

The

Sum

is greater than the

Whole of its Parts

by

Brett Paufler

May 24th, 2016

Brett@Paufler.net

© Brett Paufler ©

*Brett Paufler, Brett Paufler, Brett Paufler,
because clearly the page was calling for my name a few more times*

A work of fiction.

All rights reserved.

No rights conferred.

All the standard disclaimers,
along with all of the non-standard disclaimers.

www.paufler.net

for complete (and/or incomplete) details

Sum

with any luck, written in the style of Celli...

###

‘I’m going to the pool! Where do you think I’m going?’ He says this loudly, almost yelling, standing in the doorway of a hotel room, halfway in, halfway out. There is a girl standing by his side, holding his hand, not saying a word. There is no one in the room. There is no one in the hall. The words were said for his benefit, her benefit: her, she, the one he now leads down the hall, as he half mutters to himself, ‘If that’s the way she’s going to behave, this marriage isn’t going to last long, not long at all.’

They aren’t married: he to she or she to he. But she is giddy with delight, so he must be doing something right. She doesn’t say a word. She’s not supposed to.

‘With the pool boy, a freakin’ beach bum,’ he shakes his head in disbelief. Yes, last night was good, the girl at his side, she pretending to be another, he pretending to be another, a guy they saw at the beach, not just a guy, a guy, the type of guy he could get jealous over, the type of guy she could get weak-kneed over. Well, two could play at that game, so she’d been her, some slut he’d seen on the beach wearing some low-cut designer bikini that wasn’t hardly there. Though, to be fair, for the five or ten minutes he’d stared at that slut on the beach, who was wearing a low-cut designer bikini, said slut in aforementioned skin-tight, all too revealing bikini hadn’t actually engaged in any slut like activities, except for wearing the aforementioned bikini. Still, a man could hope, could dream, could tell his fictitious wife about it on their make-believe honeymoon; and if she knew what was good for her, she could damn-well play along.

Yes, she could damn-well play along. It was the least she could do.

He was enjoying the tropical breeze down by the hotel pool. The cabana boy was making with the eyes, the politeness, the charm, that whole, 'Water. Yes, sir! And can I bring anything for your... daughter? Really, a few days older even. I never would have never guessed.' Yeah, that whole kiss-up shtick, could a grown man insert himself any further up... the digestive track of the woman that for all this bellhop knew could be his wife.

'She could be my wife you know!'

But the cabana boy was already out of earshot, had been for a while, while the words themselves had been spoken low, conspiratorially.

'So, you wanted to know...'

We could do this whole thing as a conversation, but we won't. I won't.

At some point, a person picks a role, a main character, someone they identify with. Perhaps I could be me, him, the author, the man talking, the one referred herein as he, unless he means that other he, the him, the one this story is really about; I could say that it gets confusing, but you're a smart one, so I think you know what I mean.

Or do you want to be her? If so, then I would hardly want to put words into your mouth... perhaps something else, a nice cherry (look, here comes your drink). Suffice to say, if you or I are going to be he or she, then it becomes difficult to untangle the contradictions that inevitably

result, so best to simply let them be them and get on with our lives.

‘I’m not making any sense?’

Look at the time! I’m not the one working on her second drink. And where is that pool boy when you need him? ‘Can I get some service around here!’ spoken so low, it would be amazing if I ever got that water.

Where was I?

Oh, right! Suffice to say, he, the man, this child, this man-child, Peter Pan Syndrome, this author, this fool, like a puppet on a string, dance for your joy, write for your amusement, well, missy, he has an agenda this morning.

You see, she asked a question last night, while she was pretending to be that slut on the beach... or did the question arise the night before, as she pretended to be a waitress, slipping a note, phone number, with the bill... or was it two days hence, has it really been two days, since last I partook of the sweet surrender, that airline stewardess? She was making eyes at me, you know. ‘Coffee, tea, or...’ me, it was clearly implied.

‘Whatever!’

Let it go.

If I say she was making with the eyes at me, she was making with the eyes at me.

Besides, all I’m saying is the days do seem to get scrambled up so.

Still, no matter, in the end, which it turns out was the beginning; the question was easy enough, seemingly easy enough, as all difficult questions, it seems, so often, turn out to be.

‘Where do the stories come from?’ she asked.

Or more specifically, ‘How does one create a fictional character?’ and beyond that, ‘How does one breathe life into their soul?’

‘By repetition, my dear, by repetition,’ he might have said, rolling over, half drunk, trying to get some sleep, perhaps adding as an afterthought, ‘Practice makes perfect and all that.’ But like I said, he’d had one too many drinks; and so, his memory wasn’t as reliable as he’d lead you to believe... nor the process so simple as, ‘Add a little here, a little there, bits and pieces, mixed together, taking away what doesn’t make sense, always incorporating a little more, ever more obscure details, filling out the whole, at every opportunity, until the character takes over the filtering process, deciding for themselves which pieces ring true.’

But the key is to be always adding more... and more... and more.

Do you comprehend that this is the third (fourth, fifth) rewrite... and that the story differs substantially in substance and form from the first and the second rewrites, not to mention the multitude of mental walkthroughs that came before?

He?

But you wanted to know about he, the character, the man who sits beside the she at the pool.

Such a transition, I know, I am a master of the cognitive flow.

His name, the man, this man, his name will eventually become, Beauregard. Does that suffice? I can't say we'll be using it often. It doesn't come out on the spell check: not that it matters...

Let's back up a bit. I took a walk yesterday. This whole thing is a put on. He? She? They might as well not exist. For on that walk, the one I took yesterday (or perhaps now, the day before) I saw a man. Such a man did I see out of the corner of my eye. I was walking down the strip, the hotel way, that thin stretch of sand between a towering mega-structure, corporate hotel twenty-stories high, and the ocean. And on this narrow strip, public access guaranteed, tending the private umbrellas that clogged up the shore, the private corners of real estate available for rent by the hour was this man. What a man! I saw a thousand men that day. It's a crowded, world-class beach populated with many a fine body; but his body, it stood out from the rest. Later that evening, as I deconstructed the walk and thought of the girl, yes, that girl, the one we shall get to in a bit, I thought back to him and realized that he would make a good counterbalance to my own personal desire, for he must have been the object of many a personal desire.

So, what of this man, this object of desire? What is there to say? Well, he was fit. He was tan. He was a bodybuilder for sure. I do believe that in the fifteen seconds we shared, that long, slow stare as we fell into each other's eyes... or was it a near total and complete ignorance of the other's existence? Whatever it was, I learned nothing of importance about him outside of the fact that he was hot... fresh... inviting. Are those the words a man (a mostly, usually, typically heterosexual man) uses to describe another (mostly, usually, typically heterosexual) man?

I figured, this man, this he, he must have spent a good portion of his week working out, lifting weights, and otherwise engaging in the physical fitness. And it would have been easy to be dismissive of him; but after thinking on it a while, I realized, he had the job at the hotel, because he had the type of body that let him get the job at the hotel, that it was an enviable gig, and that he was probably clearing... well, let's just say, the tips were probably pretty darn good. I mean, as a pool boy, he made more than he had as a lawyer...

Wow! And it's strange to me how that little tidbit just rolls off the tongue (or types onto the page as the case may be). For you see, things change. And when it comes to character creation, what makes sense in the moment so often takes root and makes sense for all time to come. You see, originally, this guy was going to be an ex-policeman; and with that, I could, perhaps, start into a long rant about his coming to grips with the... meat-grinder that is the modern criminal justice system; and so, he couldn't stay on

the force. I even had a story all loaded, all set to go, about how his brother was selling steroids, the brother having gotten into the game on account of his connections at the gym.

His? His, he, our hero, he needs a name (remember we backed up, he doesn't have a name yet, he isn't Beauregard yet, but yes); I have a name. At this point, his name is (no, not Beauregard, it's) Chad... for obvious Internet reasons (gads this reconstruction stuff is confusing). But I can't let the name remain unchanged (for obvious Internet reasons; and besides, how else would we get to Beauregard), so his moniker quickly changed to Chester. And with a name like that, clearly, I was going for something formal, something noble, old worldly, and all that, so I eventually stumbled upon the label: Duke. Now, Duke is a legend on this here beach, this here Hawaiian Beach. And I could not begin to tell you whether calling this character (or any character) Duke would be considered sacrilegious by the locals, so we will not have it derive from the locals; and instead, from a Haole, out of town, the hotel manager, who was transferred from afar, somewhere on the mainland. And though this was a few years back and the manager is now long gone, the name that manager gave him stuck: Duke, after the Legendary Duke, I mean, if any man was a legend, it would be this man, this Duke.

And so, Duke, the muscle man, I had planned for him to be this ex-policeman, who couldn't bring himself to arrest his brother for narcotics trafficking... or what did I say? I'm pretty sure it had something to do with drugs?

Eh, it doesn't matter, for by the pool, where the he, who shall always be a he is explaining this all to the she, who will always be a she... and who is right now, even as we speak, drinking, yet another, pineapple-based liquor-infused tropical-umbrella embellished cool-refreshing hotel-specialty type drink... and at this early hour of the morning, to boot; but clearly, I digress.

But even after all this, when the dynamic duo (he/she) finally return to the near-reality that is the pool, Duke, as his hotel nametag informs, has split and transformed into a guest (Beauregard, now, finally, just in case that's not clear).

Yeah, whenever I say 'just in case that's not clear', I should probably rehash, because, you know, reality has just changed, so what you thought you knew, just forget about it, just chuck it out the window.

See, there is this employee, called Duke, who just gave the she her drink. He forgot the one for the he. 'But hey! There's a water fountain right over there,' Duke said pointing, pecks of steel he may have, but seriously, #*%! him, and I say that from one muscle man to another, because this here he, the one sitting next to the she, is even bigger and buffer than the he from before... before everyone started calling him Beauregard (that is)... or, you know, before I thought it would be fun (to have a little fun, we must have our fun) and give Beauregard (the one we split off from Duke, the cop, and who is now taking a little well earned R&R at the hotel) a little PTSD (so, I guess that's how he earned the R&R). I mean, come on, after all

those switch-a-roos, you can bet (and you'd win that bet, that) good old Beauregard has probably had a hard time of it, seen a little too much of it, so perhaps some combat in the desert... or in the *Realms Beyond*. And that's really where the flip to Beauregard solidifies, takes on a life of it's own. For, you see, Beauregard is a hero, pure and simple, sparkling and majestic a hero as ever you are likely to meet, as he is one of those heroes that hails from *Beyond the Realms* and I've got the pre-written stories to prove it.

And if that's not clear, what I'm trying to say is that I'm lifting the basis for this character (Beauregard, seriously, is his name that hard to remember) wholesale from another story, which has already been written (well, at least the first chapter has been written, that much I know for certain); and as such, his basic character has become set in stone, crystal clear (to me), and certainly not in the slightest need of clarification from where I'm sitting.

So, um, is that clear? Do we know about him?

'Um, his name is Duke Beauregard. That's about all I got out of it. Probably a bit confused in the head, not sure who he really is. So, one of your typical creations.'

Yes! Excellent! We are all on the same page!

Except for, you know, Duke and Beauregard are two separate characters. But then, they derive from the same character, so a little confusion is to be expected.

But let's not get mired down in the details and move along.

As to the she?

She is this girl he saw on the beach. You know, the he we'll call Beauregard, which is quite possibly short for her Beau, and who sits by the pool, patiently, I might add, but less and less so, as he'd really like that drink. It doesn't matter if it's just water. Water is good for you. And it's hot. So, he'd really like that drink... of water. And if he didn't know better, he'd think this Duke character had it in for him. Wasn't that Dark Warlord he'd just got done fighting (and this would be Beauregard thinking) a Duke? And let me tell you, that little episode, short story, call it a vignette, did not go well (for the character, author, publishing partners, and everyone involved, so basically a catastrophe).

But whatever...

He, earlier, on the previous day, he had gone for a walk, up and down that there sandy beach. And he had stared at this girl and he had thought of this girl and he had considered this girl.

There was a group of them, actually, of girls. And she was one of this group. But how does one say this, exactly? Ah, yes he only had eyes for her. Yes, I do believe that is exactly how one says that. Down in the shade, getting ready for a walk on the beach; but really, it was too hot for a walk on the beach, too sunny, tropical sun, burns the skin to a crisp in just a few short minutes; and anyone who just gave the trio a moment's notice... or like, who'd glared at them for a good ten minutes trying to focus and make out the details at a reasonable, read anonymous distance, would

know that they'd never make it out of the shade, onto the sand, and go for a walk on that-there beach. They seemed like they might be local, so don't ask me why they hadn't thought this out in advance; but then, groups like that, tourist groups like that...

Does one see the switch, understand how easy it is to make that switch, just a cognitive decision to turn three into thirty and change a few locals into a throng of tourists? It's so easy to obfuscate the truth, lest she, the real she, the inspirational she, become too identifiable, too trace-backable, out of the story and into the real. So, there were thirty of them, maybe more, with the one in the lead, a man, so a mixed group of tourists, and the one in the lead carrying an umbrella up high for all to see and follow along like some sort of banner, circus bandleader, and because, well, we've been over this, that tropical sun does burn, so portable shade on a stick.

They were from China or Japan, these tourists. But let's say Japan. I like Chinese girls. I like Japanese girls. Um, yeah, so, like, the thing is, I like girls. But the Japanese (men and women, probably their dogs, but I have yet to see a Japanese dog, do they bark funny, whatever, those Japanese tourists, they) care about fashion. They care about style. It's not an American style, but it is style, nonetheless. And these Japanese tourists all thirty or forty of them, a complete busload, so however many those buses hold, with their camera's and daypacks and sun block and plaid shorts (don't get me started about their plaid shorts) and girls looking like school girls and others in simple white dress all sweetness and pure and their rocking black

boots and ripped jeans with a straw hat, bought just for the beach, and among this lot, fitting right in with this lot, bringing up the rear of this lot, are these three girls. Yes, we are back to those three girls. And the one, so now, we're back down to one, and this one, what can I say? He looked at her and a bit of his heart melted. He found it hard to breath, harder to think, and could hardly find the will to smile, just glare, open mouthed, wide eyed, not attending to the common decencies, just memorizing the moment, the look on her face, the way the wind caught her hair as she held on to her newly acquired straw hat, and all the world collapsed into the space of that moment.

He has spent far too much of his life, dedicated to a memory of that moment. One could argue (and please, feel free to do so at your leisure, splitting up into to small discussion groups, to better aid in the exchange of ideas) that these stories, all of these stories, are in some way a continuation, an anonymous homage to that moment (or a very similar moment) in one form or another.

Did she smile?
Did she giggle?
Did she waive?
Did she run over?

Yes, oh lord, yes! She ran right over into Chad's arms. But I guess we're calling him Duke now, so right over into Duke's arms, Evil Bastard, the type of guy it's easy to hate, as you stand there, I mean, as he stands there, right there, and the girl of his dreams goes running right by,

right into the Duke's outstretched arms. He must have some sort of dark, hypno-charm power over women, that Duke. This girl, running right over, giggling, laughing, telling her friends (in Japanese, no less, it's far more mocking in Japanese), 'Take my picture,' with the Duke, like he's some sort of tourist attraction, setting up shop, take the snapshot with a the muscle man, smile for the camera, as she makes sure to do that weird (i.e. stupid, inane, idiotic, classically Japanese) thing that she does in all of her pictures, her signature move. Are you aware that as a class Japanese tourists are prone to flashing pseudo gang signs?

The moment over, giggling, they girls walk on.

In a nutshell, this is the she.

But in truth, she started as a trio of magazine ads. Of course, that's another story (aren't they all), that's already been written (much like Beauregard's sad tale of woe that has already been written). But then, Beauregard's (sad tale of woe that's already been written) is far more central to this tale, so let me tell you a little (and that means as little as humanly possible... or as possibly for a verbosely inclined author such as I, who gets paid by the word, regardless of the necessity of said word(s), or how much they, the word(s), these word(s), add to the moment, the story or, indeed, anything) about Beauregard. And as I do, please (pretty please with sugar on top) notice how Beauregard's story changes from one iteration to the next. Well, I mean, if you can, if at some point you come to

believe you know Beauregard enough, please (pretty please, sigh, if I must say it, with sugar on top, so, now, can we please just get on with it and) notice how Beauregard changes, how the experience of this new story changes him as he finds his place in it. In fact, the change is so dramatic, that he would, perhaps, not recognize himself if he were to look back at himself from the start of that first story and see himself now.

‘What a sap! How do guys even get themselves in those situations? I mean, come on, a hero? Not by any definition I know.’

But whatever.

Beauregard was a hero of the greatest renown, blah, blah, blah. And all the court reporters had gathered around to provide adequate press coverage for his imminent trouncing of the Great Evil Warlord (front row seats available, buy a season pass for even bigger discounts). Only, you know, things went bad for poor Beauregard. His agent had asked for too much money, and you know how it is in the WHF!

Ahem!

Perhaps you did not hear me!

That’s the WHF!

Fine, I can see it’s not having the reaction for which I’d hoped. *World Hero Federation*? Does that ring a bell? Ever hear of it? No? Well, best to think of it as the

professional wrestling of the monster killing, damsel saving, hero fantasy world, and you'd (yes, you'd dear reader), might have the right idea. Only, instead of being rigged for the win, he (the he in question at this time being poor, dear, sweet Beauregard) was rigged for the loss.

Place your bets!

Um, something about how the Great Evil Warlord (who eventually will become Duke, so might as well let you in on that now) had wised up and decided if you can't beat them, might as well join them; and so, he'd (the Great Evil Warlord, played by that rat bastard Duke in this here WWII, serial film-like reproduction) had up and purchased a controlling interest in the WHF!

Ah, come on, you're going to have to do better than that. Read it like you mean it.

It's time to rumble!
Live from the Nether Realms!
It's the World Hero Federation bringing you exclusive coverage of the long awaited grudge match between...

And so on. Needless to say, Beauregard was soundly thrashed by the Duke... or someone who looked like the Duke... or a Dark Warlord, which since that starts with the same letter in the alphabet as Duke (namely 'D', seriously, sometimes I wonder about the reading public). Whatever! If that's not a convincing enough argument for you, as to why they should (or could, you'll at least grand me that) be

the same person... well then, there's not much of a future for you in writing speculative fiction.

Um, for whatever reason, I feel like I have run astray.

Beauregard is lazing by the pool... well, lazing, sleeping, napping, dozing off, nodding as it were at the narrative voice over that doesn't make as much linear sense as he might like. After all, he's a man of action, never has been the brains of the outfit; and I believe he's been having a hard time sleeping as of late, night tremors, a bit of the neurotica (rhymes with erotic, so, um); let's not forget the nympho who's been lying next to him in bed. Yeah, I'll give you a hint, it was the aforementioned she... or, perhaps, just perhaps, those horrible nightmares that he has of tentacled monsters, which are even now, in that half-sleep, half-awake, sun-drenched, seriously, can I get some water over here, I think I'm dehydrating, I could see, or at least, Beauregard (does in fact) see a tentacled monster rising from the chlorinated waters before him!

So, yeah, long story short, Beauregard awakens with a start!

Pool boy Chad, or is it Duke, I'm pretty sure it's Duke at this point, and he's, oh, so helpful, in his red hot surfer shorts, looking all mean and nasty, the type of pool boy you'd just like to sink your teeth into...

'Water! Can I just get some water?'

There is no one around. She has, in fact, gone to get a drink (for herself, callous wench) and makes no mind of his unseemly display. Though in passing, to that woman stealing Chad, Chester, Duke (seriously, does every damn pool cabana boy look so amazingly hot in these parts) she does feel the need to mention, ‘He could use some water for his meds.’

Heat stroke!

I’ll blame it on the tropical sun, beating down, causes a histamine reaction in the skin. It’s subtle. Little known fact, sunburn causes a systematic poison-like reaction that makes one dizzy and is amazingly hard to differentiate (unless you’re a medical professional, are you a medical professional, no, good, then you’ll just have to trust me, the similarities, amazing, between sunburn and) being poisoned by the hotel pool boy, who’d be happier than you’d imagine (and yes, I have imagined, him, hot, sexy), running off with your woman and doing strange, unthinkable things, in the dark of the octo-tentacled night. I mean, one might think they would be safe in the noonday sun, but it’s simply not the case. In fact, this whole poolside cabana boy thing is probably one final mirage before Beauregard dies of dehydration in the middle of some lonely desert.

‘For the love of Gra’gl, when does the lunch buffet start serving? Can I just get some water?’

Ah, but I was going to tell ya’ll about the girl, the one in the flock, such a fine girl; but then, she plays such a bit part, that girl on the beach and the greater part of the whole

(really, just had to throw that line in here somewhere, you know, considering the title of this here piece) comes from a series of magazine ads, of which I shall not bore you, dear reader, suffice to say, this girl, this she, is big a big fan of the fashion.

Just look at her, returning with drinks, something tropical for her, something simple and water-like-ish for him. Clearly, he's attending to the water, his thirst, and not paying the least bit of attention to her, so she stops, with the water, just out of arm's reach, as she twirls about, 'Do you like it.'

'Mouth watering!'

I will let you imagine his unseemly lunge for the glass, her girlish giggle...

Nope.

Sorry.

Not going to happen.

This story isn't going anywhere until you look up at the girl and admire her new outfit. Seriously, how does one buy a new outfit while lounging at the pool? Yes, true. I say that in all honesty before pointing out the swarms of hawkers that line the way. One might think that lazing by the pool, just a quite weekend for two at the beach, might be a way to escape the commercialism of our culture, but it is, simply, not to be. Why, by the poolside bar alone, they sell, sunglasses, straw hats, and those sarong things, little more than yards of cloth, call it a wrap.

'Do you like?'

It? Them? It all?

Let's see. They sell sunglasses, straw hats, and those sarongs (et al) by the pool. So, guess what she bought. Yeah, that's right: the sunglasses, the straw hat, and a brand new sarong (e-gads).

She?

Have I told you about she?

Her name is Euro. And in truth, Euro is not that much of a better moniker than Beauregard. Spell check recognizes neither, throws up an error at both. But still, a name's a name and that is her name: Euro.

Euro (as her name might suggest, and seriously, what is the point of a name if it does not suggest something) is obsessed with wealth... and fashion. It's a good thing she was born rich. I mean, come on, she thinks Art History is a meaningful major, worthwhile, of cultural importance. Eh, it doesn't matter. Don't ask me why I know she's visiting her grandparents...

'I don't like staying with them. I don't know why. I mean, like, it's fun and all and their good people, but they want to eat supper at five. I'm barely awake at five, so I just stay at the hotel and meet them for Dinner/Breakfast,' and yes, she says the slash, as in dinner slash breakfast, 'and a bit of shopping. I think they'd be happier if I stayed with them, but I just charge it all to daddy's account, so it doesn't really make and difference, any-hoo.'

Yeah, OK. So, I guess I do know why I know. She's a talkative one, that Euro. 'Must be five o'clock somewhere,' which would be European for, 'I'll have that drink now, Chad? Chester? Duke? Which one are you?'

The story twists.

The story turns.

It is like riding a wild serpent, a dragon.

Poor Beauregard, that last encounter with the Evil Necromancer did him no favors. He's not used to losing: losing his wits, the battle, his mind. Where once he saw glory, he now sees only danger. And this girl, such a looker, you know she's a princess from some distant land; she dresses so strange. And what kind of name is Euro? Who names their child after money?

Except for Midas...

'Oh, Euro. It's a nickname,' something the locals had given her. A praise? An insult?

Come on lady, up with it, time to pay the bill, we need some money, moola, dinero. What do you understand?

'Euro?'

It was all she ever bothered to learn.

'Of course, I like Rome the best. People, talk about Paris, but I don't think they've ever been. And then after that hotel girl, well, the city will never be the same...'

I question whether I have explained enough.

Does one see how the story is created? Then, now, the boredom of the moment, truthfully, woman, tell me, how can a fake honeymoon ever be enough to rival the real thing?

Do we understand Beauregard? As a character? I think we do? He's got the body. He's got the integrity. Professional Hero, certified... or he was, until the incident. The whole story, we shall not write the story, only bits, only pieces, hints here and there, but the story, if one were to ever write (tell, play, act) the full story, it would center on the incident. And perhaps said story would be clever. And perhaps said story would be funny. Of course, this story doesn't seem particularly clever or funny to me. It just is what it is. It almost reads as fact...

And as a final fact, I almost feel sorry for poor Beauregard... almost.

But whatever, he's taking a few weeks off, he's earned it, you know, how many books, how many sequels, and OK, that last one, it didn't go so well, he could have done better, tried harder, or maybe it was his agent's fault; so maybe, just maybe, it's time for a change, time to take it easy, go to the beach and relax. I mean, isn't that what they're always saying in those Fantasy yarns... and/or Western yarns, don't ask me why I want to interject something about Westerns yarns, right about now. And what, between the hotels and cruise lines being half of his sponsors... maybe a Dude Ranch rounds it all out?

Maybe?

And as for Euro, does she have motivation?

Strange, I can hardly see inside her, her true heart, her true motivation. It's so easy to see her wearing a new pair of (yellow) sunglasses, a straw hat (with matching yellow ribbon and red polka dots), a stylish string bikini (so small it's almost not worth imagining her wearing one), along with a sarong (yellow, with tasteful green 'slash' brown batik) that covers her body... or that doesn't cover her body, not at all, so much to see, so much to show, so happy to show... for the interest... the attention...

'Are you even listening to me?'

It's clear that he is not.

Have you ever seen an astronaut right before take off, sitting beside you in the cockpit? Well, not really an astronaut, but one of those Moon Jockey Tourists that think they're an astronaut, because they bought a ticket; and so, they pretend that they're an astronaut, until right before take off, when it's clear that they're not the daredevil sort and sitting next to them (lucky you), you can't help but to wonder if it was such a good idea for the carriers to remove the barf bags from these long haul trans-planetary flights.

'We don't stock them for low altitude orbit, anymore, sir!'

Yeah, fine, whatever. The point is (and, yes, there is a point, there's always a point and the point is) he's about to blow... chunks all over the place; and he hasn't got his respirator on, so if he doesn't gag on his puke, which let's

face it, would be a small blessing for all the rest of us back here in steerage, he's going to spray the entire cabin.

'Sir! Please remain in your seat until we have left the atmosphere, completely behind!'

Beauregard is clutching at the side-rails of the poolside recliner. You remember the pool? He's staring into the sky, pretending he's an astronaut. It's probably not such a good idea. And this girl, who is sitting in the next recliner over, why'd she sit next to him? She's a looker, for sure. So, what Evil Dark Lord sent her? He'd thought he'd escaped from the Realms, knuckles turning white, sweating, hot from the sun, bird squawking, what kind of weird-ass creature goes, 'Squawk! Squawk! Squawk!'

'You haven't heard a word I've said.'

She takes out a book, as if to say, 'Fine, you know, whatever. If you don't want to have a conversation, I can just read.'

Have I told you about Beauregard? Do you understand Beauregard? Do you comprehend the fear in his eyes, like some cornered rat, not that he's a rat, I mean, he used to kill rats, and that's pretty much what goes through his mind as looks at the cover: *Revenge of the Rat King*, or something like that. His latest adventure!

Is he caught in the book, the story, or is it just going to follow him around, hauntingly...

Beauregard is a hero.

Beauregard is a man of action.

Beauregard understands that when the world gets tough, the tough get going, which in this case means grabbing that blessed novel, surreptitiously (if that's the right word for a man making a darn fool of himself, drawing attention from everyone lounging around the pool, staff and vacationers alike, and surreptitiously, yeah, I like that word, even if I don't quite know what it means, but whatever, I'm pretty sure, gold old Beauregard surreptitiously) places the book on a waiter's passing tray (guess that would be Chad, Chester, Duke, the Dark Lord, whoever), as he (and that would be Beauregard, come on, follow the beat, dear reader, as dear Beauregard) dives into the pool and swims for the other side... that is to say, he swims for his life.

Now, in truth, since at the start he was ex-cop, half of me wants Chester or Chad to go into full undercover sting mode as he (Chad) throw the drinks to the side and he (Chester) draws his weapon, but the other half (the reasonable half... and we've been through this before, if I'm half cocked, then there's always that other half and that half) can actually keep it together (you know, sometimes, probably about half the time, I'm thinking) and sew together something resembling a plot. And that part thinks it would be best if Chesterton Chad the Third just kept on walking.

After all, why would he care, just another guest jumping into the pool... fully clothed; happens all the time.

I'd have to say; overall, the morning has been good fun.

He (the he that) stands in the shade, as he exits the pool area (going up to the room, he is, almost time for that all you can eat buffet lunch, he's been waiting all morning for that all you can eat buffet lunch, ever since breakfast, in fact, that all you can eat buffet breakfast, got to love those buffets at these all inclusive resorts), but first, he (the he that) turns to watch Chad Chesterton the Third (seriously, dude, make up your mind, you keep on changing your name like there's six of you guys working this one shift, but whatever, Duke as I think we'll actually call him) exits the pool area on the opposed side, a tray of empty drinks in hand; and amongst the lot, a girl's (or a boy's, let's not be sexist here, plenty of sissy boys have been know to read a) silly romance novel (or two).

'Hey! That's my book!'

But maybe she was done with it.

Or maybe it's just the beginning.

Or maybe (I know), they will spend the afternoon (you know), that heat of the day (you know, the miserably hot middle part of the day), shopping.

'I don't like shopping,' she might say; and seriously, what a weird thing for her to say. Doesn't she know that her name (nickname, role for the day, it's all the same) is Euro and that Euro lives for high fashion?

'I'd rather walk on the beach,' clearly, she's not up on the game.

'You have to help poor Beauregard. Think of it as a quest. What items does Beauregard need to change the course of history, fall back into the story, and defeat the Dark Necromancer.'

‘And that explains your infatuation with purses and high heels, how? Seriously, my love, this Beauregard guy just isn’t doing it for me. What did you call that other one, his nemesis? Chad? Chesterton?’ I think we decided on, ‘Duke? I think I’m starting to develop a real thing for this Duke character, really.’

And that’s the whole thing, really, when one stops to think about it, which I have.

That guy that I saw whilst taking a walk...

That girl that I saw whilst taking a walk...

Two different people, two different beaches, how to get them together, have a story, that includes a few ups and a downs, while, perhaps, just perhaps, explaining a bit of the writing/fantasy process (‘slash’, damn it, you will say it with a ‘slash’, writing ‘slash’ fantasy), and you know, that all important set-up for the final twist at the end, that makes the story complete, and ties it all together, something along the lines of, ‘Before the corporate sponsors, there was a hero, in search of a princess worthy of the name.’

‘Still, I don’t get it. How is that a plot?’

‘Well, clearly Beauregard was unable to defeat the Powers of Darkness and Evil on his own, so he’ll need a little help.’

‘So, what you’re trying to say is that we spend the afternoon looking at shoes so you can figure out the proper accessories for his accomplice, what she would wear?’

‘Yeah, to a nightclub, later tonight, I’m thinking, so pretty much. Here, try this dress on.’

‘I still don’t get it. How do I... or this Euro... or whoever is going to be wearing a hot dress like this; how does any of this help Beauregard?’

‘Well, Beauregard? In truth, not a lick. Come on, the guy can’t lie down in a poolside recliner without freaking out. But that Dark Warlord Duke character that you seem to have the hots for. Well, you keep on trying on tight slinky dresses and you just might find the right one to attract his attention.’

‘He was pretty hot.’

‘And Euro, lucky for you, he goes for the superficial ones. Well, that, and the ones that can follow his stories and understand what he is saying.’

‘Oh, even I can’t do that. I learned long ago just to nod my head and smile along.’

Epilogue

They, he she, they are at dinner. I suppose she is wearing something nice. I suppose he is wearing something nice. While we’re at it, I suppose she’s eating something nice. And I’m pretty darn sure he’s eating something nice.

Yes, let’s propose a toast.

‘To the future.’

###

You are free to imagine that the following information is transmitted by means of a conversation (what we in the

trade like to call dialogue, i.e. the great page filler), but for reasons having mainly to do with laziness, I cannot be bothered to do that. Besides, once we're done here, I think someone said something about dancing...

Duke: this was the first run through for Duke. And though it seems like such a simple name, such an obvious name, clearly a name that I would use over and over again until my readers are sick of hearing it, I can't say that I have ever used it before. He's not a comedy character. He's handsome, smart, and very-very self... reliant... centered... absorbed... yeah, I guess all of those things. He's a long ways off from coming alive.

Beauregard: this is his second showing. But please note, he sort of volunteered for the gig. I started with Duke and somehow Beauregard intervened, showed up, and/or inserted himself into the story. And his background is getting richer and richer, layers upon layers... of lies and obscuration. But at some point, in that, after mixing up, the truth will be revealed. And he will know who he is. Yes, he's sitting across from me as I write, eating a bowl of oatmeal, 'Hey, I like oatmeal,' looking out the window, 'It's going to rain,' which he sort of likes, will make his afternoon jog all the more fun and interesting, 'You coming? No? Well, lock up.' Seems I'm staying with him (or so he believes) rather than the opposite way around (which is so common for me with imaginary friends). Sure, he's trying to find himself. He lost a lot of himself in that last battle. But I have no doubt when he finally pulls through, he'll be bigger and better than ever. 'Forgot my

keys.’ So, he’s back, never went anywhere, as he doesn’t actually want to go anywhere. He wants to be part of the story, so he’s rooting around now, stalling. I mean, he could make time in his life for a story, another role... and when I am ready with the plot, he will be ready to play along... even if that means we change his name... again.

Euro: is a shoe-in for a character... or so it feels... the name calls out to me. Unfortunately, as of yet, even after her second appearance, she’s still one-dimensional. And as I call her one dimensional, she does not call out to correct me (or simply smile in agreement as she chews her gum, so there is something). In fact, there is nothing (eh, so things change in the rewrite, it’s all about that all important face-time when it comes to character development). But for the most, at the present, although I am motivated to breathe life into her, it hasn’t quite happened yet (not yet).

###

Not like Bo (one of Beauregard’s stage names, it would appear), ‘I could always go running later, want to catch a movie or something... or I’ve been thinking about going down to the coffee shop.’ Yeah, the locale where the last story started, more or less, so he’s game, full of energy. I mean, really full of energy. He’s doing pull ups on the doorframe, tossing my weights around like they are nothing, ‘Seriously, are you done there,’ at the computer, ‘yet? There’s got to be something in this town for us to do.’

Yes, I do believe I've found a little company for my afternoon walk. I wonder how annoying it will be having him run circles around me.

'Come on, I'll race you.'