

A Sermon on “Fairy Tale: A Novel” by Stephen King
Sermon by Rev. Minister Angela Smith of COPE for August 20th, 2023 (and beyond)

I’m an avid reader and have appreciated Stephen King’s many works for decades. I’m going to do my best to avoid spoiling the story for you if you haven’t read it yet. It seems experimental. I found the quoted review commentary from various outlets to be seemingly unfamiliar with King’s entire body of work and/or at least not familiar enough with it to make some of the comments found in the cover. But, I feel their inclusion added to the entirety of the book as a literary work of art.

I believe it was experimental for Stephen King in terms of writing style, which was stream of consciousness recall by the protagonist and first person narrator of the story. The story itself reads almost as a private diary or memoir given the self-examination elements and self-acceptance, acknowledging faults and all. Given the protagonist is apparently a 21st century teenager, the character development arc seemed arguably critical in representing him as seemingly too soft, if one overlooks his success in sports including football, in the beginning. But, as a commentary on emotionally driven criticism in situations where a family suffers a loss and members handle it differently picking up the slack for each other when needed as well as what may help snap someone out of it, it deserves much praise. That messaging was subtle and delicate, a bit of an undertone to the introductory chapters of the book.

King references HP Lovecraft throughout, but I believe the story is also inspired by Shakespeare’s “Hamlet”, Mortal Kombat, “Willard”, “Finders Keepers”, “Star Wars” (also referenced explicitly), “Pinocchio” (and all the other fairy tales referenced explicitly including “Alice In Wonderland”, “Rumpelstiltskin”, etc at times as a means for the protagonist (Charlie Reade) to describe his own experiences), among others. Even the board game Chess is involved with the “Fair One”, though never referenced which leads me to believe Reade wasn’t familiar with Chess even though King is so familiar. Myths such as the Fountain of Youth are also explored. And, one of the fun things for me is that I expected a leprechaun and there weren’t any. I suppose one of the key components of the story as well as those interested in it at times were red herrings to a degree even if somewhat annoying. I have to say even “20,000 Leagues Under The Sea” also seems to have inspired some of it or at least the description of Gogmagog. HP Lovecraft’s “Pickman’s Model” as represented in the “Cabinet of Curiosities” series by Guillermo del Toro on Netflix seemed to influence as well though not referenced by title. Mostly just “Cthulhu” referenced by title in terms of Lovecraft’s work or how similar Reade found it to his own experience.

The point in the end is that what likely keeps Reade sane given his adventures is his familiarity with stories of all sorts, specifically horror and fairy tales which are also horror in their original forms. Even if you have a snowball’s chance in hell of surviving something horrifyingly catastrophic, knowing others survived something similar and how they did it, whether fiction or not, can help. The self-reliance and resilience of Reade is inspiring and though he appreciates help, he doesn’t expect it nor ask for it. That’s easy

to say after someone inherits financial independence for the rest of his life at such an early age. But, if I say more I may give too much away.

I had 33 pages left to read of “Fairy Tale: A Novel” by Stephen King when I wrote everything above. And, that remains true for the rest of this paragraph. If there is a leprechaun at the end of the story, I’ll have enjoyed it less because I felt King was using a red herring and then pulled a switcheroo. The truth is though that I thought he had his wife write some of it and then he wrote some like that old game where one person starts a story, then another continues it, and it keeps going until someone finishes it. That’s actually called “Once Upon A Time” and is considered a storytelling game. It is described here: <https://creatingcreatives.com/storytelling-game/> Some of the writing early on and language made Charlie seem very effeminate, but that was later explained with some exposure he had to grief counselors of sorts. Reade’s not homosexual and that is clear. There was enough graphic detail of King’s usual tone at times to confirm he wrote some of it. But, I’ll always wonder if it was all his work and as written the answer reveals itself in more ways than one. If that’s the case, I’ll wonder if Stephen and Tabitha (his wife) wondered if they co-wrote a book with only Stephen's name on it, if it would still be a bestseller and played with that whole concept quite a bit. The book almost demands readers guess who wrote it as written. The answer is clearly Charlie Reade to anyone who bothered to read it.

It seems King’s writing one with his son. Was that it? I still think if I’m right that it is Stephen and Tabitha together. For those interested in a book by King that many have found helps with managing traumatic stress, it is “The Talisman” and one he co-wrote with Peter Straub. I thought "Fairy Tale: A Novel" was reminiscent of that one too.

This is why I consider it literary art and potentially a masterpiece because the mystery can only be solved if it exists in the first place. Maybe he wrote it alone, maybe not. Ever heard of Richard Bachman? This isn’t outside his “wheelhouse” as a theory.

You’ll enjoy it more if you consider the possibilities. I know I did. And, as of this sentence, I still haven’t read the last 33 pages.

I read the final 33 pages after the rest of the sermon above was written. There were still no leprechauns. I feel “Fairy Tale: A Novel” by Stephen King is overall a testament to the resilience of youth and wisdom born of experience. “*Once upon a time...*”

For those interested in starting #TaoFu Self-Defense Exercises, please see <https://www.cope.church/taofu.htm> and begin at any time.

There are opportunities to send messages, receive mystery bonus blessings, and more with or without donating available now on our "Pass the Basket" page at <https://www.cope.church/basket.htm> . Thank You.

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:32 KJV Willful blindness is an abomination.

COPE accepts Feedback, critical and complimentary. Learn more at <https://www.cope.church/feedback.htm> . For the sake of keeping myself and others humble, a sense of humor is welcome on all sides.