Bourne toWrite... creative writing workshops

Nodules

by Douglas Fresh

I sat in a room the colour of egg yolk for two hours while the officer got my story down. A deafening silence raged over the island at the world's end as Chief Detudamo stared me down.

'I haven't been here in two damn years, and you come here telling fairy tales about your dead woman walking! Now, what the fuck do you really want?'

He shot a hole in the wall next to me. The police station was a neglected ruin...

'Does your plane still work?' I stammered.

Detudamo held his cocked Glock to his head and scratched his temple in bemusement. Then he kicked me hard in the arse and shoved me through to the next derelict office.

I looked up again, there was another, slightly stronger tremor. Then the chief's attention shifted.

'What's in the bag, James?'

I put my last gambit on the table.

'Christ.' Detudamo changed his tune. 'How the fuck did you get that? It looks real. It better be!'

'Let me borrow your plane, and it's yours.'

'It's down the west path,' said Detudamo.

We bolted down the cliff road.

Another jolt, and we all fell. People sprawled across doorsteps. Birds and snakes fled across sky and grass. We ran faster as toy-town Ferraris and limos lazily spilled over the cliff edge or spun out of control into houses. Cinched, high-heeled women crumpled to the ground.

‘That’s a super-nodule in your hand—precious metals, minerals. It’s worth something like nine hundred million dollars. But we found these creatures. The small ones are the size of whales. The big ones, they burrow beneath the seabed!’

Detudamo looked incredulous.

‘What—and this is their billion-dollar poop?’

He knocked the nodule with his gun. His eyes widened as it glowed for a moment, something wriggling inside. We were almost at the plane…

‘Kathy—the woman you killed—was trying to stop the mining because these creatures will protect their young.’

Detudamo grinned coldly.

‘I’ll take the plane, and you can walk to hell!’

He blasted me in the arm before a massive jolt threw us to the ground. The plane was still intact. The police chief lay there, wild-eyed, trying to steady himself.

And—

Bang. Bang.

Two shots pierced Detudamo’s head.

I ran at Kathy and pushed her into the plane, taking the gun from her. There was no time to explain.

‘Get off me! I know what it’s like around here. You were forced into it—boo-hoo. If you think we’re going to shag off into the sunset, you’ve got another thing coming!’

It felt wrong to be turned on.

‘You’re a co-pilot—nothing more.’

Kathy switched on the radio.

‘This is Sun King, over. Let the cargo through, over.’

That was meant to happen all over the world.

We throttled up the runway, weaving through larger, smashed planes. In the distance, people clambered for yachts. Some made for standard bunkers; others had massive hydraulic lifts that lowered entire houses underground. Another deafening shunt jolted the island, like an invisible giant accidentally knocking a board game. The landscape broke out in hives and sporadic sinkholes. My stomach dropped as we swooped upwards, and my heart sank into words.

‘Sorry, Kathy.’

Her face remained fixed ahead, frowning at the cold, crisp blue sky.

I looked away from the fuel gauge and out through the lower door window. The sea withdrew from all around the island. Sandy beaches collapsed as waves engulfed and shrouded everything.

Then there it was. At first, I thought it was a circular mountain range—the birth of a new island surrounding ours. But the peaks were too perfect.

Too sharp. The blood and breath drained from my head with fear.

A mouth the size of a lunar crater simply swallowed the island: supersized, destructive, inevitable predatory perfection. The air around the plane suddenly sank. Kathy turned to me, her eyes like they were in the old days.

'I just wanted to feel that we might escape…'

Everything went dark.