

SpeechGeek



Season Five: Spring 2008



ISSN 1545-9209 Price \$25 US
<http://www.speechgeek.com>

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SpeechGeek is published three to four times per year: August, October, December, and (sometimes) April by Corey Alderdice, 959 Morgantown Rd., Apt. 3, Bowling Green, Kentucky 42101

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As a competitor, I spent my Saturday mornings for eight years in classroom across the country performing in just about every forensics event. Some of my most fond memories of high school and college are from the experiences and friendships this activity has afforded me. I often wish that I would have had the chance to compete in middle school forensics as well.

Talking with a parent this week, he expressed just how much middle school forensics has helped his son come out of his shell. After all, middle school is one of the most awkward times imaginable.

As high school teams, we can do a lot to support middle school forensics in our areas. If a team already exists, encourage your squad to volunteer some time to coach and mentor the younger students. If a team doesn't exist, consider starting a squad as part of a service project.

SpeechGeek looks forward to the National Junior Forensic League National Tournament taking place in late June 2008 at Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green, KY--our backyard. For more information about the NJFL, visit www.nflonline.org.

Corey Alderdice
Publisher

Grace

by Jodie Anderson

SETTING. Doctors office in Charleston, IL – a small town in the Midwest United States.

TIME. present

CHARACTERS.

Female performer 1 will play Janice, Dr. Caldwell, and Mother

Female performer 2 will play Christy and Dr. Jones.

(Janice and Christy are both in an exam room at a Doctors' office for two very different reasons. Their lines should somewhat overlap giving cadence to both situations.)

SCENE 1

JANICE. I don't believe that I've ever wanted anything more than I've wanted a child...

CHRISTY. I don't believe that I've ever wanted anything more to just disappear...

JANICE. My husband and I have been trying to have a baby for the past seven years. Listen, I think anybody my age would be a little concerned. I'm now 35 years old and I feel that my time is running up.

CHRISTY. I mean I'm only 17 years old, I have my whole life ahead of me and I'm not going to let this situation stop me. Listen, you're going to help me whether you like it or not because I'm not the kind of girl that gets pregnant in high school. I'm the freakin' president of the stupid Student Council, I'm up for Homecoming court this year, I'm a good person. This just isn't fair...fix it!

JANICE. Fix me, doctor. My husband and I are good people. We've never had problems in our marriage, we are both very healthy, we've had all the tests run that say that we should be pregnant – that its possible.

CHRISTY. I don't want this baby.

JANICE. Listen, if there is anything you can do, Doctor – just let me know. I don't have much, but my boyfriend said that he could get some money from his parents.

JANICE. I'm willing to pay whatever to make this happen. *(pause)* I'm scared my husband will leave.

CHRISTY. I'll be back next week so that we can get going on this baby problem...

JANICE. I'll be back next week so that we can talk about this more.
(Both Janice and Christy exit the Doctor's office. They meet. They look at each other.)

JANICE. Oh, excuse me.

CHRISTY. You're excused.

INTRO

SCENE 2

(Janice and Christy are sitting in the Doctor's office. Both look anxious and nervous.)

JANICE. Is this seat taken?

CHRISTY. It's yours if you want it.

JANICE. Thank you.

CHRISTY. It's going to be awhile, I've been here for an hour already...

JANICE. Shouldn't you be in school?

CHRISTY. Excuse me?

JANICE. I'm sorry. I'm just not used to seeing a girl your age at the gynecologist's office at 12:15 in the afternoon.

CHRISTY. *(condescending)* You come here often? *(pause)* I'm on my lunch break.

JANICE. I see.

CHRISTY. And it's none of your business.

JANICE. I agree. It's not. None of my business.
(awkward pause)

CHRISTY. Listen, I'm sorry about my rudeness.

JANICE. No...

CHRISTY. *(cutting Janice off)* It's just that I'm freaking out.

JANICE. Ahh..

CHRISTY. *(cutting Janice off)* Probably because I'm seventeen years old and six weeks along.

JANICE. Six weeks along? With a baby?

CHRISTY. I'm sorry – are we sitting at a gyno's office? No, I'm six weeks along with my experiment to see how many times I can get confronted by random old ladies.

JANICE. Well. You seem to have been mistaken.

CHRISTY. Yeah, how?

JANICE. You've confused me with someone that is old.

CHRISTY. I'm sorry. Again. I just don't know what I'm going to do with my situation. I want this baby out of my life. I have no money. My boyfriend is – well he's 17, he doesn't want to deal with this either and I'm pretty sure he's moving on to Nicole Santini, which is a complete mistake because she's a total...

JANICE. *(interrupting)* Wait.

(pause. Janice thinks.)

JANICE. Listen, I've got a proposition for you.

CHRISTY. A what?

JANICE. A suggestion, a recommendation, a proposal. What if we walk up to that stodgy receptionist and told her to cancel both of our appointments.

CHRISTY. Have you lost your mind?

JANICE. No. Yes. Listen, you're pregnant; I want a baby.

CHRISTY. What are you talking about?

JANICE. I could take your baby.

CHRISTY. What!?

JANICE. Well, I mean willingly. You would give me your baby willingly. I wouldn't pull a "Hand that Rocks the Cradle" moment on you, but I would take this – situation – off your hands.

Firm Foundation

by Lillian White

Location is Baton Rouge, LA. Time: September 2005

SCENE 1

PAUL. *(with scraps of his house in his hand)* Do you know what I appreciate about places like Wal-Mart and Target and Home Depot and all of those highly marketed, over priced stores that sell really cheap crap?

MICHELLE. *(sweeping, sarcastically)* They have the latest styles and trends on home decorating for low, low prices with creepy door greeters?

PAUL. Not only that, but they give you a manual. A nice, handy, easy-to-read manual with proper bolts and screws to build...*(searches for the word)*...things with.

MICHELLE. I think the home appliance days are gone on this project.

PAUL. I can do this. It's just a house. It's like that movie with Kevin Kline and that really skinny woman that it's in all of those weepy movies...

MICHELLE. Are you talking about Life as a House starring Kevin Kline and Kristen Scott Thomas?

PAUL. That's the one! It's just like that movie...

MICHELLE. Yes, but isn't that movie about terminal cancer and living by the ocean?

PAUL. Yes, but he builds a house in it and I'm using it as my motivation...today.

MICHELLE. It's just a house he says after the tears and the yelling and the temper tantrums...

PAUL. Listen, there were no tears...

MICHELLE. Oh, maybe that was just me.

PAUL. Ok, there weren't many tears...

MICHELLE. Its okay to cry, Paul – God knows I have. No one will question your gender or sexual orientation if you let a few wet ones run down your cheek. We've been through a lot.

PAUL. And the prize for understatement of the year goes to Michelle, my bell.

MICHELLE. Watch it, pal...the neighbors might think we're getting back together.

SCENE 2

MICHELLE. *(hammering)* Ow! Ow! That hurt!

PAUL. What's wrong?

MICHELLE. I just hit my hammer with my hand.

PAUL. You mean your hand with your hammer?

MICHELLE. Yeah, whatever.

PAUL. Listen, honey..

MICHELLE. Paul...

PAUL. Listen, *Michelle*. I can do this. There's really no need in you going

off and hurting yourself.

Is this because I'm a woman?

MICHELLE. Oh, please...here we go with the women's lib parade...

PAUL. I have poor hand/eye coordination.

MICHELLE. Okay. You are not a weaker sex.

PAUL. Thank you.

MICHELLE. You're just...uncoordinated.

PAUL. *(flirty)* Watch it buddy, I have a hammer and I know how to use it!

MICHELLE. *(laughs, gives her a hug)* Listen, I'm sorry that this all has happened.

PAUL. *(still in his arms)* Paul, stop...

(A pause between the two. Michelle starts to get uncomfortable and then emotional and stops herself. Entangles herself out of Paul's arms)

MICHELLE. *(begins to work on the house some more, picks up large plank of wood)* Is it hotter than Haiti out here!

PAUL. *(attempts to take the plank of wood from her hand that she previously picked up)* Yeah. Baby, listen you don't have to do this...

MICHELLE. *(disregards him)* Paul, we don't have the money...*(corrects self)* you don't have the money to put up a brand new house. This house fell apart while we were together and it will go up while we are together.

PAUL. Well, that's awfully big of you.

MICHELLE. Is that a fat joke?

PAUL. No, I'm just...

MICHELLE. *(understanding)* I know what you meant. I just like to give you a hard time. You're too serious.

PAUL. Serious?

MICHELLE. Yes, serious.

PAUL. What do you mean by serious?

MICHELLE. Serious. As in you are seriously going to have a serious heart attack and very seriously die if you don't stop being so...serious.

PAUL. Oh and I don't know why I would be so serious. My life is nothing more than a cool cucumber, a ray of sunshine, a beacon of hope...*(sarcastic)* and I'm *not* being serious when I say those things.

MICHELLE. Paul...

PAUL. As I explained to a friend of mine – currently, my life is like a huge yard full of dog crap. A good day is determined on whether or not I can find a clear path to walk through.

MICHELLE. Paul, you're being ridiculous...

PAUL. First serious, now ridiculous...

MICHELLE. Oh, c'mon Paul – you just said that your life is like a yard of dog...

PAUL. *(finishing her sentence)* Crap. Dog crap. My life is like a yard full of dog crap.

MICHELLE. Well, I disagree.

PAUL. *(not listening to her)* No, it's not every day that a man can say that he's going through two traumas at once. That is a special kind of loser. A pure-breed of loser, if you will.

MICHELLE. Ok – yes, the house being flooded and getting thrown through half of Baton Rouge – a trauma. But, the divorce...that was

Tension at Home

Poetry Program Builder by Saeed Jones

IT MEANS SOMETHING DIFFERENT IN ARABIC

I come from ashes and leftover scraps abandoned.
The first song sung in a book of broken hymns
after all the candles have melted and hardened.
Once, I threw a towel over my head and pretended I was Mary.
My aunt told me that pretending was blasphemy. A burnt cross
was lit in my chest that very day, but they say my name
first appeared in reluctantly opened love letters
flown in from the East smelling like cherry blossoms. Sweet
and sick and begging to be taken back. I come
from hastily signed divorce papers. I believe all the stories
of who I was: Custody battles are where I learned to dance.
Before the fire, there was the empire, before the empire,
Aeneas flirted with Dido: He saw her in the crowd at a concert,
asked for her number, and was rejected. He saw her again
at a 7-11 and was rewarded for his persistence.
I come from a woman who believes luck
had nothing to do with it. They say I almost drowned
in a book of Greek mythology. Once, my father saved me.
We are not sure why he decided to be a hero that day.
My mother doesn't remember his act of heroism. He won't forgive her
for forgetting. But let's not talk about them, it will set my home on fire.
I come from cracked eggs cooked on a July sidewalk, from drive-bys
through the ruins of Graceland, where the heads of ex-wives hang
in embarrassment. I come running from the fingers of my family,
who adore the likeness of me, that doll I poke with pins
on holiday visits. Two pins in its stuffed chest means I wish
I was a prodigal son. Three means means something different.
In Arabic "Saeed" means happy and fortunate. I will not refute
this claim, though I have double-checked its veracity.
I get that from my grandmother. Skepticism
is the only thing we have in common. On Mother's Day
the whole way to Memphis I read lines from Medea.
None of this is true and all of it is real in a different language.
I come from nuns who left the church and got married. I come from
a lame imitation of Egypt. I come bearing arms full of empty books.
Once, I told my father that I wanted a new father. He constructed
wax wings and left that same day. I come from a woman
who knows the temperature at which wax begins to melt.

ADVICE FROM THE PART-TIME ORACLE

Between the clicks and beeps of my groceries
being rung up in the express checkout line,

the cashier stopped with a bag of bananas in her hand
and told me that she was a part-time oracle.

Apparently, abundant use of your third eye won't pay
the water bill and before I could cluck my tongue

in disapproval, she said that I would eat the absence
of you, one gasoline soaked crumb at a time.

I told her that the bananas were on sale
and pretended that I wasn't shivering inside.

But it's 3:00 now, and the moment is silver
like the surface of a lonely, undiscovered lake.

Frustrated by my insistence on doing the foxtrot in bed,
sleep sits on the living room couch, watching infomercials

and counting unprocessed calories. These last few weeks
I have been learning how to dream with my eyes wide open

as the space you once occupied in this house spreads
before me like a medieval feast that I'm too full to eat.

A long table, longer than a list of grievances,
is covered with a hundred gleaming plates,

all of them spinning with heaps of memories
lounging on top of them, vain in their fat and sweetness.

Candles line the table like bright sentinels
or unclaimed children. The chandelier, slightly swinging,

contorts its face and licks its lips. Someone is warming
up on a poorly tuned violin nearby. I know somehow

that I am the only guest at this meal.
I probably prepared each plate myself

but something in me keeps hoping for a breathing body
to be seated at the other end of the table.

It doesn't even have to be you, just someone
with two pupils willing to take in this vision

and a mouth big enough to help me eat
all this grief, one flame licked morsel at a time.

Sleepwalking Home

by Saeed Jones

When the bus from New Orleans stopped in Salt Lake City, one of the first things I noticed was the white people. Miles and miles of white people. And once you got past them, there were mountains. Even after being here for two years, sometimes I just watch them - the white people - wondering how we all got here. Well, I know how I got here. I took the bus. Would you believe I wanted to be a poet? Full time. I wanted the word. I wanted beauty. I wanted to get the heck out of Louisiana. And here I am, away. Welcome to Salt Lake City. Population: a whole bunch of white people plus one.

Back in Louisiana, I grew up in a house crowded with the sound and feel of family. If you had stood in the yard in the evening, looking in one of the windows, you probably would have been jealous. I mean - we were THE family. We even had a golden retriever. I didn't think black people owned golden retrievers. And I always had a feeling that the person on the outside looking in was me. It just seemed like my family was walking in one direction and then you had my sorry butt running opposite.

The last few months at home were like watching someone blow out a row of trick candles. My friends were all in college at this point. Pre-med this, Pre-law that. And you had me, stocking shelves at the grocery store, writing crappy poetry. And I knew I was lost, wandering, but I was okay with it. Why do we have to be so certain? I just wanted to look around.

The last time I spoke to my parents. Different. My father kept mumbling. You just want to be different. Ma just stared at her feet until I said that I was thinking about going to Utah and that bought me a moment of eye contact, a look that said I did everything I could and I'm tired. She said, why? I said, why not? And my father pushed me. Not a hit, not a slap, a shove. I almost fell over the back of the couch. And I imagine it's the way drunk strangers fight outside of bars, not the way fathers and sons talk. This was not a slap in their faces. I loved my family. I loved them enough to get out of their way.

I started sleepwalking about three months after moving into my apartment. I woke up in the kitchen, right in front of the fridge. Awkward, yes. But nothing compared to waking up in my roommate's bed. This was too much even for Todd, a big ole hippie. He suggested that maybe I needed to get out of the house for a while, man. Maybe go to a nudist colony he knew about, man. I opted for a five day hike in the mountains, man.

Five days. In the mountains. With white people. But I will say that if there is such a thing as the word, I heard it. Do you know the sound tree tops make when the wind pushes them and rub against one another? I'd never noticed that sound before. It was like the trees were speaking in a language I didn't understand.

When I got back to my apartment, I turned on the TV while I unpacked

my hiking gear. I thought I was looking at footage from some third world country. Then I realized that this wasn't some nameless place, it was my neighborhood - drowning. I had seen that muddy water before but never like this. And then, I looked at my phone. I hadn't bothered taking it with me into the mountains. I thought my family would have called. No messages. Just water.

I kept telling myself it was a matter of days but then days became months of sleepwalking. I've just about given up on my bed entirely. I know. I know that if they could have, my family would've called by now. But somewhere between the facts and the fantasy is a space that I keep wandering around in. And I don't think I'm gonna find a place to rest my feet.

It's been almost a year. Still no answer but I'm making my peace. People are talking about the anniversary, about the proper way to pay respect. Todd thinks I should host a candle light vigil in a nudist colony he knows about. I'm gonna go back into the mountains. Something tells me I know the language those trees were speaking in.

He Looked Like a Mortician

by Corey Alderdice

Sitting on the corner of Twelfth and Park, the young lady next to me picks at a bagel. Her name is Leslie. The slightly crisp autumn air whips around the passers-by on their way to work, lunch, an important meeting, an illicit rendezvous. Most of them are just going home to watch T.V. It's the little ways that we waste our time. Leslie, who has now hollowed out the soft interior of the bagel, has moved on to deconstructing the exterior shell. Even though it is early in the afternoon, the weather is somewhat unseasonable so it troubles me that she's not wearing a coat. I mean, didn't her mother ever tell her that one should never go out in cold weather without a coat? She should have offered some maternal advice about catching her death from cold.

Oh, that's right. Her mother died in a car wreck thirteen weeks after she was born. I always forget these details. I'm supposed to remember these facts in case I need them in conversation. People tend to get poignant and reflective around me, so it always helps when you can answer their questions or point them in the right direction.

"Kinda cold out here today, isn't it?" I ask. "You'll catch your death of cold without a jacket."

I roll the magazine I'm reading up and watch the tube shrink to keep from making eye contact. The articles about the AIDS epidemic, war in foreign countries and college binge drinking deaths were beginning to remind me why I hate my job so much.

Leslie turns her head away from watching two girls play in the park across the street. I wonder why she isn't sitting the actual park to watch people. You'd think she'd want to watch things unfold as closely as possible. Perhaps she just likes to keep her distance and happily observe from the margins. I know the feeling. Okay, I remember why she's sitting here.

"I love the weather in the city this time of year," she replies and smiles. She didn't have time to put on makeup this morning, not even lipstick. It's not really all that important when you're a barista at an organic coffee shop inside the corporate conglomerate, yet socially responsible, organic food co-op. Nothing remarkable. Nothing at all.

"Are you waiting for a bus or just enjoying the day?" I inquire.

"Actually," she leans in a little closer and whispers, "I'm waiting for Godot."

"Excuse me?" I've met a lot of people in my life, but I've never heard of anyone by the name of Godot. "Is he late?"

She stops for a moment. Her eyebrow lowers just slightly as the curve of her lips turns upward. She's trying to figure me out—if I'm for real or something.

"Should I have asked if she's late? Kids today and their crazy names like Suri and Apple. I can't keep up with it anymore." She begins to laugh. I'm not really used to people laughing around me. It's kind of awkward and then I get really awkward. My job is that kind that requires decisive action to be unemotional. The handbook basically tells me what to expect. I get a lot of crying, but not really a lot of laughing. It's all kind of grim.

"I'm Leslie, by the way. Nice to, uh, sit on a bench with you today."

"Well, Leslie Lohman, it's very nice to meet you."

"I'm sorry?"

"I said it's very nice to meet you Leslie Lohman." Crap. I said too much. I quickly play the conversation back in my head. Yeah, that's right. She never said what her last name was. Think. Think.

"How did you know my last name?"

Think. Think. Is she wearing her name, because that would be just great. Nope, no nametage. Quick decision. Quick decision.

"I saw it on the back of your iPod. Someone must really love you to get you one of those as a present, eh?"

Please be right. Please be on the back of her iPod. Bingo. Her face relaxes and the smile returns.

"Oh, for a second there I thought you were stalking me."

I tense up again. "No...no...no...I'm not a creepy guy at all. Sorry, I just have a tendency to notice things."

"Well, what else have you noticed?"

I really haven't noticed anything else. I'm supposed to be focusing on what I'm supposed to say and do here in the next hour. I'm on a really tight schedule today, unlike Leslie, but I've stopped to take this whole moment in despite the fifty other appointments I have to keep. "You, uh, you like coffee."

"All right, Sherlock, what gave that away?"

"For starters, you smell like coffee and burnt soy milk."

"Good guess. Okay, it's my turn now. You...you...are a professor, right?"

"Not quite. I dabble in philosophy, but it's more a hobby than anything else."

I'm not really comfortable with this whole game thing. I really do have other things that I'm supposed to be doing, but I can't seem to break eye contact with her. "I'll give you two more guesses."

"All right, you are...a...writer. Am I right?"

"Not quite. Some friends of mine who have used me as a character in a few of their stories, though."

"You work at a funeral home."

I tense up again. That one is a little too close for comfort. I cough a little and shift to cross my legs.

"Oh, I totally knew it," she says. "No one wears a black suit and tie like that unless they're funeral home guys."

"Well, I uh..."

"Or," she leans in really close. "Do you work for the Men in Black? 'Cause I know it's just a movie and all, but you can tell me? Is it real? Are there aliens out there?"

I get it now. I'm the old guy this kid is having a laugh at. You have got to be kidding me. Kids today have absolutely no respect for adults. They don't even have respect for the elemental forces of metaphysical nature like Death.

I mean, me.

Leslie Lohman of Atlanta, Georgia is supposed to die today according to my notes. I don't know how. That's never really a part of the job. I'm just supposed to be there to facilitate—to help her cross over to the other side. The powers that be control the exact details, but I'm the caseworker that's meant to handle the more personal aspects of the event—the check-in clerk at the Hotel Afterlife.

I never let the job become personal. You can't let the job become personal because forces of nature aren't personal. They're abstract. They're

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Copyright 2007
ISSN Number 1545-9209