

Miracles

Occasionally I have been asked by various people whether or not I believe in miracles. I usually say I believe in preposterously unlikely events. If pressed, I will sometimes say that there are phenomena that can't be explained. Here is an example.

Picture this. A young man leaves the monastery at the age of 20. He has never dated, learned to dance, kissed a girl. He is as socially naïve and inexperienced as it is possible to be at that age in the 1950s American culture. And shy, painfully shy.

That summer he gets a job as a lifeguard. Talk about an experience an ex-monk dreams about. He is a lifeguard. Girls like lifeguards. He likes girls and is a lifeguard. End of story? Well, no...it turns out this young man looks like he's around 13 years old and all the teeny-boppers love him. Girls his own age think he's in Junior High. This does not enhance his experience with girls at all since he has a conscience and won't mess around with little girlies. In any case, they still write him at college for over a year. Bummer.

So he goes to a little college a continent away. This school studies weird stuff. They don't have text books. They go to the original sources. For math they go to Euclid and Ptolemy. They study ancient Greek and translate Euripides, Aristophanes and Herodotus. They read plays, history and philosophy from the Greeks who wrote them. This does not trouble the young man at all. He's already had much of this material at a nice Catholic college when he was a monastic guy. He had taken five years of Latin. He was good at math. He already knew how to prove the Pythagorean Theorem.



There was this girl in all of his classes. ALL of his classes. She was pretty and smart, but she was clueless when it came to Herodotus and Euclid. Even though she was right out of high school, she knew the ropes when it came to the boy/girl business. One day she asked him if he would help her with her math. Another day she asked him if he would help her translate Herodotus. During one of their study sessions, she said she had to go get a coke. Two hours later he was still waiting. So while he walked back to his dorm, he saw her talking to a guy in a

cozy alcove. She called the next day to apologize, but he was having none of it. Right. That night they were studying Ptolemy and Aristophanes again.

This turned out to be a regular thing. He was good at math and language, she was a good kisser. Each brought skills to the relationship. He fell in love and as hard as that is to believe, so did she.

A year passed. He stayed for the summer, got a job with a big electronics company called Westinghouse, became an “apprentice electrical engineer.” That is a code word for ‘gopher’. The girl went home, got a summer job, made some money and came back in the fall. They decided to get married. They had no money, so their friends helped out with food and decorations; it was a great wedding attended by friends from their former college and work. To save some money, they chose a date near Christmas so that the church would already be decorated. The minister’s wife played the organ, a gift since they couldn’t afford to hire musicians. Afterwards, the young man invited the entire entourage to their apartment to have a snack and a drink. Picture this: fifty people in the bride and groom’s tiny apartment with no bedroom a pullout couch. The bride apparently still loved him in spite of his excessive dumbness, but there was probably a lot of eyeball rolling.

Oh, yes. I forgot to mention that the wedding took place on December 21, the loooooongest night of the year. Good deal for the groom. Poor bride.



Fast forward. It is fifty-two years later. They are still married. They’ve lived in six countries, traveled around the world, had adventures and produced four children.

And they still love each other.

So what do you think? The very first girl the young, ex-monk dated turned out to be the love of his life. That has got to be more than luck, more than a preposterously unlikely event.

I think it is a miracle.