

alimonti books

Slices of Rain

A Novel by Frederick Alimonti

Bill LaRossa sits up quietly in bed reading under the covers of his dorm in the Cedar Knoll Sanitarium. He seems a normal, if introspective, intelligent college student. Yet, not too long before his “stay” he was driven to suffer some form of breakdown. In a violent rage he had defaced his neighborhood church – a church that had to that point been a cornerstone of his upbringing.

Told from his perspective, Billy recalls his past; his education, and his childhood and various events leading up to his volunteer service at a local hospital, where he comes to adore a young cancer patient. He first observed this lovely girl in the reading room, where he made it his business to read a story with such joy and passion so as to bring a smile to her saddened face. He succeeds:

I closed the book and smiled too. I was actually so happy about getting this little girl to smile, that I felt a tear well up in the corner of my eye. I quickly regained my composure and bent down to pick up the pile of books at my feet. It was time to head home. It had been a wonderful story session. I wanted to take just one last look at the little girl before I headed home - just one more look at that smile I had put there.

As I looked up, I noticed Doctor Long kneeling next to the little girl and the two of them talking to one another. It was obvious they knew each other well. I felt like I had been punished for my pride. As I finished reading the story, all I could do was pat myself on the back for being so f!@#ing wonderful and getting that little girl to smile.

A few weeks ago I had fallen in love with Doctor Long. As I saw her sit down and talk to the little girl, I hated her. I hated her for being a doctor, for being a cancer specialist, even for being so beautiful. Her beauty just made her more deceitful.

Billy turns to his God, and comes to think that he has struck a deal for her recovery. Billy’s journey and his struggle with faith takes detours both light and dark, and the joy is as much in the story-telling as it is in the story. On a lighter note, Billy’s comments on his college history course:

I had two classes on Thursday, English and History. The first item on the agenda was Father Day’s history class. The most memorable thing about Father Day’s class was his mouth. A few minutes into the lecture, he would get these little dots of foam at the corners of his mouth that would just grow and grow throughout the lecture. This happened every day. He was about seventy years old and must have known that they were there.

There would be Father Day, lecturing about the French Revolution or German Unification and the spit dots would begin to form. At first they were hardly noticeable, just a little glint of white from the corners of his lips. Ten minutes into the lecture they would be the size of little pinheads - - by the time the class was over, they could be as big as two aspirin – by then they might even drip.

Throughout the class, as the little spit dots grew, so too would the tension level of the classroom. In fact, that tension may have been the only thing that kept the class awake. Thirty minutes into the class, I would bet my last dollar that the only thing on the mind of every student was whether or not Father Day would wipe those damn dots off his mouth. On those rare occasions when he actually did, I'd swear that the whole class audibly sighed in relief. Sitting here in the reclusion of Cedar Knoll, I cannot remember a single fact that I learned in Father Day's class. It's hard to believe that nearly a semester of European History had been sabotaged two regenerating spit dots.

As he recovers, he struggles with the issues that brought him to his institution and his impending release, Billy must come to terms with friends and family and, perhaps most importantly, his beliefs.