Objects of Trust and Affection

Recently I went down a rabbit hole.

It all started when I heard a local story about Richard Dreyfuss. He was appearing at an art house cinema in Beverly, MA to celebrate the upcoming 50th anniversary of *Jaws,* in which he starred. Mr. Dreyfuss used the occasion as a platform for his personal politics, which turned into a rant that was described as transphobic and misogynistic. Hundreds of guests walked out, and the cinema issued an apology.

I read some of the accounts of the event and was disappointed. I have been charmed by his characters in many of his films, “Close Encounters,” “American Graffiti,” “Down and Out in Beverly Hills,” and “Always.”

A short time later, I was reading an article in *The New Yorker,* related to an upcoming sermon, and another article was suggested to me. In the real-life story, a photographer/hairstylist-to-few-stars sublets his apartment simultaneously to *hundreds* of people. After he’s charmed prospective tenants, taken their money, and broken countless promises with outlandish lies, they all meet in the apartment after one couple miraculously gains residency. They commiserate, form bonds, and some end up sharing different apartments with each other to minimize their losses.

The storyline reminded me of “The Goodbye Girl,” which was one of my favorite movies as a kid. In the movie a struggling actor subleases his apartment to a friend — of course played by Richard Dreyfuss — without telling his girlfriend and her young daughter. Without other options, the three live together and the adults end up married.

Curious, I googled the name of the real-life photographer/haristylist/scammer to find out where he is now, and the first hit was a professor, here at the University of Rhode Island.

I thought, “how tough would it be to have the same name as a notorious scammer?” If the good professor ever shows up here — and that *is* possible — it will be hard to not think of the scammer, even though the two are probably unrelated in any way.

Meanwhile, I’m disappointed about Richard Dreyfus. I can’t help wondering: while he was churning out films in the 70’s and 80’s, did he hold those views, but more quietly? If he were vocal, would I have still liked him? Or have our times just made it more difficult to relate to people with political views we find odious?

More to the point, why do people so often turn out to not be the people we expect them to be? Should we trust people just because they have a sympathetic story and say the kinds of things we want to hear?

All of this makes me glad I have so many people in my life I know I can trust. Even if we disagree from time to time.

In Peace,
Rev Denis