

THE D.A.D.D.Y. COMPLEX

LUKE PATTERSBY

WITH RYAN SANDOVAL

THE
DEVASTATOR

**DON'T MISS ANY OF LUKE PATTERSBY'S
BESTSELLING THEO SULTAN ADVENTURES:**

SQUATTERS' RIGHTS
THE JUNIPER EQUATION
THE CALIBAN PARADIGM
HANG DOG
PROFESSOR TARGET
DEATH DO YOU PART
MINY MOE
SYMPATHY FOR THE JESTER
WALL TO WALL
PISSSED OFF

"Praise" for #1 bestselling author Luke Pattersby and his Theo Sultan Series

"Like the *Metal Gear* franchise in prison therapy and the therapist is Tom Clancy right after suffering a massive head wound, all rolled into one: good!"

— *Psychotherapy Book Reviews*

"Theo Sultan makes other characters in the action-thriller genre such as Jack Reacher and Jason Bourne look like a pair of poodle ovaries."

— *Lompoc Sun*

"Much like his hero Theo Sultan, the thrice-divorced author Luke Pattersby has shunned real family for a career in fictional thrillers. His offspring is a fine collection of bestsellers – and the grandchildren are dollar signs!"

— *Association Press*

"As a shoot-first-and-ask-questions-never type maverick, Theo Sultan might have some questionable politics, but consarnit he gets the job done!"

— *Virginia Review*

"Pattersby's commercially driven body of work reveals a slew of troubling personal issues. His stories are misogynistic, paranoid of technology, and xenophobic; they glorify violence, and his popularity suggests a fear of paternal commitment for author and reader alike. But consarnit, he gets the job done!"

— *Minneapolis Mirror*

"this guy's daddy issues tho."

— @00spybuff, *Twitter.com*

Author's Note

People often ask me, Luke Pattersby, what does it take to write a heart-pounding, edge-of-your-seat thriller. I gotta say, every book is different, every character a new journey into the human psyche, every page a new dance with that sly gal known as The Muse. I'm sorry, but there's no secret to my sauce: whether I'm writing about a family-less spy who makes love to unattached young women, or the lawyer without a family who copulates with women who are much younger, or the symbologist with no familial-ties who romances females aged in their early-twenties, every formula is wildly unlike the next. So it goes.

I am a Storyteller. Since the dawn of time we keepers of the myth have gathered 'round the fire to share tales great and small. To find comfort in the familiar and strength in the mighty. From *Gilgamesh* to *Popeye the Sailor Man* to even my own creation within these very pages: Theo Sultan. Humankind's greatest heroes exist to fearlessly guide us all through the dark. *Look, how the night surrounds us even now...*

Sadly Reader, though I have proven myself a hero many times over in terms of selling books, there are still those critics who claim that I owe my successes to a team of underpaid ghostwriters. Or that I set my stories in countries I'd like to visit, then get my publishers to bankroll the whole damn trip. Or that I am compensated by the word, so I over describe irrelevant moments just to boost my numbers. Unfortunately, the list goes on.

Perhaps the most damning allegation though, is that I have "daddy issues" stemming from unresolved feelings toward my own absentee father and that my Theo Sultan stories have become nothing more than "an embarrassed and impotent subconscious wrestling with the guilt of being a thrice-divorced failed parent and abandoned man child..." as one vicious S.O.B. wrote.

Sigh.

Do I have three ex-families? Sure. Does my fictional hero, Theo Sultan, also have three ex-families? Now that I think about it, yes, I guess this is true as well. Hmm, ever heard of a thing called “coincidence?” The point is, Reader, as you embark on this adventure that will take you from one cover to the next, I ask you to forget our world – one of jealous loser critics, bitter ex-families, and fathers whose names are not fit to print on prison toilet paper. These subjects have nothing at all to do with *The D.A.D.D.Y. Complex*. What matters is the journey.

Also, I must deny all claims that the following story was written as:

1. A contest to see if I could break the world record for using the most metaphors in a single story (currently held by Janet Evanovich).
2. The product of an unfortunate Benzedrine trip.
3. A veiled attack on Sammy Hagar from Van Halen for snubbing me at Michael Crichton’s birthday party.

Now follow me ye seekers of myth, join us ‘round the fire. I hear The Muse calling...

Dedicated* to:

My business manager, my accountant, my financial adviser, my lawyer, my travel agent, my therapist, the Readers, Michael Crichton, James Patterson, John Grisham, Vince Flynn, Nelson DeMille, Daniel Silva, Robert Ludlum, Lee Child, Joseph Campbell, Blake Snyder, Steven Pressfield, Geoffrey Chaucer, Charles Dickens, Herman Melville, the U.S. legal system, the men and women of the U.S. Armed Forces, and of course, dearest Lily Rose.

**NOT Dedicated to:*

My ex-families and DEFINITELY NOT my father.



“

The Child is father of the Man.

”

—William Wordsworth, the Poet

CHAPTER 2

Sultan lumbered into his one bedroom, handbuilt cabin deep in the Virginia wilderness and miles from that non-stop shit show known as Society. His loyal dog, “Marcus,” a mayonnaise white Alsation named for the wise philosopher king Marcus Aurelius, greeted Sultan with three different beer bottles in his mouth – *all domestic*.

“Thanks, boy,” said Sultan as he popped the cap with a quick *tsss*. In his mercenary days, Sultan was once a part of a disastrous mission to acquire rare hops from deep in the Congo for a brewer out of Portland, Oregon. *There were no survivors*. The cut-throat hops trade made blood diamonds look like cereal prizes. It had been domestics ever since. Besides, in his opinion “I.P.A.” stood for “I Pay (out the) Ass,” a joke he made to his doting pup on a near nightly basis. No sooner had Sultan tasted that first bubbly sud of liberty when Marcus returned with a bag of sunflower seeds – Sultan’s favorite treat, and a mysterious package that looked about as world traveled as the dog’s master. *Damn time to move*, thought Sultan.

His muscular, yet insanely nimble sausage fingers undid the string binding the package’s contents. The return address read “M.B., Linegoggin & Haverbrook.” *A lawyer’s firm*. Already Marcus had his hackles up and was instinctively barking at the slimy stench of family law that wafted

out along with an eruption of legal letterhead and ancient child support letters. Sultan's grip tightened like a boa constrictor. *My ex-families. They finally found me...* Thumbing through the documents, Sultan used knowledge from his lawyering days (*hey, everyone makes mistakes*) to decipher the meaning of the "hate mail": His ex-children were suing him for unpaid child support, plain and simple.

Like the past vomiting into Sultan's heretofore sparkling clean toilet of a mind, it all came flooding back, bitter carrot chunk memories and all. Sultan's history as an ex-family man three times over had returned to haunt him. He had started and lost three separate families, been a father and husband three separate times. There was Linda, baby James, and little Susie all swept out to sea during a Disney cruise through the Bermuda Triangle. Margot, the nurse, and their triplets – a handful at times sure, but not deserving of the fate they all suffered – kidnapped by Indonesian smugglers and sold into the underground circus.

Least that was the rumor.

Sultan lit a cigar, inhaled the thick, smokey freedom, and ashed into the ash-tray his dog helpfully brought over in his mouth. Ahh, yes, no wife to complain about his cigars. Not like Denise, mother of Tucker, little Wanda, and the third kid – what's his face, the wimp with asthma. Sultan simply forgot to pick them up from the shopping mall on Christmas Eve, and had been out of the picture ever since... *C'est la vie*. No, that life wasn't for him and he wasn't regretful at all. He didn't mind things like eating his Boston Market dinners alone over the running garbage disposal. *He didn't mind falling asleep in his recliner with cigars in his mouth like last night.* Guess his ex-families had finally resurfaced – two at least – and were pissed at dear old dad. *Hell of a birthday gift.* If he didn't appear in "court" in three week's time, Sultan faced incarceration. As far as he was concerned, though, the only court in the land Sultan now recognized was the basketball court found in America's inner-cities.

With a swig, Sultan tossed the forms, picked up the latest issue of *9/11 Magazine* brought over by Marcus, and flipped on the radio he had

built from technology waste left on the Appalachian Trail. Lost phones, misplaced earbuds, dumps wrapped in tin-foil. As far as Sultan was concerned, the Internet Age had done nothing but turned nature into a wasteland of wires and dumps wrapped in tin-foil.

He tuned his radio to his favorite Blues program that featured the songs of yesteryear. Of a time when good men were lucky enough not to deal with cultural abominations like free soda refills, or something called an “emoji.” To not have to deal with child support. Yes sir, “Ol’ Sackhead’s Sunday Sampler” was like listening to the past.

Tinny voices and crackling percussion spilled out of the speaker and set Sultan at ease. Marcus reappeared with a set of Sultan’s favorite musical spoons in his mouth. A gift from a little boy in Afghanistan. They were gnarled and misshapen, much like Sultan himself, but still brought him great joy. He often used them to play along with whatever musical prophets were speaking the Truth on Ol’ Sackhead’s.

A tappa-dappa-dap and kikkikida-clacka-clack, he started on his handsome thighs...

Not now. Later.

The Mestizo’s ominous warning in the bounce house didn’t sit right with Sultan. How “something dark” was coming his way. To be sure he deeply respected the Latin connection to the spiritual realm and at one time went undercover deep into the world of shamanism. Or, perhaps the criminal was just shooting his little mouth off. *Talking shit*. On the subject of criminals, Sultan couldn’t help but think about what made such sinister slugs slither unawares in the threadbare brassiere of Lady Civilization. Was it bad parenting? Was it absentee fathers, like Sultan’s own deadbeat dad who had... NO.

Best not to remember. *Best to forget the pain*, Sultan thought as he now found himself downing his 12th domestic beer, motorcycling shirtless through the local graveyard. To his own dad’s final resting place.

Stone odes to long forgotten Civil War soldiers streaked by. Mere boys surrendered to that earthy foe in ragged blues and greys alike,

their souls too weak to leave the haunted ground, strong only enough to barely lift tattered worm-eaten uniforms like swaying kelp in an inky black ocean. *Farther up, dead people from the 1990s were also buried.* Wind whipped through Sultan's dirty-blond hair as his Harley Davidson FX Super Glide Cruiser with aqua-colored bulletproof side-compartments smashed apart headstones willy-nilly. If he knew soldiers like he thought he did, the old boys down in the cold, cold ground appreciated this explosive action to break up the monotony of the beyond. He revved the throttle in their honor.

Up ahead a leaning headstone about as tall as Sultan himself slanted away in his path like a launch ramp. He gassed it. Seconds later, in his best Evel Knievel impression, Sultan and his hog were airborne, caressed by the Virginia air. In this moment he was a million miles away from the threats of unpaid child support. He shut his eyes, for in this moment he was free. When he opened them, the gnarled shape of an outstretched hand reached for Sultan's throat.

It was a tree branch, and in a split-second reaction Sultan headbutted the plant to smithereens. He landed with a skid, and all the appropriate physical occurrences that a man his size and a bike that weight would result in, then put some "desert-juice" into the turn to complete a full 360-degree rotation on the nearby burial plots.

He had arrived at his father's grave.



CHAPTER 7

The local diner was known for the worst eggs in town and coffee that tasted like it was filtered through a king rat – a phenomenon in the vermin world wherein rodents become intertwined through a quagmire of tails and filth. *Sultan ordered a third cup.* He swigged his java like a man who was pissed, and caffeine always soothed him because the weak stimulating chemicals were no match for his natural adrenaline. He had a mouth full of dirt-brown scrambles filled with egg shells – just the way he liked them. “Dammit, old man, I work alone,” Sultan said.

Sitting beside Bayer in the booth was a young woman in a rock-n-roll shirt, with a threadbare beanie and blue hair, busily typing into a fancy laptop. Midtwenties. *Probably a nerd.* A subculture whose dependence on technology was single handedly ruining society.

Technology. Sure, medicine and cars were fine in small doses, but all that cybering – “page me,” “fax this” – was ruining life. Gone were the days of handshakes. Of learning the fiber of a man’s fabric through simple conversation and skulking. Now, thanks to the nerds like the blue-haired “tech expert” who sipped her fancy “choochoochino” or some such, all we had now was *The Grid*.

“Debz is the best in her field,” said Bayer. “Besides, you didn’t think we’d send you into the field blind? Not in today’s America. First Kosovo.

Then Benghazi. Nowadays everyone with a government salary has to raise their hand and ask nicely before so much as blinking.”

Sultan mulled the girl's name around in his head. *Debz*. The “z” most likely an affectation. She was from one of those generations with a fancy name – The Becomers, or Adventurists – one that made every member feel like they were heroes in a story, without even lifting a finger. Unless of course that finger was about to press right back down on a keyboard used to type and click out a theoretical life on the information superhighway. *A digital native*.

“Look, you asshole,” she said. “I’m not thrilled about being your eyes and ears either.”

“Good, Blueberry,” he said. “Because I need extra those like I need an extra pain in the ass. I respect girls in the workplace – burn the bra and all that women’s lib bullshit – but you’re probably better off with one of the desk-jockeys back at Langley. Hang with me, toots, and you’re liable to get shot, pregnant, or both.”

Bayer looked nervous. *Debz* gulped down a huge bite of a vegetarian breakfast burrito. Unfazed.

She said, “I know your type, Cave Man. A so-called ‘maverick’ who’s really just a deadbeat. Pretends to be a hero, thinks every woman you meet is into you, but secretly hates himself and would rather point fingers at the changing world than put the slightest effort into changing himself. Damaged and searching desperately for the mission that’ll do what you’re too afraid to do yourself.”

She made a mocking “drinking” pantomime, then a blowing-brains-out hand gesture, using a pinch of Sultan’s scrambled eggs to imitate brain matter.

“Listen, jabber jaws,” Sultan said, standing up. “The only reason I’m not giving you a hot oil facial in the deep fryer right now is because Bayer tells me you got info about my dad. But that can change in an instant.” He dusted egg bits off his jeans, pocketed a fistful of tiny jams from his table, as well as the neighboring tables, and headed for the exit.

“Sit back down, Theo,” said Bayer.

Debz said, “Aww, big Cave Man baby’s taking his toys and going home?”

Sultan spun around and yelled, “Look, youngblood, all that technology you know how to use is really just an addiction worse than Afghani black tar heroin. Now if you’ll excuse me, I got a dad to find.”

Debz unzipped her messenger bag and flopped out a stack of papers.

She said, “Then I guess you’re not interested in this list of every theme park in the world with a log flume ride.”

He stopped in his tracks and marched back to the table. Grabbed up the printout. There had to be about 300 amusement parks here. It painted a grim portrait of the state of human civilization that we needed so much mindless entertainment. People would rather cram into hour-long lines, ass-to-crotch with the morbidly obese than pick up a book or ponder the cosmos. Finding out where this photo was taken would be like looking for a needle in a cholesterol filled haystack.

“I also got an encryption sourcing program running on your photo as we speak,” she said. “It’ll give us the location of the fax source.”

Sultan sat back down in the booth.

“You two are going to be the death of me,” said Bayer. “Now Debz, show Theo what you showed me.”

“Let me guess,” said Sultan. “You want to teach me how to do an ‘email.’”

“It’s about Entwistle,” she said. “He’s not the only missing father.”

