Paper Walls: Keith

The paradox of Keith Buchant was that despite being a man of many opinions he would never actually tell people any of them. Instead he would stare blankly at them or shrug and offer a chuckle before steering the conversation in another direction. If one were to press Keith, assuming he didn’t just dodge the question outright by pulling from his weathered playbook of social avoidance, he would simply sigh and utter the following quote “I am not a person of opinions because I feel the counter arguments too strongly” and hope for that to kill the debate. In the instances which it did not he would nod appropriately during the forthcoming lecture, all-the-while intensely debating himself about the issue.

Not even his usual utterances were spared from his mind’s eye. So it came to be that on one day he would, in the process of going about his usual routine, be about to deliver this most tired of authorial references when he was pulled into the throngs of internal debate once more. Keith wondered whether that was something of a commentary on his life up to that point; a headline of sorts. It would be placed atop the roll of footage he would see in the process of death. ‘The life and times of Keith Buchant: He was not a man of opinions because he felt the counter arguments too strongly. Also he stared stupidly at those who asked him for one.’

Spelling out the title allowed him to snap out of his reverie and realize that he had trailed off in the middle of conversation to stare at a table and whisper intensely with himself. He looked up to find a young woman whose doe eyes looked back him with a cocktail of bemusement and genuine concern for his sanity. Keith apologized profusely for his poor etiquette before doing a quick scan of the mental playbook for a way out of the situation. His fear began to mount as he realized he may have to tell the woman something to assuage her doubts about his mental stability. That would be the socially correct thing to do, yes? When she read his expression - and observed what Keith could only assume was confusion on his face - she set her coffee down and touched her hand to his before looking at him, her eyes impossibly blue, and offered him a reassuring smile.

“Relax, Keith. Take a deep breath” she had said. He took several.

“Now start again. You were telling me about your complex opinion on pennies.”

Keith had two choices: he could angst again and probably hyperventilate while doing so – though that would get him out the situation he’d gotten himself into - or …

“Well, Britt, it’s like this.” he began.

“Pennies are worse than useless, they’re completely counter-productive …”

**Paul Cupido**