“If your book club wants to fall in love with a novel, look no further than Love and Other Consolation Prizes. This is an evocative, heartfelt, beautifully crafted story that shines a light on a fascinating, tragic bit of forgotten history. Jamie Ford at his storytelling best.”

—KRISTIN HANNAH, bestselling author of The Nightingale

“All the charm and heartbreak of Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet. Based on a true story, Love and Other Consolation Prizes will warm your soul.”

—MARTHA HALL KELLY, bestselling author of Lilac Girls
Someone recently asked, “Do you have a muse who inspires your writing?” This immediately conjured images from the movie *Xanadu*, where Olivia Newton-John played a glittering, roller-skating, disco-singing muse who falls in love with a struggling artist on the verge of giving up.

Needless to say, I wish I had a glittering, roller-skating, disco muse.

Instead of Terpsichore, the goddess of dance as played by Olivia, my de facto muse seems to be a never-ending appetite for lost history—the need to constantly turn over rocks and look at the squishy things underneath.

One of those metaphorical rocks happened to be the great Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition of 1909—Seattle’s forgotten world’s fair. I stumbled upon an old article about race and the AYP and how China had declined to sponsor an exhibit because delegates had been harassed at previous world’s fairs, and how ethnographic displays were immensely popular, like the Igorrote exhibit, a mock village of grass huts, which was basically a human zoo.

As I kept digging, I was intrigued to learn that 1909 was also the height of Washington State’s suffrage movement. Both the Washington Equal Suffrage Association and the National American Woman Suffrage Association held conventions in Seattle to take advantage of the publicity of the AYP. And a large group of suffragists climbed Mount Rainier. Led by Dr. Cora Smith Eaton, who flew a “Votes For Women” pennant atop the 14,409-ft. summit, alongside an AYP flag.

But curiously, 1909 was also the peak of Seattle’s social evils—described as “dance halls, bagnios, crib houses, opium dens, and noodle joints . . . openly advertised in the full glare of electric light”—a major concern for the host city.

But what haunted my imagination more than anything, among articles about a “world of wonder” with a wireless telephone, incubators for premature babies, and a machine that could butcher salmon (patented as the Iron Chink) was finding a *Seattle Times* clipping that proclaimed somebody will draw baby as prize and a sad 1909 follow-up in the Kennewick Courier, where a man

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**A note from JAMIE FORD**

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who was in charge of the giveaway said, “No one had claimed the baby (yet).”

Much to my authorly delight (and parental mortification) that story turned out to be true.

The Washington Children’s Home Society did indeed donate a baby boy to be raffled off. And yes, his name in all the newspapers was Ernest. Ironically, he was offered up under the auspices of then-director L. J. Covington, who fought tirelessly against the moral plagues of his time but apparently had no problem giving away a child.

Oddly enough, I also found a letter in the *Leavenworth Echo* from July 10, 1910, with the headline wants to adopt ugly boy. A woman named Anna M. Sampson wrote, “You may send me the ugliest, biggest, most ungainly looking boy you have. I think I know how to bring out the best that is in such a lad.”

The letter was received by M. A. Covington, superintendent of the Spokane district of the Washington Children’s Home Society, who responded: “I have a boy who is not the ugliest and who is only ten-years-old, but I believe he will suit.”

This begs the question: Were there two different Covingtons giving away children? Were they related? Or was this perhaps the same person, confounded by a typographical error? I’m still not sure.

But what I am certain of is that all of this happened during the tail end of the orphan train era, when children were given away with aplomb. And while it’s clear that a baby boy was offered as a prize at the AYP, it’s likely that no one claimed him, and his subsequent fate is unknown. And I like the unknown.

That’s when I decided to write this story.

Because of mysteries like these, Ernest became yet another one of my imaginary friends. And on the blank canvas of his life, I set off to render his tale, which in my world begins in Southern China during a time when workers were being smuggled into North America despite the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. Young women were still being sold as *Mui Tsai* in China, or *Karayuki-san* in Japan, often ending up in the United States, where they
worked as slaves or indentured servants, more than fifty years after the Emancipation Proclamation.

The real Ernest, as of the publication of this book, would be a centenarian, so it’s doubtful that he’s reading this. But perhaps someone knew him. And if they do, I hope they’ll contact me.

I’m on Twitter: @jamieford.

In the meantime, I’ll be here in my office, staring at a blank screen, contemplating my next book, turning over more rocks and waiting for my muse. As much as I’d like to be visited by Erato, the muse of romantic poetry, it’ll more likely just be Clio, the muse of history. And we’ll do this dance all over again. Though a part of me still holds out hope for Olivia. Roller skates and all.

The above is an abridged version of Jamie Ford’s author note. To read it in full, see page 299 of your copy of LOVE AND OTHER CONSOLATION PRIZES.
“Somebody will draw baby as a prize” 1909 Seattle Times newspaper clipping

One of the more interesting/odd exhibits at the 1909 Expo: Baby Incubators

Birds Eye View of the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Expo, 1909
The Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Expo was also a nexus of the burgeoning suffrage movement, as displayed in the official AYP seal, which is of three women.

Suffragists protesting in Seattle from all over the country.

The national suffrage conventions were held in Seattle during the AYP.

Suffragists in Seattle holding copies of the "Suffragist" magazine, circa 1910.
On the other side of the coin, there was the burgeoning red light district of Seattle. This is famous madam, Lou Graham, who was the inspiration for Madam Flora.

Madam Lou's building in Seattle's Pioneer Square. This is the model for the Tenderloin in the book.

Madam Lou (left) and some of her ladies.
The inspiration for many of Madam Louis women (Violet, Rose, etc.) came from a long-lost collection of photos by amateur Seattle photographer Max Loudon. These were shot in 1909.
The mayor in the novel is based on the actual mayor, Hiram Gill, who believed in an “open town” of legalized prostitution, booze, gambling, etc.

Jumping to 1962, this is Gracie Hansen. She wasn’t a madame, but a promoter of adult entertainment at the 1962 World’s Fair. The adults-only section of the Century 21 Expo was her creation.
The Sento (Japanese bath) depicted in the book is a real place, beneath the Panama Hotel in Seattle. It’s the oldest intact Japanese Sento in the United States.

In the book, Ernest and Gracie go to Ruby Chow’s restaurant, which was iconic in its day. That’s Ruby on the right. She went on to become Seattle’s first Asian City Councilwoman.

Almost all of the locations in the book are real places. Such as the Osami Barber Shop.

Ernest comes to the United States via smugglers. This old shack used to belong to Benjamin Ure, who smuggled Chinese and Japanese men, women, children, into the US in the late 1800s, early 1900s. They were sold for $400 each.

The idea of Fahn came from the story of Yamada Waka (right), who as a young girl, was sold into servitude/prostitution in Seattle. She later became a feminist pioneer.
I've been in a guys' book group, called Books & Brews, for five years now. When I was first asked to join, I thought it was a clever ruse, an excuse for men to get together and perhaps have some sort of clandestine fantasy football draft. I was wrong. The first book was Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying Lot of 49*. That's when I knew these guys take their reading seriously. (And that they tend to choose books waaaaaay above my reading level. Um...thanks guys).

So with book clubs in mind, I came up with some questions, as if they were presented to my own book club. Ready? Here goes:

1. The story of Ernest starts off on a very sad note. Do you condemn Ernest's mother for her actions, and if so, what were her alternatives?

2. The early suffrage movements in the U.S. all took place in what were regarded as frontier territories in the west. Why do you think the trends of suffrage and vice emerged at the same time, in the same places? (Like Wyoming, where women first got the vote in 1869).

3. Those suffrage campaigns were often intertwined with religious movements. When did women's rights diverge somewhat from a religious underpinning and why?

4. This book ultimately deals with prostitution. Is there an intersection between prostitution, personal agency, and feminism? Or are these mutually exclusive concepts?

5. Caucasian prostitution in the early 20th century has often been glamorized, while Asian prostitution has been demonized. Is there truth behind those cultural tropes? Are our historical perceptions off? What's the reality of those perceptions then—and now?

6. Madam Flora and Miss Amber have a unique relationship. Do you see this as one born of love, of shared business interests, or a bit of both?

7. Speaking of business interests, do you see Madam Flora and Miss Amber as two people exploiting young women, or benefiting them?

8. Early world's fairs often had ethnographic exhibits—human zoos, if you will. When did this stop being socially acceptable and why the change?

9. World's fairs also try to be predictive of the future. The 1962 World's Fair boasted the latest technology and hinted at a grand technological leap. Were those predictions right?
10. At the Tenderloin (and in the character of Turnbull) we see wealthy, successful men breaking rules and social conventions. Is there a modern analog? Are wealthy men today able to live above and beyond the margins of law and civil discourse and if so, who, and how are they able to get away with such behavior?

11. For much of the book, the reader is wondering whom Ernest will ultimately end up marrying. Did he make the right choice? Why or why not?

12. Lastly, Ernest and Fahn read a certain book by Henry de Vere Stacpoole. How does that novel reflect the innocence and tragedy of their relationship? And do you know what that book is? (Hint, it was made into a somewhat cheesy movie in the 80s).

There you go. I hope this sparks some interesting book club conversations. Speaking of, I have to go read this month's book. Wish me luck.

Jamie