**In the Story**

And so, the story of Argyle’s campaign takes another twist. Who can imagine how this story will end and how it will be told? My friend Amanda has the curse of not being able to resist going to the end of a book to see how it finishes before she starts reading it. She told me it was to see if it was worth all the effort – admittedly there is nothing more frustrating than getting two thirds through a book before you realise it really is a load of rubbish (what do you do: stick or twist? Give it up as a bad job or push on with it having got that far anyway?). That however is the risk you take when you embark on a book or a film. To remove that risk by sneaking a look at the ending takes away the impact of the story and ruins the whole thing. Because it’s all about the story.

We all love a story because we all live a story. Harold Goddard (an English Lit boffin) said that, “The destiny of the world is determined less by the battles that are lost and won than by the stories it loves and believes in.”

You are the hero of your own story, but it is a story interwoven with other people’s stories, and set in the grand, overarching story of the world, which some people call history. This is a framework for understanding life, or finding meaning in existence, or even just giving a bit of perspective to things. There are some who deny its existence: those who believe we are a chance collection of atoms bundled together growing then dying. Richard Dawkins says, ‘Natural selection, the blind, unconscious, automatic process which Darwin discovered, and which we now know is the explanation for the existence and apparently purposeful form of all life, has no purpose in mind. It has no vision, no foresight, no sight at all.’ So for him there is no big story we are all a part of. And even our little stories – the story of your life and mine – are actually just an outworking of an entirely unfeeling biological process that has no greater meaning.

There is a Siberian proverb that says if you don’t know the trees you may be lost in the forest, but if you don’t know the stories you may be lost in life. They should know: they have a lot of trees. I would say that the very existence of the magic of story points to a greater meaning: all our little stories speak of a greater one. And for me that story is revealed in the Bible: Creation, separation, sacrifice and restoration. Obviously there’s more to it than that, and the whole Old Testament is a series of stories within a story, each illuminating a different aspect and finding ultimate expression in Jesus Christ. It’s an amazing thing when you see it in that context, and this approach (what theologians call the salvation narrative) brings meaning and understanding to many of the difficult and mysterious elements of the Christian faith. (many of which, incidentally, are reflected in our modern stories).

In addition to this you can pick up the book, read the ending and not spoil the story, so Amanda will be very happy. And ultimately it sheds light on our own ending as well, but the middle bit is up to us to write for ourselves. I’m hoping that Argyle will have the drive and self-belief to write a fantastic final chapter to this season, but regardless of the outcome it has been an exciting journey – the theme of journeys crop up a lot in stories don’t they? I wonder if Curtis Nelson has been told by John Sheridan to click hi football boots three times and repeat, ‘There’s no place like League One, there’s no place like League One.’ Worth a try surely?