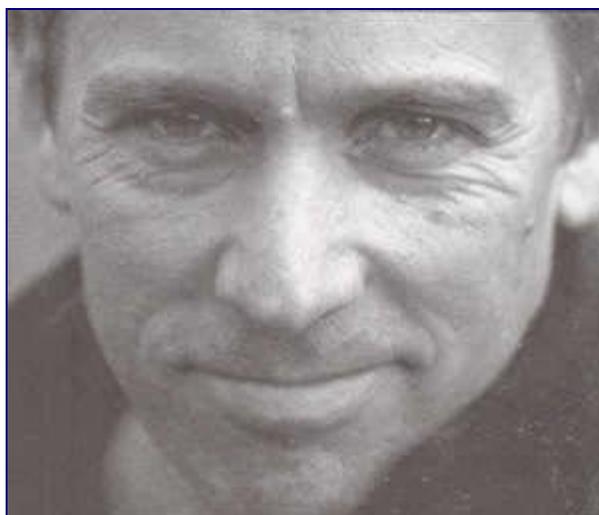


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**A READER'S JOURNAL:**

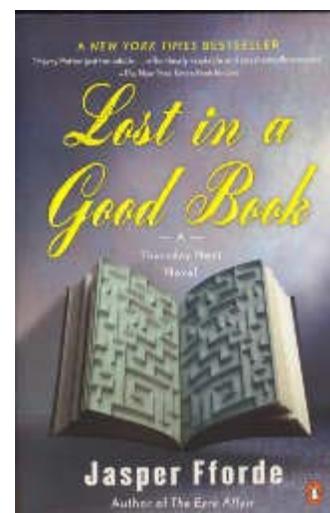
**Lost in a Good Book  
A Novel**

by

**Jasper Fforde**

Published by Penguin Putnam/NY  
in 2002

Book Review by Bobby Matherne  
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Thursday Next is now a celebrity after her successful trip inside the novel "Jane Eyre" to rescue and re-insert the heroine back into her own novel and change the ending to a more satisfying one to most of the readers. As a Jane Bond-type heroine of the Literary Spook business, Thursday continues her work in this novel which adds several novel ideas, a whole spate of them rather, to the idea of what constitutes a novel or any sort of writing for that matter. For example when Ms. Havisham takes Thursday under her wing to initiate her into the ins and outs of being a Jursifiction Agent, they get stuck in a room without any reading matter and thus are unable to move into another novel. But all is not lost because Havisham can *aperate*(1) using the merest scrap of written material and manages an escape by reading a clothing tag.

After introducing Jack Schitt in the previous novel, Fforde adds his half-brother, a Mr. Schitt-Hawse of the Goliath Corporation (GC) in this one. Thursday is not delighted to meet him, nor any agent of the GC. When he puts out his hand to her in greeting, her response is surprising, but pure Thursday stuff.

**[page 8] "Would it upset you if I didn't shake it?" I asked him.  
"Well, yes," he replied, trying to be affable.  
"Good."**

The LiteraTec Public Relations (PR) agent, Cordelia Flakk, tries to inveigle Thursday into all sorts of publicity schemes, which Thursday wants none of. Here's a typical interaction: when Thursday tries to escape her clutches, Cordelia feigns being hurt.

**[page 25] "Thursday, this hurts me *really* personally when you're like this. It attacks me right — right — er — here."  
She made a wild guess at where her heart might be and looked at me with a pained expression that she probably learnt off a springer spaniel.**

In the middle of a conversation with Cordelia on page 26 and 27, Thursday gets interrupted by a footnote. This is a marvelous innovation by Fforde because it will require people who *never* read footnotes in any kind of book to read them in a novel, of all places! Her conversation makes no sense unless you read the interruptions by a man's voice which appears only in the footnotes. This presages the appearance of the footnoterphone later by means of which people in one novel communicate with people in other novels! Here's a short bit of the three-way conversation with footnotes when Thursday gets called on the footnoterphone before she was introduced to the concept. Thursday is speaking first. [In the quoted material (fn1) will simulate the uppercase 1 for footnote 1, etc.]

**[page 26] "Ten minutes(fn1), whoa! — Who's that?"**

**"Who's what?"**

**"Someone's calling my name. Didn't you hear it?"**

**"No," replied Cordelia, looking at me oddly.**

**I tapped my ears and looked around to see if there was anyone close by. Apart from Cordelia, we were alone in the corridor. It had sounded so real it was disconcerting.(fn2)**

**[Footnotes (fn's) at the bottom of page 26]**

**(fn1) "Thursday Next!"**

**(fn2) "Miss Next — hello? Testing testing. One, two, three."**

Here's the end of Thursday first call on the footnoterphone from Mr. Snell:

**[Footnotes at the bottom of page 26]**

**(fn10) "I'll explain it all when we meet. Sorry to have to communicate with you in footnotes but I'm due in court in ten minutes. Don't speak to *anyone at all* about the case and I'll see you on Thursday, Thursday. That's quite funny, that, 'Thursday . . . Thursday.' Hmmm. Maybe not. Got to go.**

If your tensionologist recommends that you loosen up by becoming a stand-up comedian, it shouldn't be surprising if you say things that are funny and you don't realize that they are. Perhaps Bowden's tensionologist noticed that about him. Someone had earlier asked how he liked his new car, a Sportina. Thursday thought his response was funny.

**[page 45] "My tensionologist suggested I should try stand-up comedy," said Bowden, watching me closely for my reaction.**

**"Well, 'How do you the Sportina? / Where I left it' was a good start," I told him. He stared at me blankly. It hadn't been a joke.**

Chapter 4. is entitled "Five Coincidences, Seven Irma Cohens and One Confused Neanderthal." in which Thursday is led to the necessity of carrying around a jar of dried beans and rice to check for the local condition of entropy(2). Since humans have treated other humans as non-humans during various periods of history(3), it is amazing how Fforde introduces the possibility of creating humans specifically for doing that, namely, neanderthals. After all, in a world in which gene splicing has achieved the status of a hobby sport and dodos are a favorite pet, and England has mammoth migrations akin to the bulls running through Pamplona, why not neanderthals to do the everyday tasks others won't?

**[page 48] The neanderthal experiment was conceived in order to create the euphemistically entitled "medical test vessels," living creatures that were as close as possible to human without actually *being* human within the context of the law.**

The ladies on the Skyrail are helping each other work crossword puzzles and the answers to the clues come up, Meddlesome, Thursday, Goodbye. That plus the fact the seven women are all named Irma Cohen gives Thursday a pause. Plus her picnic gets rudely interrupted by a vintage motorcar, namely a Hispano-Suiza, falling out of the sky on her blanket a few seconds after she runs from the area! When Thursday tries to explain to Victor at the LiteraTec office that she punched a neanderthal because she thought he had a gun on him, Victor objects that it would be ridiculous for a neanderthal to have gun. Thursday tries to explain that coincidences are mounting and that is also a waste of time.

The world is going to end and nobody will listen to Thursday. The world actually ended at the beginning of Douglas Adams' "Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy" because the space was needed for a new freeway and Earth was in the way. But in this novel the entire Earth is being turned into a pink Jello Pudding or some British equivalent called Dream pudding. Thursday duly reports her conclusions about the world ending on some day in December, but Victor will have nothing of it.

**[page 69] He dumped my arrest report in his out tray and sat down.**

**"Thursday," he said quietly, staring at me soberly. "I've been in law enforcement for most of my life and I will tell you right now there is no such offense as 'attempted murder by coincidence in an alternative future by person or persons unknown.' "**

**I sighed and rubbed my face with my hands. He was right, of course.**

Thursday does not lead a dull life. For example, note this report of her day to husband Landen. *Cardenio* is a previously unknown play by Shakespeare.

**[page 76] "Did you have a good day?" he asked at last.**

**"Well," I began, "we found *Cardenio*, I was shot dead by an SO-14 marksman, became a vanishing hitchhiker, saw Yorrick Kaine, suffered a few too many coincidences and knocked a neanderthal unconscious."**

After the *Eyre* thing, women everywhere started to dress like Thursday who thought the whole chinos and a shirt fad was ridiculous. She asked the wife of a colleague dressed that way:

**[page 79] "If Bonzo the Wonder Hound had rescued Jane Eyre, would you all be wearing studded collars and smelling each other's bottoms?"**

Thursday's brother Joff was a minister in the Church of the Global Standard Deity and reported to her with some chagrin that the church had split in two for the third time in one week.

**[page 81] "No!" I said with as much surprise and concern in my voice as I could muster.**

**"I'm afraid so. The new Global Standard *Clockwise* Deity have broken away due to unresolvable differences over the direction in which the collection plate is passed around."**

As the coincidences begin to mount, Thursday is befuddled. She comments, "I've just spotted my old croquet captain, Alf Widdershaine. This is Sue long and Tony Fairwelle; they just saw Sarah Nara -- see a pattern emerging?" (Page 101) On top of it all her husband Landen looks at the ham they brought for the picnic and says "Good buy." She demands they vacate the picnic blanket a few seconds before the Hispano-Suiza goes keplunkt on it.

When Thursday needs to go to Sydney in a hurry, she takes the DeepDrop transport through the middle of the Earth. There was an interesting delay, or rather an interesting excuse for the delay which had to do with the excuse creation process, or rather, just read it yourself. Sounds like the real back story for typical excuses you get from all large corporations. The announcement came over the PA:

**[page 160] "Attention, please. Passengers for the 11:04 DeepDrop to Sydney will be glad to know that the delay was due to too many excuses being created by the Gravitube's Excuse Manufacturing Facility. Consequently we are happy to announce that since the excess excuses have now been used, the 11:04 DeepDrop to Sydney is ready for boarding at gate six." <**

Next and we get introduced to Jurisfiction at the same time by Snell:

**[page 161, 162] "Jurisfiction is the service we run *inside* novels to maintain the integrity of popular fiction. The printed word might look solid to you, but where I come from, 'movable type' has a much deeper meaning."**

Where I come from movable type has a much deeper meaning also, as it refers to the pixel-based type used on the Internet. I publish all my works in this kind of type and without a Jurisfiction-type of organization, I can simply change any document I published at any moment without notice or a by-your-

leave. Archived issues of my Digest are subject to such change as well. This is very handy for fixing typos months or years after the publication date of a Good Mountain Press Digest, but can also be used for other purposes to change things at a whim. What Fforde has done is create a fictionalized equivalent for extant books on the printed page to the possibilities created by electronic books on the Internet and other forms of electronic printing looming on the horizon.

Thursday Next travels to Osaka to locate Mrs. Nakajima who knows how to book jump without a Prose Portal machine, but she is at a loss as to how to find the Japanese lady until she spots a young man with a leather jacket emblomed on the back: "Follow me, Next Girl!" This would make a great T-Shirt, it seems to me for guys to wear who are looking for girls. Next had received an entroposcope from her uncle to help her confirm the appearance of local decreases of entropy. It's a simple device anyone can put together at home. Fill a jar almost full with dry beans and rice. Shake it to operate the measuring device. If entropy is increasing as normal, the beans and rice will be evenly mixed after you shake it. If entropy is decreasing, the beans will assume a pattern inside the rice which will be visible. Since a decrease in entropy is violation of the Second Law of Thermodynamics and something only achievable in a fictional work, so far as we know, such a device, which imminently useful to Thursday, would be minimally useful to Outlanders, which is what book characters call you and me. (I assume, naturally, that none of you reading this review are book characters.)

This next passage takes on additional meaning if you happen to have a copy of the sequel to this book in your hands. Next has a copy of a book in Mrs. Nakajima's apartment in her hands and says of it:

**[page 172] It had *Jurisdiction* embossed on the cover, above a name I didn't recognize.**

The cover of [The Well of Lost Plots](#), which you can view by clicking on the hyperlink of the title at the beginning of this sentence, has Jurisdiction literally embossed on its cover. It appears as an agency's name of a badge with an image of a dodo and the motto, "In Words We Trust." (4)

When you are bookjumping, it takes quite a bit of skill to journey to the right place, as the Cheshire Cat explains to Thursday. "With a bit of practice on your own you *might* learn to be page-accurate when you jump." Eponymously speaking, unless you learn to be "page-accurate" you might get "lost in a good book."

This next conversation with her and the Cat reveals a distinction that most people do not make, up until now. Certainly Thursday will notice the difference from now on. Cat speaks first.

**[page 181] "We've been expecting you for almost twenty years. Where on earth have you been?"**

**"I . . . I . . . didn't know I could do this." (RJM: She refers to bookjumping.)**

**"What you mean is that you *did* know that you *couldn't* — it's quite a different thing.**

*To know that you can't do something* is dramatically different from *not knowing you can do it!* Most people think they can't do something. They say "I didn't know I could do this" (like Thursday told the Cat), when they actually felt at every point in the past, "I do know I can't do this." But it is a wise cat who knows the difference. A wise cat would always state such a drastic limitation "I do know I can't do this" by adding the [limitation eraser](#) to the end thusly: "I do know I can't do this, up until now." This changes the "I do know I can't do this" into "I don't know I can do this." That opens up the possibilities, first, to knowing, and second, to doing. And that makes all the difference in the world, does it not?

In a fungible world of multiple realities, any one of which can be replaced by another one, Thursday's father asks her, "Have you heard of Winston Churchill yet?" (Page 240) When she says, "Not yet." her father cusses a bit apparently because he's got more time-traveling work to do to allow Winston to survive into adulthood and change the face of the world. If you're traveling through time very fast you must be careful to keep from being rooted to the same spot by some vine which grows up around you. "We had an

operative named Jekyll who once trained a four-hundred-year-old oak into a heart as a present for her boyfriend." (Page 245)

When Thursday decided to get lost in a good book to while away until sprogging time, she chooses an unknown book to swap characters by becoming a PageRunner (Page 351 has the definition). That's a process by which she will change places with a book character for a year so she can escape detection by anyone looking for her. Here's a snippet of conversation with the character she is due to replace. Next is first and Marianne is next.

**[page 280] "Don't we have to be careful as to what we say?" I managed to utter, looking around nervously.**

**"Goodness me *no!*" exclaimed Marianne with a delightful giggle. "The chapter is over, and besides, this book is written in the *third person*. We are free to do what we please until tomorrow morning, when we depart for Devon. the next two chapters are heavy with exposition — I hardly have anything to do, and I say even less! You look confused, poor thing! Have you been into a book before?"**

**"I went into *Jane Eyre* once."**

**Marianne frowned overdramatically.**

**"Poor, dear, sweet Jane" I would so *hate* to be a first-person character! Always on your guard, always having people reading your thoughts! Here we *do* what we are told but *think* what we wish. It is a much happier circumstance, believe me!"**

Mrs. Havisham teaches Thursday how to get into the pre-book backstory, a feat which requires the book equivalent of negative numbers, only it's page numbers. Thursday asks how she is to picture a negative page number and gets this answer:

**[page 308, 309] " how do I picture a negative page number?"**

**"Visualize something — an albatross, say."**

**"Yes?"**

**"Okay, now take the albatross away."**

**"Yes?"**

**"Now take *another* albatross away."**

**"How can I? There are no albatrosses left!"**

**"Okay; imagine I have lent you an albatross to make up your seabird deficit. How many albatrosses have you now?"**

**"None."**

**"Good. Now relax while I take my albatross back."**

**I shivered as a coldness swept through me and for a fleeting moment an empty vaguely albatross-shaped void opened and closed in front of me. But the strange thing was, for that briefest moment I *understood* the principle involved — but then it was gone like a dream upon waking. I blinked and stared at Havisham.**

**"That," she announced, "was a negative albatross. Now you try it — only use page numbers instead of albatrosses."**

The first time you save the world is always the hardest. But for Thursday losing her lifelong friend and husband when he was time-napped at age 2 was every bit as hard as keeping the world from turning into pink Jello pudding.

When Aornis Hades finally shows herself, Thursday has no idea who she is, even though she introduces herself fully and explains what she's doing. Why not? Because Aornis is a mnemenomorph., as she explains below:

**[page 379] "My particular edge is that I am instantly forgettable — you will *never* capture me because you will forget that we ever met. I can erase your memory of me so**

**instantaneously I am rendered invisible. I can walk where I please, steal what I wish — I can even murder in broad daylight."**

When things really begin going bad and all three backup generators on the Dream Pudding Manufacturing plant break within minutes of each other, all Thursday can think of is "Death by coincidence." (Page 380) It's the very kind of death which nuclear power plants need to be engineered to avoid, and the latest designs for new plants will shutdown safely only in the case of inadvertent loss of gravity. And that is nothing deserving of levity! But as Thursday reminded us, her dad's favorite saying was, "It is funny the way things turn out."

In case you think Fforde guilty of hyperbole, here's my thumbnail sketch of the ending of the book: Thursday has ten seconds to either kill herself or the entire world will dissolve into pink Jello pudding when her father arrives with a face that can stop a clock and does stop it to announce that he has decided to turn himself into pudding while catapulting back in time 3 billion years ago, which will kick-start all of life on the Earth! Her father will become everyone's father and Aornis Hades by trying to destroy all life on the planet will be responsible for creating all life on the planet!

It's funny the way things turn out.



## **ADDENDUM: Witty and Interesting Words, Phrases, and Word Usages**

### **Droll names for pairs of agents who get killed off very quickly:**

#### **Agents Kannon and Phodder**

[page 38] "I'm Phodder," said the driver. "My associate here is Kannon. SpecOps-5 has been reassigned."

#### **Agents Walken and Dedmen**

[page 105] "Agent Walken, SO-5; this is my associate, James Dedmen."

#### **Agents Lamme and Slorter**

[page 316] It seemed their car had a faulty exhaust. Lamme and Slorter had been following me around very indiscreetly for the past two days.

### **Britishisms in words and phrases:**

**wheeze** — (*coll*) joke, trick, design, scheme

**granary** — short for granary bread, which is whole wheat bread. As on:

[page 15] "Okay. Make it granary with marmalade. Go easy on the butter."

**proleptic** — presupposititious or anticipatory

[page 16] "I'm just getting a touch proleptic in my old age."

**secateurs** — pruning scissors

[page 39] He was wearing an old pair of herringbone tweeds and brandished a pair of secateurs like a

cavalry saber.

**rum** - *adj* — strange, singular, odd, queer.

[page 40] "Look here, it was a rum business about that Bronte book, eh?"

**pelmet** — a canopy covering drapery mechanisms, a valence

[page 116] . . . but if you pelmets change color for no good reason, your curtains swithc from festoon to swish or your antimacassars have a new pattern on them, . . .

**panniers** — saddlebags hung over either side of a bicycle or motorcycle.

[page 153] We came across two bicycles leaning up against a tree, the panniers open and the tent half pegged out on the ground.

**jackanoried** - *vt, past tense* — a verbed form of jackanory which means roughly "tall tale" — a fantasy story from a BBC4 series called Jackanory. Used in the sense of *hijacked* or *kidnapped*, but in fantastic way.

[page 173] "I jackanoried you into a book when you were nine but now you must do it for yourself..."

**fworp** - *vi* — apparently means to change or leave this reality. Origin in Dr. Who episodes, I suspect.

[page 174] I continued to read, and as I did so the room about me began to *fworp* from view.

**trainers** — sneakers

[page 188] She rummaged some more and took out a pair of trainers and pulled them on.

**bollards** -- short posts for preventing motor vehicle access (*Naut.* post on pier for tying up a boat)

[page 206] ". . . a path between two concrete bollards that looked *way* too narrow for my car."

**sprogging time** — sprog is colloquial for baby or infant, so "babying time", when the baby comes.

[page 230] "When's sprogging time? July?"

**footle** - *vi* -- to trifle, to potter about aimlessly

[page 297] ". . . so you're going to have to footle with the backstory."

**bloophole** - *n* — (as defined on page 298) "Term used to describe a narrative hole by the author that renders his/her work seemingly impossible."

The example in the book, which serves as Thursday first assignment as a Jurisfiction agent is to fill in a bloophole in *Great Expectations* where a character jumps from a ship in leg irons and swims away to freedom. Since the leg irons would have caused him to sink to the bottom, Thursday must hang a life preserver on his escape rope to allow him to escape without doing the impossible job of swimming with leg irons on.

**kitting up** — gearing up; fitting out oneself with clothes and equipment (page 303)

**swotting up** — cramming up or studying hard, as for an exam (page 303)

**wagonwheel** — some type of popular British food, like our bear's claw pastry perhaps. Something appropriate for picnic basket fare.

[page 311] "Do you want my wagonwheel?"

**baler twine** — in America we use baling wire, much stronger, for jury-rigging all sorts of things.

[page 330] Where my uncle's machines were held together with baler twine, cardboard and rubber solution glue, . . ." [RJM and we simply call it "rubber cement".]

**pasty** — apparently coll. for pastry. In America, a pasty is something a stripper wears to cover her nipples. They are held on by paste, thus the name. Brits: A little head's up, don't come to the USA and ask

a stripper at breakfast if you might have a bite of her pasties. Oh, what's a head's up? It's what someone says to you at a baseball game to cause you to look up and dodge a hard baseball heading for your noggin (or a stripper's palm for your face).

**a fine evening dress** — black tie or other men's formal wear Head's up: don't talk about a man in the USA as "wearing a fine evening dress" unless he happens to be a travestite! (Page 354)

**Dream pudding** — haven't a clue, except to think it resembles a pink Jello pudding. But surely it will become popular once the entire world is converted into it.

----- *Footnotes* -----

**Footnote 1.** I'm using here a Harry Potter word here which means to move quickly from one place to another by magical means. There is lots of magic in Thursday's world, but it's never called such. After all, this is an adult novel. The New York Times Book Review called it "Harry Potter just for adults."

[Return to text directly before Footnote 1.](#)

----- *Footnotes* -----

**Footnote 2.** It's the only way she could check for sure if she was in the middle of an isolated high-coincidental localized entropic field decreasement." (Page 377)

[Return to text directly before Footnote 2.](#)

----- *Footnotes* -----

**Footnote 3.** Republicans and Democrats do that very thing, up until now.

[Return to text directly before Footnote 3.](#)

----- *Footnotes* -----

**Footnote 4.** This motto is an obvious take-off on "In God We Trust" and since the Gospel of John begins with the words "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." we see an interesting spiritual aspect of the author, which is otherwise not explicit in his Next novels.

[Return to text directly before Footnote 4.](#)

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