

KATHERINE B. SCHWARZENBACH

Embracing Difficulty: or Once More Into the Breach, Dear Friends

Red flags, flashing lights, orange cones - - Danger Ahead! A young woman complains that her boss doesn't respect her; nothing she does is right; but she's missed important deadlines. I tell myself, "She's going to get fired. She can't lose this job. I've got to step in here."

A small example of being stymied by necessity. Our narrative is in pieces. My bits and pieces are different from hers, and yet, we're interlocking in a dangerous place. It's up to me to set things right.

In *THE SEDUCER*, by Jan Kjaerstad, the protagonist Jonas Wegeland undergoes a traumatic near-accident, where, as a six-year-old, he experiences a psychic dismemberment imagining falling into a steamer's propeller. "So how do the pieces of a life fit together?" By hearing his grandfather's endless stories, Jonas recovers himself, almost. "Even though [grandfather] did his utmost, and even though Jonas could see with his own eyes that he was all there, he never rid himself of the feeling that, psychologically speaking, he truly had been chopped into pieces" (p.186).

My patient and I attempt to "piece together" the causes of her dilemma. Unexamined remnants of my own past resurface. My presentation depicts the danger inherent in entering a dark place with another. Unlike Jonas and his grandfather, my patient and I are each in pieces. I'm taking a huge risk when I show up and step in - - I know my patient has. I can only follow her lead and seek to regain our footing so that in our mutual survival, we can regain our rhythm and begin to understand our Story, shared and separate.

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