

SUDDEN DEATH DEBATING LEAGUE

Ten-Minute Dark Comedy Duet

by
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SETTING: A classroom, generic but for a single lily on the teacher's desk, and a piece of paper on each of two student desks. LOUIS, a high school freshman, enters carrying a briefcase. If HE's going for the geeky lawyer look, HE's nailed it. Enter at the same time MARIE, a high school senior, competing with him to get through the door first.

LOUIS: I'm undefeated.

MARIE: Me, too.

LOUIS: They're calling me a freshman sensation.

MARIE: How lovely for you.

LOUIS: *The* Freshman Sensation.

MARIE: They call me the Senior Slaughterer. I wish they'd come up with something better than slaughterer--

LOUIS: It's pretty weak.

MARIE: Maybe I should be the Sensation Stopper.

LOUIS: Did I mention I'm undefeated?

MARIE: The Sensation Slayer.

LOUIS: Don't expect me to take it easy on you just because you're a girl.

MARIE: Why didn't anyone think of slayer before?

LOUIS: Maybe because they're not obsessed with death?

(MARIE picks up one of the pieces of paper from the desk, gives it a cursory look, and then signs it.)

MARIE: It *is* the sudden death round. **(beat)** Sign your will.

LOUIS: Ha ha. Save the intimidation tactics. Everybody knows that negative never wins on global warming unless the affirmative team totally tanks.

MARIE: That's not the topic.

LOUIS: It's the topic for the entire year. Resolved: In recognition of the significant threat posed by global warming, the government should pursue an aggressive policy to curtail emissions worldwide.

MARIE: Never done a sudden death round before, huh?

LOUIS: **(lying)** Sure--I've done plenty of them.

MARIE: Then you know they won't let you compete if you don't sign.

(LOUIS picks up his will and looks at it carefully. HE suddenly looks ill. HE goes to the door. It's locked--they're trapped.)

LOUIS: The door's locked.

MARIE: Of course it is.

LOUIS: But I . . . I need to go to the bathroom. How am I supposed to . . . uh debate if I have to go the--

MARIE: You should have gone before. You had an hour to go before you came to the prep room.

LOUIS: I didn't have to go then. **(Beat. HE looks around for an alternate escape route.)** This is a joke, isn't it? I'm being set up. Who put you up to this? Bob? He's totally jealous of me ever since I got ranked first in the fall invitational.

MARIE: I don't know anyone named Bob.

LOUIS: You must know someone--

MARIE: I know a Robert.

LOUIS: That's the same as--

MARIE: He's not your Bob. He's not anybody's Bob!

LOUIS: Was it Ben?

MARIE: I don't know Bob, I don't know Ben. All I know is that in seven minutes, it's either you or me, and it's not going to be me. **(beat)** It's nothing personal. Once you take off your cocky hat, you seem like a pretty nice guy.

LOUIS: Why didn't my coach say--

MARIE: I thought you had done this before.

LOUIS: Yeah. Of course. Won lots of these. My coach just didn't say this one was a . . .

MARIE: **(holds out her hand)** I'm Marie.

LOUIS: **(American style: Lou-iss)** Louis. My friends call me Lou-E, you know, like I'm a rapper.

MARIE: Not the first thing that jumps into my head.

LOUIS: My name is Lou-E, the debating masta

I blast my opponents with words

Like a herd of cattle, ready to battle
With argumentation--I am the rhyming, thinking nation,
The freshman sensation.

MARIE: I don't get the herd of cattle line.

LOUIS: Yeah. I wanted to rhyme with battle.

MARIE: Maybe this:

My name is Lou-E, the debating masta,
Blastin my opponents like a stereo component.
My words stampeding like a herd of cattle,
Argumenting in a battle--
I'm a general in the army of eradication
With my rhyming, my rhythm--the freshman sensation,
Devastation incarnate--you can't take the weight
Of the logic that flows from my brain
Like a freight train--don't blink or you might miss me.
My name is Lou-E--now let me repeat it: my name is Lou-E, and you can't defeat me.

LOUIS: I think I love you.

MARIE: You're just saying that.

LOUIS: No. I mean it.

MARIE: Thank you. But it would never work. I'm an older woman--

LOUIS: So you like me, too?

MARIE: I didn't say that.

LOUIS: You said once I take off my cocky hat, I'm a pretty nice guy, and then you said it would never work because you're older, *not* because you didn't like me.

MARIE: Stop saying that.

LOUIS: You know it's true.

MARIE: I don't want to be beheaded either, but that's no reason to get ridiculous about it!

LOUIS: **(beat)** Did you say beheaded?

(Beat. LOUIS attacks the locked door with renewed energy, but still to no avail.)

MARIE: It's a little off-putting to watch the moderator polishing the guillotine while you're talking, but just don't look at him. What I do is pick a spot on the wall.

(LOUIS gives up on the door. He slumps on the ground against it.)

LOUIS: ***(miserably)*** I like to picture everyone in their underwear.

MARIE: I'd have trouble concentrating with images of a fat, bald man in boxers polishing a guillotine floating around my mind, but if it works for you. . . ***(Inspiration strikes LOUIS, or so he thinks, and he pulls out his cell phone. HE dials, but it's obvious he can't get reception.)*** There's no reception in here.

LOUIS: But it worked right outside. My Mom called to say she was going to be late for the--

MARIE: People were making too many 911 calls, so they lined the room with lead. ***(LOUIS panics and rams the door once more, but it's not budging.)*** I just told you the room is lined with lead.

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