

DOING THE MATH
A monologue
by
Arthur M. Jolly

www.arthurjolly.com

info@arthurjolly.com

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At Rise:

JUDITH addresses the audience - she speaks in sudden bursts, possibly suffering from mild Asperger's, maybe only a neurotic, freakily intelligent girl.

JUDITH

It started with 32 weeks, from conception to birth - a hurried, panicked affair, unexpectedly early, in the back seat of my Dad's 1982 Taurus with ninety nine thousand, nine hundred and eighty seven miles on the odometer. If they had made it to the hospital, it would've rolled over to a perfect row of one and six zeros just as they reached the city limits. Kalispell, Montana - the closest town with a hospital to my Dad's ranch. One and five zeros, point zero for six in all, which was the number of pounds I weighed when I was born in a car on the side of the road waiting for an ambulance to show up that was delayed because Wheeler county has all volunteer EMT's and when the call came, the one that had gone to get lunch for the others had left the keys in his pocket and they couldn't find the spare set. A one and six zeros, in binary sixty four, the age my dad was when he died. He had spent all morning trying to yank the transmission out of a combine with a chain hoist, and in the afternoon he came into the house smelling of sweat and hay chaff, and asked my mother for a glass of water that he never drank because he had a stroke sitting at the kitchen table.

(beat)

He died thirsty.

(beat)

I said that to my mother once, and she said quit it, because it made him sound like a recovering alcoholic. "Uncle Jimbo battled the demon drink his whole life, eventually succumbing to cirrhosis of the liver after six stints in rehab and three failed marriages, but by God at least he died thirsty."

(beat)

He was sixty four. My second grade teacher once told my parents that she estimated my IQ to be about sixty four, which my parents was sure was because I had turned blue while waiting for the ambulance on the side of the road, wrapped in my Dad's shirt, and the teacher said I would never go beyond third grade in my education without special attention, but it turns out I'm a little smarter than that. As soon as I understood how to dumb down what I was trying to say to the point others could understand it, my teacher realized I was actually a lot smarter than she was.

(beat)

Relax - I'm not some idiot savant you have to pity because while they can multiply two sixteen digit numbers in their head they're likely to piss their pants while they do it. I mean, I can... the first part without the second. I'm just pretty normal aside from... I can also tell you what day of the week you were born on, or what day it will be in ten thousand years.

(beat)

Tuesday.

(beat)

That's a gimmick. Party trick. Three hundred sixty five point two four two two days in a year. Duh. That's what I like about numbers - they don't lie. It will be Tuesday. The human race may have been wiped out by a plague or a meteorite or a nuclear holocaust, maybe no-one but cockroaches will be there... but it will be a Tuesday.

(beat)

Numbers don't lie. Let A equal A is the assumption it all starts from, and that should be a comfort. Let A equal A, let thirty two equal thirty two, it can't wake up one morning and decide to be thirty four, then the math is off, the numbers are wrong and everything has no relevance any more.

If thirty two weeks from conception to birth was not thirty two but thirty four, if the math was wrong, then the timing was wrong, if the weekend in the diary was at thirty four weeks, if the trip to Fort Benton was at thirty four weeks, then my father didn't die of a stroke at sixty four, one and six zeros in binary, because my father, the man that would wash my hair with callused hands and thick stubby fingers and never pulled with the comb like Momma did, the man I loved, he didn't die at sixty four because my father - the man I do not know, the man at the Red Boots Grill and Bar outside Malmstrom Air Force Base on Route Eighty Nine on the way to my Mom's sister's place in Fort Benton, may still be alive. Route Eighty Nine, binary one oh one one oh oh one.

(beat)

The numbers add up - but the math is wrong.

(beat)

Yesterday I found Mom's diary and today I went to my once, and now possibly, father's grave and I prayed the simplest prayer, the prayer of the mathematician - let A equal A.

LIGHTS OUT.