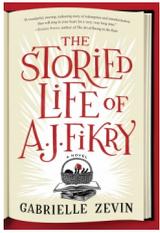


The Storied Life of A.K. Fikry



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Like bookstores? Like islands off the coast of New England? Favor novels that feature an orphan and a single dad? Drawn to love stories especially ones where the couple start off at each other's throats? Have a thing for rare manuscripts especially those of Edgar Allen Poe? If so this charming book-celebratory novel is just your thing.

The Storied Life of A.J. Fikry begins with publisher's rep, Amelia Loman ("a tall dandelion of a woman") disembarking from a ferry to visit a small bookstore on Alice Island to go over the winter accounts for her publisher, Knightley Press. The owner, the very curmudgeonly A.J. Fikry, is decidedly unfriendly and shocked by the fact that the old book rep has not come. Loman tells him that he has died and then proceeds to push her favorite book, a memoir by a widower dealing with his bereavement. For Fikry this hits too close to home but he does not tell Alice why. He has recently lost Nic, his intelligent and beautiful wife while she was pregnant with their first child. Fikry begins a delightful rant about all the books he does not like: postmodern, post apocalyptic, magical realism, ones with multiple fonts, children's books, poetry, YA, etc.

Later he feels badly about treating the young woman so badly and goes home and drinks wine. When he wakes up his "retirement-enabling" manuscript that he found with his sister-in-law at an auction has been stolen. It's Poe's *Tamerlane* and is worth a couple hundred thousand dollars.

He calls Alice Island's Chief of Police, Lambiase, who gets on the case. Over the years of running his booksho, Fikry has been molding the cop's reading tastes. They began at pretty basic, but now he has Lambiase not only reading high quality literary mysteries but also leading a book club discussion on crime novels.

The next day A.J. leaves the store unlocked to go running only to find when he returns a baby in the children's section alone. The chief of police is called again. He recommends that since it is a weekend, A.J. keep the poor thing until Monday when a social worker can come over from Hyannis Port by ferry. Over the weekend two things happen: A.J. falls madly in love with Maya, the precocious two-year old, and a young woman commits suicide by walking into the surf. The young woman is assumed to be Maya's mother. The novel proceeds from there. It concentrates mostly on the Fikry family, but also shares stories about other odd island characters. Always, Fikry talks passionately about books.

For another fun read about a quirky bookstore--this one set in San Francisco--try Robin Sloan's *Mr. Penumbra's 24-Hour Bookstore*.

Posted by Dory L. on October 22, 2014

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