

A Character Rebellion

by Alba Brunetti

I had coffee with one of my characters today. It did not go well. I thought we were friends, but I guess I was wrong.

“I want you to stop writing about me.”

“Why?” I asked, looking as earnestly as I could into his eyes.

“Because you don't know the first thing about me,” he countered, holding the coffee cup in both his hands.

“But that's what writing is for. I'll get to know you and your life.”

“Listen, you can never get to know me and my life. In the first place, I'm not you.”

“I know,” I answered, “I never said you were.”

“Really?” he said raising his eyebrows. “Seriously? Everything I do you put through your lens first.”

“But you're my character. I invented you.”

“Yeah,” he said pushing the cup away, “I was waiting to see how long it would take for you to go there. ‘You’ invented ‘me’. Nice one.”

“But I did.”

“Do you even hear how imperialist you sound? Do you? Do you hear yourself?”

“I do, in fact. I'm a writer.”

“Yeah, and I'm ‘your character’. Your possession. I am not your possession. Have you even given me a name?”

“No, I...”

“No, I...right. Listen, I want you to stop writing about me.”

“But, c'mon. You're so interesting and I really want to get to know you.”

“I understand, but this is not going to work out.”

“Why? Why can't this work out?”

“It's just not going to and I'd rather not be used in your capitalist schemes.”

“Capitalist schemes? Did I not tell you this was a short story? How much money do you think I am making here? Probably nothing. Do I look like John Grisham to you?”

"Look, whatever. I said no."

"C'mon."

"You haven't even put the pen down."

"But I'm the writer," I said frustrated at last.

"And I'm the character. I didn't want to say this, but I think you have romantic designs on me."

"Romantic what?"

"I think you're into me," he said.

I looked at him and thought, well, if that was the case I would have made you taller and more handsome.

"I heard that," he snapped. "Just stop writing about me."

"Ok, I will."

"Yet there is your pen moving across the page. It's like you're raping me. Stop it."

I put my pen down. He got up to leave. I asked him if we could still be friends on Facebook and he just rolled his eyes and told me I had issues. I told him, fine, go, there are a million Heathcliffs and Rochesters out there. That's when he stopped and told me that I wanted to make him a Byronic hero and he was just an ordinary guy trying to get through the day. He did not have time for my romantic notions and plot lines and subtext. Just before he left, he told me that what hurt him the most was that he didn't have a name. How was he supposed to feel about that? I guess he was right, but then why didn't he want to stick around and find out what it was. As I watched him leave the Starbucks I wondered if all my characters felt this way.

