:****If he came yesterday and we weren’t here you may be sure he won’t come again today.*
>
> ***V:****But you say we were here yesterday.*
>
> ***E:****I may be mistaken. (Pause.) Let’s stop talking for a minute, do you mind?*

MFW.

The Management wishes to….



Here at i2b, we love a good story well told. Alas, even though we have several to tell and – arguably – the skills to tell it well, the twain have not made acquaintance for several weeks now. It's not for lack of writing. In fact, the Writer has several pieces he feels merit publication and an increased daily ration of gruel and breadcrust. Lucky for you, dear reader, that the Publisher and Editor, in cooperation with the arbiters of decency in the Standards & Practices Department – good, earnest people whom the writer insults as "pecksniff simpletons" – have intercepted the notes in a bottle the Writer dropped into the privy in hopes of bypassing our essential and benevolent oversight.<fn>We had left him alone – shackled, of course – for our weekly shareholders and board of directors banquet. The menu was sublime, but we lost track of time and gave him time to attempt his deception. Luckily, we foiled his chicanerous efforts.</fn> We find them in poor taste, shocking to the conscience, and an insult to human decency. The Writer wept as we burned his makeshift foolscap (inscribed in his own blood with a sharpened toothbrush handle), but he is being made to understand that this is all for his own good. How he wept tears of gratitude when we cancelled today's flogging in favor of a light racking! It was touching, indeed, to see a man getting his mind right.

The Writer yearns to unlimber his quill on a range of topics – from what it means to dare greatly as an artist, to what in the hell difference is there between a wall-eyed undertaker and an alleged Democrat who votes just like him – but until that wretched scribbler learns to behave in polite society, the Management has no choice but to keep him under wraps. For his own good, of course.

My Favorite World #7



Some weeks I have to puzzle over which piece of My Favorite World to play with in this sandbox. Not so today. Nothing has ever been easier.

That picture at the top is my good pal Kati. She looks pretty damned giddy, right? That's because today, in this strange cracker box of a state that is Florida, marriage between gay men and between gay women is now legal, the law of the land, no longer taboo, absolutely fine, mighty damned skippy, and just plain right on.

Put it another way: Got a license? In love? No problem. Get married. How has it ever not been that way?

Kati is a duly licensed Notary, and today, the first day in Florida on which ALL human beings in love were allowed to wed despite other busybodies' biblical panty bunching, Kati wielded her mighty stamp of Notary and officiated for several couples – there were hundreds statewide – who wanted to mark today as their Wedding Day. (And thanks to Kati for permission to use her gorgeousness to attract people to my bloggy little vineyard.)

Scores of people in love, committing to one another in the eyes of friends, family, society, and if applicable, their God. This is so absolutely fabulous that I feel like Kati looks in that photo. My Favorite World, made all the better

because one more arbitrary barrier to equal participation in My Favorite World is just dust now.

MFW!

I’m an aging, straight, white Southern man, squarely in the tea party demographic, raised during the years when the word ‘gay’ first began to mean what it means now, a time when so-called *minorities* began to push back against the imposed normatives that had defined our culture for generations. It was a time when my predecessors – the white, straight men of my father’s generation – began to lose their firm grip of control, and the anxieties that they visited upon their sons and daughters in response were insidious and damaging in ways both subtle and not so. I grew up in a time when such thinking was *normal.* I had to learn to oppose these blind prejudices within myself. I was lucky. I’ve had a life full of wonderful friends, teachers, guides. I’m sure I was something of a project.

But today, we live in a world that is a far sight better than it was just yesterday. All because people in love get to celebrate that wondrous, awe-inspiring gift. And the fact that my kids get to grow up breathing the air of a more tolerant world – a place where people in love face just that much less of an obstacle to fully participating in their/our lives – makes me very, very happy.

Forget your June wedding traditions. January 6, people, that’s the day of mass hitching, overwhelming loving, and long-overdue ecstasy and embrace. Next time J and I get married again (I think it’s three so far, but one loses track), I want a January wedding.

My Favorite World!

Immune to Failure? Not so much…

Another week, faithful readers. Once again I enter the arena to wrestle an idea to ground, and once again I find myself with a foot on my chest. Mea culpa. Maxima maxima.