ForeWord Reviews

GENERAL

Waterfall Dance
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Stories That Stir
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The lackluster world of Will Thomas, attorney and video game avatar "Dick Savage," is complicated when he is retained by primatologist Emily Bennett, who is facing charges of "felony theft and conspiracy" for abducting/rescuing three chimpanzees from SpecuMed, a medical research facility, where their eyelids were sutured: vivisection is the operative term.

Meanwhile, flirty Thomas woos the ladies.

Enter Sparks, the star chimpanzee (not related to the disfigured Abe, Oreo, and Maggie) nattily accessorized with suspenders, living in a house with other chimps and with human caretakers as well, a safehouse with connections to Emily's late father, the founder of Simian Says. There Thomas learns that Sparks enjoys watching fireworks. Moreover, Sparks comprehends American Sign Language from both humans and chimpanzees and responds via a Stephen Hawking-like synthesizer contraption strapped to his waist.

The astounded attorney conjures the PR possibility of Sparks on the stand, witness for a simian humanity and to recall for the jury Sparks' ten-minute consoling conversation with the three eyelid-sutured chimps during the SUV-to-van transfer, following their rescue by Emily Bennett.

Alas, naïve Thomas was hired *to lose.* Primatologist Emily Bennett, commanding the press whilst in jail, generates sympathy and publicity for the cause.

Will Thomas revisits Sparks' domestic scene and joins the staff. Hand-in-hand, Sparky and Will sprint for a day trip to find fireworks. Here, a few pages from the end of the novel, the significance of the title is revealed via simian gyrations.

The book's evocative opening mood, created by the suggestive saucy-thug speak of noir detective fiction is overwritten. And, unfortunately, the ruse of chimpanzee rights/advocacy is merely theater for Thomas to find love in the hands of his pal, simian Sparks, because Thomas himself could never get the girl. *This* tale is louder than the alarming and haunting vivisection; laconic images of reaching: hands, fingers extended, palms touching are more fetching than the trio with sutured eyelids.

Nevertheless, the book does offer grab bag bits for assorted readers: courtroom repartee, animal antics, anthropomorphism, "book learned" nuggets, pseudoscience, fantasy, babes. And Simian Sparks, via synthesizer, has found his voice, as human Will Thomas has found his footing:

Iz-it-okayee-to-sayee-I-love-youu-Will?
Wee-arre-ae-familee.

P.Z.VISCHNIAC