



## Episode 44

### A Pound of Flesh, Two Pounds of Carrots, and a Nice Baguette

The cliché is apples and oranges. But when Tarnish Jutmoll compares his LDers to his Speechies, the comparison is more like tattoos and pork chops, with the understanding that at any time either side could be the pork chops.

This afternoon's meeting is devoted to the Speechies, and give or take a couple of lesser luminaries, they are all assembled, including a passel of newbies that Jutmoll has yet to distinguish as separate individuals. He sits behind the sacred station of his desk and looks at them finding their places in the room, and feels a momentary pang of regret knowing that at any time the school could pull the rug out from under them and disband the team. The older kids have come to identify themselves by this activity; the younger ones have yet to obtain the many great benefits. For all of them, it is a terrible shame that the activity will no longer be there for them.

Jutmoll has tried to make his own personal escape, hoping to get Seth B. Obomash's job. But somehow he knew that it wasn't going to happen.

Welcome to the Bahamas.

"Would everyone sit down, please?" he asks, his voice carrying over the rumble in the room.

The students quickly drop behind the desks. One nice thing about extracurricular activities is that everybody pretty much does what you tell them to do, because they have no reason to be there other than that they want to be there. If nothing else, that makes life a little easier for the coaches.

"Could we talk about this double-entry business, Mr. Jutmoll?" Cartier Diamond asks, opening the meeting with an unexpected salvo.

So much for everybody pretty much doing what you tell them.

"What about it, Cartier?"

She is sitting by the windows, dressed in her usual black from blazer to boots and back again, her sunglasses perched on the top of her blonde head. Sitting next to her is chubby little Mordred Prentice, echoing her outfit in his own head-to-toe ebony. It was unusual seeing Cartier without her Prentice puppy at Messerschmitt, and Jutmoll considers that all is right with the world now that the two of them are reunited.

"I just don't think it's right," she says, her honeyed voice taking on a hint of a whine.

"I'm sorry to hear that," Jutmoll responds.

"I mean, I work hard on my D.I., which I do a lot better than the Prose/Poetry, but I've got to spend half a tournament distracting myself with something I don't do as well, and which takes up so much of my energy that I probably won't end up doing my D.I. as well either. It just makes no sense, and it hurts me in the end."

Sitting beside her, Mordred Prentice is nodding sagely. Since he is a sophomore who as a freshman never had to double-enter and as a sophomore has yet to compete, his experience on this subject is rather limited.

"All right," Jutmoll says. He has gone over this ground before, but he'll do it again for the benefit of the newbies. "The reason I ask upperclassmen to double-enter is because Forensics is an academic activity, and as an academic activity I expect it to expand the students' intellects. Double-entering forces you to expand. This is not a negotiable issue."

"It's just not right," Cartier repeats sulkily.

"I do offer an alternative," Jutmoll says.

"I know. Don't go to the tournament."

"Exactly."

"I mean, it's really a pain to double-enter in these CFL meets."

"Don't go."

"I think I won't."

Jutmoll shrugs. He only cares about Cartier's participation vis-a-vis the deleterious affect of her rebellion on the newbies, but since neither Cartier nor the newbies will be around all that much longer, there's no point in pressing the issue.

"One down," he says. "Anyone else wish to withdraw this Saturday? Because I'm working them to death, no doubt."

Cartier sighs dramatically; she is, after all, a successful Dramatic Interpreter. "All right," she resigns herself. "I'll go."

"I'm thrilled," Jutmoll says. "And I'm sure everyone there Saturday will appreciate the gesture."

This Saturday there are two simultaneous tournaments at the same venue. One is the Northeastern Debate League for younger policy and LD teams, and the other is a Catholic Forensic League speech tournament for all ages. Which brings us to the subject of the Catholic Forensic League.

Why the Catholics, you may ask. Why, indeed? Why isn't it the Mormon Forensic League, or the Islamic Forensic League, or the Parsee Forensic League?

Back in the mists of prehistory, when today's gods of debate were mere mortal debaters themselves, the world was a radically different place. There were only three television networks, and everyone watched them. There were only ten baseball teams in each league, and everyone cared about their home teams because they had real homes, and had had them for ages. There was only one MacDonalds stand in the entire country, and everyone everywhere else ate normal hamburgers that they had to wait five minutes for, and even at MacDonalds they had yet to invent the happy meal with a new Disney character every week. Many movies were still made in black and white, for artistic reasons.

And what about forensics? There was debate and speech; LD was invented about the same time as the Apple II computer, a lot later than the 50s and 60s we're talking about now. Speech was conducted roughly the same as today, but debate teams carried one shoe box of index cards -- as compared to five tubloads of Xeroxes -- and considered themselves ready for anything. And tournaments, for the most part, were local. You went after school to a neighboring high school, you debated their team, you won or you lost, and you went home. And for reasons that no doubt go back to St. Francis Loyola and the proselytizing nature of the Jesuits, the Catholic schools were big on this activity. They promoted forensics, although mostly among their own. Back then, Catholic schools and public schools did not interact -- God forbid. Literally!

But over time even religion changes. Pope John XXIII and his Ecumenical Council affected the world in amazing ways and we still feel the ramifications of that opening of the church. No longer was there a wall between Catholic and public schools. In fact, nowadays Catholic schools have plenty of non-Catholics among their student population. And Catholics can intermingle with non-Catholics without fear of the imminent loss of their immortal souls. Debate has waxed and waned in popularity over the years, and the CFL and NFL have waxed and waned with it, and today there's not much to distinguish them except their pretensions. But they still both go

their separate ways. And in the Northeast, that separation primarily is reflected in the heavy concentration of the CFL on speech activities.

Like the upcoming tournament this weekend.

Like the one David Brillig is raising his hand to ask a question about.

"Yes?" Jutmoll asks.

David opens his mouth, but no words come out. He shakes his head. "Nothing. I'll talk to you later."

"Is it about the tournament Saturday?"

"Well..."

"He doesn't want to go," William Hand interjects.

Jutmoll looks over at William. For the first time he can remember, the two are not sitting next to each other. Normally they are even more inseparable than Cartier and her familiar.

"What do you mean?" Jutmoll asks.

"He doesn't want to do Duo anymore."

Jutmoll looks back at David. "Is this true?"

David gives a reluctant nod.

"Why? I mean, it's the beginning of the year. You and William just took first place at Messerschmitt. You two are great together! I know you're doing well in school. What's the matter?"

"I'll talk to you after the meeting," David insists.

Jutmoll can tell by David's body language that pressing the issue will get them nowhere. He can wait.

"All right, then. I want to start by--"

"I've got a new D.I.," William Hand says, standing up and walking to the front of the room.

"I've got some business I want to go over first," Jutmoll says.

"Please?"

It is obvious to Jutmoll that there is a dynamic here that is going to play itself out, and that the sooner it's over, the better.

"Go ahead," Jutmoll says. He pulls his chair around to face William, who is standing still with his head lowered, staring at the floor. Gathering strength, assembling his thoughts, literally getting his act together. The effect of his personal silence is to enforce a similar concentrated silence on the entire group in the room, even the newbies who have never seen a D.I. before.

William lifts his head, and begins.

"There I have another bad match: a bankrupt, a prodigal, who dare scarce show his head on the Rialto."

William slowly raises his hand, and points a crooked index finger into the audience, in the direction of David Brillig.

"A beggar," William continues, "that was used to come so smug upon the mart; let him look to his bond: he was wont to call me usurer; let him look to his bond: he was wont to lend money for a Christian courtesy; let him look to his bond."

William increases his intensity with each iteration of the words, "look to his bond." Then he lowers his head again for a moment, and changing his attitude from solemn to congenial, he breaks the spell he has begun to weave.

"These words are spoken by Shylock the Jew from William Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice. At issue is whether the usurer Shylock will extract his pound of flesh from his borrowers. He is asked, 'Why, I am sure, if he forfeit, thou wilt not take his flesh: what's that good for?' Shylock's answer is about vengeance, but it is also about humanity. Why will he extract his pound of flesh?"

William goes back into character.

"To bait fish withal: if it will feed nothing else, it will feed my revenge. He hath disgraced me--" his eyes meet David's-- "and hindered me half a million; laughed at my losses, mocked at my gains, scorned my nation, thwarted my bargains, cooled my friends, heated mine enemies; and what's his reason?"

The room is completely silent. William is no longer an orator, he is Shylock, the Shylock, the Shylock Shakespeare envisioned when he wrote the words, the only possible Shylock.

"I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? Fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases,

healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is?"

William does not overact. He uses no wasteful motions. He let's his words do the work for him.

"If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die?"

He pauses. There is no question that he is now directing his words directly at David, but only David and William recognize this. To everyone else in the room, even Tarnish Jutmoll, this is an anonymous performance.

"And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge?"

William's eyes harden. So do David's.

"If we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that. If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility? Revenge. If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example? Why, revenge. The villainy you teach me, I will execute, and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction."

William lowers his head, and the room explodes in enthusiastic applause.

All except David.

Who has nothing to applaud.

Duelists seldom do applaud when the gauntlet is laid down.

**Will William and David ever be friends again?**

**Will William extract his pound of flesh?**

**Will Cartier double-enter at the CFL this weekend?**

**When is the next Bump Tournament?**

**What kind of name is Scooter?**

**We're making a list of the answers and checking them twice to insure that they aren't in our next episode: "Creamed Onions: Exploratory Surgery in the Gastrointestinal Zone."**