

FOR SARRON

23/12/2023

1 As we walk to the Indian restaurant, you give me recommendations for books to read, “Oh you really must read this....and of course this.....” It is a ten-minute walk and there are too many writers and novels for me to remember. I recall only one. I wish I had read it and got back to you to let you know what I thought of it.

3 Two-years later, you sit next to me at a Melbourne restaurant, and ask me to remind you where I am from. I don't say same place as Mark Knopfler! We don't get to argue whether Romeo and Juliet is better than Skateaway. I don't get to tell you that the album Making Movies is the soundtrack of my final years at school. Nor just how much it shook me up to hear its most famous track played at your funeral.

4 You gift me a story about growing up with a father who hated bureaucratic authorities such as the local council. A twenty-foot sculpture in the front garden, entirely made of what we'd now call recyclables, but was then known as rubbish, emerged from your father's hands. Strangely, you don't seem to have been embarrassed by him. Immediately I want to write about a character that so defiantly flips the bird at authorities. I tell you it's a great story and that I am really tempted to steal it!

5 George Saunders said, “The architecture of our minds are similar” What a great expression. Obviously this is why novels invite us to feel so much for them and their characters even when the writer lived centuries ago and we don't know them personally.

After your funeral, I order the George Saunders novel, and then take Mark Knopfler for a shuffle-jog around the neighborhood.

I feel for you, your family, your friends, and I think of the way brief, fleeting snatches of contact and conversation, just like novels might, just might, live on.

2 Three of us have a coffee the next morning. The sun is bright and we sit in a courtyard full of plants. Each of us shy strangers. We talk about psychoanalysis. You have a gentle feel. I notice your striking eyes. Suddenly you say to me, “Come to WA and give a guest lecture!” “I don't have anything I could lecture about.” I laugh. Stupidly. I wish I had.

Charlie Stansfield

