



***highlights
& lowlights***

Mr. Fox: “By the way, you look unbelievably beautiful tonight, you’re practically glowing.”

I wish I could tell you the first time that I saw *Fantastic Mr. Fox*. It’d be nice if my memory would allow me the luxury of reminiscing in that first watch.

Hm.

Why don’t I remember?

Well, it had to have been in high school, so at least four years ago anyways. Saying I’d seen it just once a year though, a reasonable watch number for the normal population, would simply be a lie. Verging on ten re-watches is closer to the right answer.

It’s become somewhat of a family inside joke as the years have gone by. When we sit down to eat dinner, sometimes the moment strikes to scarf down our food with our hands, just like Mr. Fox inhales the waffles his wife, Felicity, makes for him at the beginning of the film. When someone swears, my dad and I look at each other and quote Mr. Fox arguing with Badger: “Are you cussin’ with me?” When my birthday rolls around, my parents make a point of sitting down to watch the movie, just because it’s my favorite.

It’s a movie I return to for a number of reasons:

1. When things in the real world feel a little too hard, the score grounds me. Whimsical glockenspiel, plucky banjos, and a melodic cello. I spend hours replaying the soundtrack top to bottom over and over: at work, doing work, creating work. My dad and I hum along to it in the car and laugh at ourselves. I’ve come to memorize the motifs that Alexandre Desplat, the composer, utilizes throughout the film and I recognize the iterations of them not only against each other, but also in how Desplat ties them into the pop culture songs he includes in the soundtrack.

“The Ballad of Davy Crockett” by The Mellomen is a perfect tonal match, and the same goes for “Heroes and Villains” from The Beach Boys and “Street Fighting Man” by The Rolling Stones. The old timey rock and roll is a unique blend with the general themes of self-identity and greed that the film addresses, but they ground the audience in a feeling of whimsy that is exemplified in the humor of the movie. It turns out that I listen to the score so much that it’s gotten to the point where some of the songs have made their way into my Spotify top songs of X year. That’s saying something, huh.

2. When I don’t know the right direction to go, I can find comfort in the idea of not knowing with Mr. Fox’s son, Ash. It’s easier to orient myself when I can empathize with his experience first. I may not be an adolescent boy fox who wears a cape and sweat-pants tucked into his tube socks, but I think sometimes I feel that way.

Mr. Fox: “Tails don’t grow back. I’m going to be tailless for the rest of my life.”

Ash: “Well, anyway, it’s not half as bad as double pneumonia, right? I mean his dad’s got one foot in the grave on three on a banana peel. That’s a lot worse than just a...”

Kristofferson: [ricochets an acorn around the room, which lands in the teacup he is holding] “Excuse me, everyone. I’m gonna go meditate for half an hour.”

Mrs. Fox: [to Ash] “You have got twenty-nine minutes to come up with a proper apology.”

Ash: “Me? ME have an apology? He gets a bandit hat? He just got here, and he gets a bandit hat? Where’s MY bandit hat? Why didn’t I get shot at? It’s because you... you... you think I’m no good at anything! Well, maybe you’re right, thanks.”

[stomps away angrily and slams door upon exit]

Kylie: [to Mr. Fox] “Told ya not to bring him.”

When I can’t figure out who I am, Mr. Fox mirrors my insecurity and processes it alongside me.

3. Even though the characters are animals functioning in the roles of humans, I find them uniquely real. I've done past collegiate projects on Mr. Fox himself, his "lineage" in other film characters, and even his questioning of his conception of himself. Seems a little intense for a Roald Dahl movie adaptation, but if you've seen the film, you'll get what I mean. Fantastic Mr. Fox forces you to reconsider your place in this world in the most comforting way possible. Mr. Fox is there to make mistakes, let down the ones he loves, fail himself and be blinded by his wants when we can't bear to do the same.

Mr. Fox: "Yes, these crackles are made of synthetic goose and these giblets come from artificial squad and even these apples look fake, but at least they've got stars on them."

All that is to say is that when I finally left 194 Saint Paul Street in the end of July, six months of being alone finally coming to a close, I watched this movie one more time.