

*Lazy, Stupid, and Married*  
at a Theater Near You

By

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Over the last several years, I have written numerous articles, a few of which may have even been decent. (After all, you know what they say about giving monkeys a word processor. Yes, that’s right, with spell check, I have become almost human!) More recently, I actually reread one of my articles, which gave me pause to consider the need for a disclaimer. In fact, one might consider this entire article a disclaimer of sorts.

From my point of view, I think it is always important to take a minute to laugh at yourself, if for no other reason than it keeps you in the same hat size. As I mentioned above, the other day I actually became fascinated by one of my own articles! Yes, that’s right: “fascinated,” just like a parakeet looking at itself in the mirror. No, I haven’t gone off the deep end (unless of course I was already there), and, if you would be quiet for a moment, I will try to explain – but in my own little way!

As my friends (both of them) will tell you, I have never been short on thoughts or comments. In fact, some will say, “That Book is sure talkative,” while others will say “When do you think he will shut up?” So when Steven van Breemen first asked me to write for *Winning Magazine*, I thought, “How hard could this be? After all, everyone around the world must surely be dying to hear my opinions, so all I need to do is get those thoughts out of my head [the ones about pigeons, not the possessed ones] and down on paper.”

After struggling with the first several articles and considering what I actually was able to get down on paper, I came to the realization that being an author (a term loosely used) might be harder than it initially looked! Those first articles were by far the toughest because when you are new to something, you don’t want to look like a fool, even though publishing anything is straining to become one!

Through this learning period, I discovered that a big part of writing is learning how to fully develop your stunted thoughts on paper and in great detail. In fact, for me to be successful, I needed to assume that you were all idiots. No, not because you race pigeons (although that might be one logical conclusion, and certainly the first conclusion to which

my wife might leap), but because if I am trying to explain something to an idiot, then naturally I tend to use a bit more detail.

For some reason, in my style of writing, detail is something that I tend to overlook. I have thought about this for a long time, and I guess it basically comes down to one or two factors. First, adding detail requires considerably more work on my part, and, second, when I use too much detail, I tend to forget what I was writing in the first place. When my wife puts her mind to it, she is a pretty good writer, so, one day, I asked her about my problem with detail. Her response was, "Let's see here, you don't want to put out the effort to write well, and, when you do, you can't remember what it was that you were saying. I think they call that being lazy and stupid." Unlike myself, who might possibly add detail if it weren't for my shortcomings, my wife intentionally doesn't add detail because she is afraid that the meaning of her message will get lost. For instance, I happen to know that if she thinks you are an ass, she doesn't call you a jerk, she calls you an ass, so that way you won't get confused about what she is really thinking. She is kind of a point-A-to-point-B person in that way!

This is not to say that she can't be subtle when she wants to be. However, she is only subtle when she is being sadistic. You see, she only inflicts subtlety when she is trying to slowly torture her victim, which is usually me. To her, subtlety doesn't mean under the surface, it means one limb at time. So that you can comprehend the difference between pointed and subtle, I just happen to have a recent example. My wife and our ever-expanding sons decided that they needed the George Foreman grill with the removable trays. That way, my sons can eat me out of house and home even faster than they are currently doing!

Well, the other morning, I came into the house after feeding the birds, and there propped up against the wall and draining into the sink were the freshly washed trays from the grill. I couldn't help but think to myself, "Sure, these trays are clean today, but the boys are going to have steak tonight, and then the three of them are going to be gone on a trip starting tomorrow, so when I want to use them, they will be dirty." A couple of minutes later, my dear wife walked into the kitchen and said, "Isn't this new George Foreman grill nice? The boys can cook six hamburgers at once! Did you see you can remove these trays and clean them?"

I have been married for over 25 years now, so you would think that I could just say, "Yes dear," and just keep walking. Instead, I had to blurt out, "Yeah, but when you are gone, who is going to clean them for me?" First, she answers pointedly, "Look ass\*\*\*\*, you've got hands, you can wash them." (I looked down and sure enough, there they were, one dangling at the end of each arm). She then went on, "In fact, that would be the first thing that your sorry ass has done all week [harsh, but probably true]. What do I look like, your mother?" Again, "sticks and stones..." But no, I just had to push the envelope that one extra inch, so as she was storming out of the kitchen, I said, "Well... You are starting to look like my mother." In truth, the comment wasn't quite as gutsy as it sounds because I hadn't said it very loud, so I wasn't really sure if she heard me. What a dumb-

ass I am. She would have heard that if she was in the shower and I was clear down at the street.

Let's face it, if I had any sense at all, I would have committed hari-kari, or I would have rushed in and thrown myself at her feet and begged for forgiveness or even asked her to put out my eyes with her high heels. However, inexplicably unaware of the boundary that I had crossed, I was instead quite pleased with myself for composing this clever little comeback!

That evening, when I got home, I announced my arrival with the usual "Cindy, I'm home, what's for dinner?" A less than enthusiastic response came from the back of the house: "There is gazpacho on the sink counter." Well, this was not quite what I had in mind, especially when I knew the two wolverines had been eating steak, but who am I to doubt Santa Claus, so into the kitchen I went. What I found waiting for me was not gazpacho, but Spaghetti-O's in a bowl. Now I am not the sharpest tool in the shed, but I do know the difference between Spaghetti-O's and gazpacho, so I picked up the bowl and indignantly marched to the back of the house to find the misses. Turns out she was in our bedroom reading a book. With authority, I announced, "This isn't gazpacho, this is frickin' Spaghetti-O's." I could tell by the way she inserted the bookmark into the book and then slowly closed it that all was not well.

With a fury in her eyes that is only seen in rabid dogs and sometimes in the eyes of my former editor, she started in. "Well now," she hissed, "Your mother used to make those same frickin' Spaghetti-O's and you loved them to frickin' death then, didn't you?" Almost in desperation from the realization of my error earlier in the day, I squeaked, "But it's cold." (What an idiot I am!!!) "Well then, by the end of the frickin' week, I am sure that you will have developed a new frickin' taste for cold frickin' Spaghetti-O's, won't you?" Clearly, I was backed into a corner, so there was nothing left to do but to stand up for myself like any man under the same circumstances would do, so I shoveled a spoon full of this frickin' delight right into my mouth before I said something else stupid.

Anyway, before that outburst, I mentioned that I have a problem including detail in my writing. Let me give you an example of how a lack of detail can affect one's writing. I might say something like, "If you hold the pigeon to your chest, you will get sick or even die," when what I should have said was, "If you hold the pigeon to your chest while examining it, you are more likely to inhale a feather protein that can eventually cause pigeon lung, which can lead to sickness, or, in some cases, even death." While the end result can be the same, one seems less alarming than the other. For some reason, my former editor had a problem with alarming statements such as these, and she was always telling me that I needed to soothe, not scare the reader. She was adamant that I shouldn't say things like "I'll slay the dogs that disagree with me," ...unless of course I happened to be writing a swashbuckling pirate story. She went on to mention that while many of my stories were adventurous and possibly even challenging (to read), they didn't qualify as pirate stories. She even made me return my eye patch.

She also said things like, “I really don’t understand what you mean in this particular sentence,” to which I would always answer, “Well, the guys reading this have raced pigeons for years, so they will understand what I mean.” Then, during the next week, I would get three emails from fanciers (none of which I told her about) saying, “I don’t understand!” Hell, because I don’t know all you guys, for all I know, it might have been her sending me those emails. Regardless of who was sending them, eventually it was easier to add more details to my articles than it was to answer the ensuing emails.

Early on, I would often spend my entire weekend in front of the computer writing these articles, and when I thought they were coming together, I would show them to my editor. When she had finished editing, she would look like that frothing, crazed rabid dog that I mentioned above, after it had killed a goose and wallowed in its blood and feathers. (See the picture you can create with a little detail?) When she calmed down from these frenzies, she would be sheepishly horrified at the bloody mess she had made of my work. [Editor’s note: Ha! I’ve gone from a rabid dog to a sheep – not bad for Bill, since only the last half is all in his head. Bill begged me out of retirement to edit this article, but I am feeling that frothing thing coming on again. I just end up having to clean my screen all the time!] After one of these episodes, it would take me a week to get my pride and my article back together, so that I could send it off in time for the next issue of Winning Magazine.

If it is any consolation, I really think I might be getting better at organizing my articles, since I have developed a new technique where I start at the beginning and I try to finish by the ending. In the process, my grammar has improved somewhat (if you speak Swahili), and while the context of the words are sometimes incorrect, with the help of spell-check, they are generally spelled correctly, so one out of two isn’t that bad.

At one point, just before my editor quit, she said, “These articles are getting so much better that you shouldn’t require my services much longer!” How transparent! Anyone could see where she was going with this! Fine, if that’s the way she really felt about it, she doesn’t have the Book to kick around any more. In fact, at some point I realized that I could use the absence of her services to my advantage. Without her in the loop, just think how much faster I could crank these articles out, and at a level of quality that would make a Yugo owner proud! (You know, Yugos are cars where the mirrors tend to fall off for no reason. If you have one and it should fall off, you may find that your parakeet really enjoys it. I know that mine does!)

At the beginning of this article, you might just barely remember that I was fascinated by a previous article that I had written. Well, the other day, I happened to open Winning Magazine to see if the new issue was out, and I noticed that Steven had placed one of my articles as part of a free subscription drive. As it happened to be an article that I had enjoyed writing, I decided to titillate myself by reading it again. While I still remembered the gist of the article, I didn’t remember it verbatim, so, the second time around, I was much more critical of my own work, and in the process I realized that I had made a number of editing mistake.

After hanging my head in shame and saying, “Ouch!” a few times, I was searching my mind for a solution to the problem. At one point, I devised what I am sure you will agree is a brilliant long-term solution to the problem, and, at the same time, one that relieves me of the responsibility of my mistakes! Since most of my articles are being translated to Dutch anyway, eventually someone will come along and translate this article. Let’s face it, if the guy is smart enough to be bilingual and he speaks both Dutch and Book, then the chances are pretty good he will clean up my mistakes as part of the translation. Then, maybe someday in the future when I am dead from holding my pigeons too close to my chest, someone else will translate the Dutch version of this article back into English, and then I will look like the genius I’m supposed to be! Once I am considered to be a genius, maybe they will even make a C grade movie out of it that is simply entitled *Stupid, Lazy and Married* and advertise it as tragicomedy that still lacks detail!

### **The Moral of the Story**

Since every story should have a moral, I guess the moral here should be that while my writing might be getting arguably better, the constraints on my time are becoming inarguably greater; therefore, if I am going to keep on writing, something has got to give. Since I clearly don’t have the skills necessary to edit my own work, and since everyone already knows my last editor quit in an unpaid rage (from my point of view, unpaid rages are the best kind), and, because I believe that anyone that would volunteer to edit my articles isn’t going to have the use of their arms (they will be wearing a straightjacket), I guess that we are just going to have to live with a few mistakes! What constitutes a few mistakes? Over the several hours since I first discovered that I was imperfect, I have been given this a great deal of thought, and I have come to the conclusion that I should try to keep the mistakes under one mistake per subscriber per article.

Until next time!

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