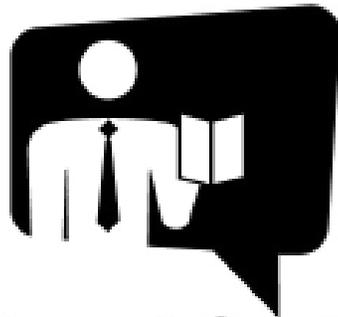


SpeechGeek



Season Six: Nationals 2009



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Whew!

The season has flown by, hasn't it?

As we count down the minutes to the fun in Birmingham, I wanted to take a moment to thank you for your support this season.

SpeechGeek had its best season ever. Similarly, that's why we're here: to help your team have its best season ever.

We always hope you find our scripts both rewarding to perform and as an instructional resource for your competitors new and advanced.

Don't forget to stop by our booth during registration. We'll have lots of **SpeechGeek** buttons and plenty of other freebies as well.

Corey Alderdice
Publisher

Second Opinion

by Steven Guthrie

When I walk into the overly sterilized white room with three-month-old *Redbook* and *People* magazines in the corner, jars of cotton swabs and tongue depressors on the counter and box of used syringes on the wall, I feel like I've come home. No, it's better than home: it's heaven. I thumb through the weathered edges of the magazine and browse the already partially completed crossword that I partially completed the last time I was here. Yep. Still have no clue what three down is. It's good to be back.

The backless robe glides on effortlessly, like hair gel or melted butter. I find tiny pleasures in these routines. I love the way the paper on the exam bed makes a crumpling noise reminiscent of dry fall foliage. Like a child, I wriggle my butt for a few more satisfying crunches before Dr. Stone arrives.

I'm here today to discuss the results of my lab work. Three days ago, lab technicians drew about 2 gallons of blood from my arm to send off for analysis. What can I say? I'm a medical mystery, it seems. For the past seven months I've been coming back to my doctor twice a week to get down to the bottom of these symptoms. My joints ache, I'm nauseated, I'm distracted all the time and can barely stay awake through the day. For goodness sakes, I'm only 56. I shouldn't feel this...old. Plus, when I plug all the symptoms into my internet search engine, it says I'm pregnant so I'm pretty sure I'm going to have to get a second opinion on this one. Thus far, the doctors have been less than capable of figuring out what's wrong with me.

When Dr. Stone walks in, she seems lumbered by the weight of my charts and medical history. She gently heaves the paperwork onto the counter and sighs. At first, I can't tell if the sigh is one of frustration, boredom or relief from carrying the files. She puts her glasses on and opens the file folder. It was definitely a frustrated sigh. It seems as though my blood work won't be offering us any solution this time.

"So, what's up doc?" I say, trying my best to be charming.

"That's a good question, Mr. Ellison. A question we're trying really hard to find the answer to, I'm afraid," she replies distractedly. "Let's go ahead and have a listen to your heart and lungs, shall we?"

"I think we can manage that."

Dr. Stone breathes lightly on her stethoscope and rubs it in her palm to warm it up a bit before pressing it to my back. She leans closer to listen.

"Take a deep breath and hold it, please," she says.

I breathe in. I can smell her perfume. It's faint, maybe it's a lotion or soap she uses.

But I can definitely smell lavender and vanilla.

"And exhale," she says.

I breathe out. She moves the stethoscope across my back, then over to my chest. With each breath, she gently presses a different location. Like a squirrel searching for a hidden acorn, she surveys my body for a hint, a clue, a palpitation or hidden wheeze. No luck, it seems.

"Let's try getting your blood pressure."

She slides the blood pressure cuff up my arm and begins to squeeze the bulb. As she pumps the cuff and it begins to pinch my arm, she presses two fingers to my wrist and counts the pulse. I watch her watch her wristwatch. There's something about oddly comforting about her touch. This is the highlight of my visit. The feeling of human touch. A hand on the shoulder, a brush against my cheek while looking into my eyes. It's the closest thing to a hug I've had in who knows how long. I know it's just part of the job, that feeling for my pulse is no different than a salesperson shaking my hand when we meet, but it's going to make me feel better. I hope. She takes the cuff off my arm.

"Mr. Ellison," Dr. Stone says in a reluctant voice, "I don't think the source of your illness is physical."

I'm a bit taken aback. "Are you saying I'm not sick?"

"No," she reassures, "I do believe that all the symptoms you've been experiencing are very legitimate and bothersome."

"Okay," I'm still unsure as to what she's talking about.

"I'd like to talk about your lifestyle."

Now I'm the frustrated one. "I'm sorry doctor, but we've spoken at length over the past few months about where I work, what allergies I may have, how I don't drink, smoke or eat red meat and I work out every day. Please, how much more about my lifestyle do you need to know?"

"I understand, Mr. Ellison," she says in an attempt to soothe my nerves, "but I'd like for you to consider the idea that your illness may be of a *psychological* nature."

I pause for a moment. "What are you getting at?"

"I apologize if what I'm about to say may offend you, but...do you think it's possible that you may be mentally manifesting these symptoms as a result of feeling detached from the rest of the world? You work from home, have no immediate family,

My Week as the Other

by Isabelle Owens

To Dr. Timothy Hudgens, Principal of Valley Park High School:

I can only hope that this letter finds you in better spirits than I currently find myself. I also hope that your office staff has informed you as to the nature of my correspondence. I have spoken with your office associate, Renita, on three different occasions this week, though I have yet to have the pleasure to meet with you in person. Undoubtedly you've been incredibly busy glad-handing the superintendent, so I'll endeavor to keep this letter to the point.

Dr. Hudgens, allow me to begin by saying that until this point I have been satisfied with the education my son, Zachary Owens, has received at Valley Park High School. A member of both the basketball team and academic quiz team, Zach has invested his time and energy wholeheartedly into getting the best high school experience possible during his time at VPHS. That being said, please try to imagine my utter shock to come home to find my "All-American" son wearing women's clothes, face caked in make-up while chatting with strangers on the internet and stating that it is "part of a class project."

It seems that upon reading John Howard Griffin's book, Black Like Me, Mr. Johnathon Martin, Zach's English teacher, took it upon herself to create an assignment that took the lesson plan a bit too far. Mr. Martin's assignment required a group of high school juniors to live a week in the shoes of someone "other" than them. Much in the same way that Black Like Me explored one white man's experience of "passing" as a black man in the 1960's south in an effort to understand racism, my son was expected to "pass" as a woman so that he may better understand what life is like for the opposite sex.

I find this assignment nothing short of perverse.

For you and Mr. Martin, as public educators responsible for the mental and social health of children, to think this activity is appropriate is beyond me. I am repulsed by the lack of foresight exhibited by Mr. Martin. Don't worry, I understand the intent of Mr. Martin's assignment. Obviously America's teenagers are so utterly self-absorbed that we need knights in short sleeved polos like Mr. Martin to come galloping to the rescue. Otherwise, how would our sons and daughters understand what life is like for "the little guy"? For "the people who are forgotten"? Thank goodness Mr. Martin wasn't teaching The Jungle or Oliver Twist or my son may have come home with severed limbs or pretending to be a homeless orphan.

I can only begin to express my indignation that Mr. Martin utilized the classroom for his own personal agenda and that my son could be used as part of his project. Let

The Prodigy

by Richard Shelton

I can tell by the way you're looking at me, you've seen my video. Online. Maybe on the local news, a couple of times. They did a full segment on me, "the internet phenomenon in our own backyard." Come to think of it – most kids my age know me from the internet, but most parents know me from local programs. Or sometimes, a friend of their coworker will forward an e-mail with a clip of my video attached. Then they'll send it to their relatives and coworkers and friends and just keeps spreading. Spreading across the grown-up network, I guess.

Or heck, maybe you haven't seen my video, but you've heard "of" me. Maybe you're looking at me trying to figure out what's the big deal. You think, "Huh. He doesn't look like a master cello player. He's probably not even big enough to play the cello." Ugh. You may also be thinking, "Aw, he's a precious tiny little musician." If you are, don't. It's so embarrassing.

It was in music appreciation class that I figured out how to play the cello. But before we get into that, I need to back up a bit. Actually, back up a lot. See, when I was a baby – the doctors said I was born with this weird, whaddya call it, oh, some sorta calcium deficiency. You know, the stuff in milk and cheese that makes your bones strong? Well, my body wasn't producing a lot of it, just enough to get my bones to form. So the doctors told my parents that if they wanted to see me get any bigger – they had to do two things: keep giving me a ton of calcium and absolutely positively NO ROUGH ACTIVITY. That meant no sports, no jumping, no bike riding, no trampolines, no tackling, rough housing or horse play.

Man, what I wouldn't give for some horse play. I've had fantasies about dog piles and piggy back rides. I can't even race someone to the car anymore. One time my brother said, "Last one to the car is a rotten egg" and when I tripped in the parking lot, it shattered my kneecap and I had to go to physical therapy. So yeah, I was the rotten egg alright. Most kids just get scabs and bandages. I know my mom and dad mean well – but they don't let me do anything for fear I may get really hurt. The only outdoor activity they really allow is swimming, but I can only do that during the summer. The rest of the year is spent reading books and playing video games. I guess it's okay, but it's also kinda lonely watching all the other kids play street hockey from your bedroom window. I don't really have a ton of friends. It's hard to make friends when all you can do is watch movies and sit around.

Okay, anyway – back to before: music appreciation class. Everyone in school has to take a music appreciation class. One semester, you listen to tapes of famous classical music. Then the next semester, you learn how to play an instrument. On the first day of the second semester – everyone else in the class was running around looking at the different instruments. Lotsa people wanted the violins, drums, triangles, cymbals and recorders. I stood in the back not wanting to get knocked

over when I saw what looked like a giant violin propped up in the corner of the room. The teacher said, “Go ahead and try it, it’s a cello”. She helped me prop it up and showed me how to hold the neck with my left hand and how to grip the bow with my right hand. Like this (shows audience). She then helped me move the bow across the strings.

I wish I could describe for you how it felt. The cello made this deep, thick sound that seemed to echo throughout the room. The other kids in class stopped messing with their instruments and just stared at me. It was like the cello had this power that the shrill violins and tinny trumpets. And I could feel it in my body. The way the vibrations from the strings traveled through my fingers and into my blood cells. For the first time in my life I felt something! I didn’t have to hide from the cello for fear it would hurt me. I could move the bow back and forth and feel the music fill the air and my body. Then the teacher showed me how, if, I moved my fingers in different places, then it would play different notes. The low notes felt like cows mooing but the higher ones felt like a cotton sheet blowing outside on the line. If I plucked the strings, it sounded like rain hitting puddles. And then – when I learned to play a bunch of different notes, it felt like dancing. When I played, I could close my eyes and just feel invincible.

It didn’t take long for the teacher and my parents to realize that learning “Twinkle Twinkle” wasn’t going to be enough for me, so I started receiving private tutoring. Since I wasn’t distracted by sports, I dedicated every hour outside of school to playing the cello. After going through books and books of classical sheet music – I began to play things I’d hear on the radio. My mom would joke around about how serious and intense I looked when I was playing. She decided to make a video of my playing to put online and send to my grandparents. I don’t know how – but the video became a huge hit. People from all over the world kept asking that we post more. So we did. Pretty soon – the videos had been viewed like a million times and that’s when the local TV stations contacted my parents.

Most of the folks who watched the video online wrote really nice things like, “Wow, that’s amazing” or “It was so beautiful it made me cry”. There were also a lot of rude people who kept saying the videos were fake, that I was just dubbing the music on the video and couldn’t really play like that. They called me fake, a poser, lame, a loser and a bunch of other names I probably shouldn’t repeat. I mean...how else could I prove them wrong? That’s a video of me! I’m really playing the cello! I even created new pieces to play and said, “Look guys – you can’t find this song anywhere else in the world! How could I be faking this?”

But they didn’t care. They kept teasing me and I kept playing the cello. As weird as it sounds, I didn’t really care what anybody else had to say about me or my cello. I felt strong and in control of my fingers as they danced across the strings. My arms felt long as they swept the bow back and forth, back and forth. I didn’t feel betrayed by my body. I didn’t feel like a prisoner to my weak bones. I was happy, the happiest I had ever been. I felt complete.

PB: Male Pregnancy

by Jonathon Harper

On Your Mark

Jonathon Harper

One night
she emerges so beautiful
skin so electric
you swear you can see
her pulse in her cheeks.
Two months
pass since you
learned how to synchronize
your breathing so
it would better dance
with hers.
Fifty seconds
of verbal tangoing
over the phone
for her to suggest
that you’d better
come over. Now.
Today.
Ten minutes
drip by sluggish like
sands through the hour
glass as she positions
herself over porcelain
in a position more awkward
than the one you’ve
both found yourselves in.
Amazing, you think,
a little liquid on a little
stick creates a tiny
plus sign
signifying the beginning
of the end of life as you know it.
Every five heartbeats
you remind yourself to
breathe in and out
in and out. Involuntary
system my ascot, your
heart may be a hyped up
drum line but each

inhale and exhale is
punctuated by the single
overwhelming thought:
I am not ready for this.
I am not ready for this.
Why did I ever do this?

Stop.

In less time than it
takes to walk to the door
turn your back to
what could only be described
as the biggest mistake
of your life and leave,
she's going to open the
door. Her skin will once
again be electric and
her quick shallow
breath will once again
dance with yours, now
more a shallow waltz
than their once passionate
tango. Her lips, those lips,
that Cupid's bow will
let loose an arrow
to pierce and splinter
your heart into billions of
bits when she says,
"We're pregnant."

So now you have a choice.

In one hour you can
sit across from her and
throw out every logical
and rational reason why
this blossoming bud
needs to be nipped.
You can convince her
beyond all knowing that
carrying this through
to its natural end
will not only destroy your
lives, but any potential for
fulfillment and joy in

PB: Redefining Romance

by Sarah Carpenter

For years, men held the cards when it came to expressing and pursuing love. Now it's time for the ladies to rightfully reclaim the relationship reigns.

Charging at Windmills

Sarah Carpenter

I never believed that hindsight was 20/20.
It seemed more in line with x-ray vision,
whatever number that would be.
When looking back,
you dissect every movement
every moment
leading up to the inevitable ending
and carve each piece open
to examine the now-obviously
inflamed mistake. The why-didn't-I-see
that fracture of logic.
The blatant misinterpreted coincidences
that could have gone differently.

Maybe if I weren't a Humanities major and
Maybe if you weren't a soccer player and
Maybe if I hadn't signed up for that mid-day and
English lit course that fit in your practice
and work out schedule and
Maybe if you hadn't confessed to me that the reason
why you loved Superman was because
even at the height of his power
he still gave Batman a chunk of Kryptonite, (just in case) and
Maybe if we never had that conversation
about whether Don Quixote was
vulnerable or invincible for imagining
he was at the height of his power then
Maybe I wouldn't have thought you
were shaping up to be everything
I didn't think you could be and
Maybe it wouldn't have crossed my mind
that Don Quixote was onto something
and that it's worth charging at windmills
if it means someone will notice you.

And if, at any point,

I had made just one different decision,
If I chose a more profitable major
or didn't care why Superman did what he did
or thought that you were just being nice
then I wouldn't have spent a week
sewing you your own red cape
that I snuck into your locker during practice
with a note signed,
"This just in. Love, Lois Lane" and
I wouldn't have waited in the parking lot
for you to emerge with the cape, crumpled
and stinking of sweat when you tossed it
at my feet and grunted,
"Get over yourself, weirdo" and
walked away with your laughing teammates,
never looking over your shoulder
to see my cheeks burn
and tears well.
You never saw the heartbroken
smile I donned like armor
to shield any further humiliation
as the rest of the soccer walked through
the parking lot,
laughing at the foolish girl
and her silly red sheet.

And I don't expect you to know
how I'm still haunted by that moment.
That the ghost of my grand gesture
lingers in my mind every time
my breath shortens and
heartbeat quickens.
That like the man from La Mancha -
the part of me that believed in
the impossible dream,
the triumph of truth and
the bravery of hope
had died along with the idea
that a girl
professing her love
to a boy
was no crazier
than leaping over buildings
in a single bound,
or putting on armor to
charge at windmills.