

ADVENTURES OF A SLOW AND CAREFUL SPEAKER

James Lynn Smith

(6 min.)

One Performer

Fellow club members, thank you for that applause. Please excuse my bandaged finger. I accidentally closed the door on it earlier tonight.

When I deliver a message in public, people sometimes wonder why I speak so slooowly and with such de-liberate enunciation. When asked, I usually pretend to be distracted, but now I will tell you...This lady is desperately afraid of mispronouncing words. You see, I have been endowed with the ability to use magic words to remove spells cast by practitioners of voodoo. But it can work two ways: One slight slip of the tongue, and my listener may be changed into a pig, or worse, develop a passion for catching flies like a frog. It is truly disgusting to see a slimy, sticky organ roll out from the mouth and zap a bug in midflight.

How did I get my magic words? Long ago when we were much younger, my husband and I were traveling to Belize by plane, but because of aircraft engine problems we were diverted to Haiti instead. Since the delay for proper maintenance was going to be two days, we decided to explore Haiti in the meantime.

We acquired an automobile and drove out from Port-au-Prince some distance. We somehow ended up on a narrow road and saw the path ahead was blocked by some animals. We thought they were goats, but as we got closer we

saw they were human-like shapes. Most were hunched and bent over as though being subdued by a mysterious power. An older native woman dashed out from behind shrubbery and excitedly shouted to us to be careful of the zombies. She told us not to look into their eyes. A rival priestess had gathered a group to attack her, and she was using magic spells to protect her from their advance. Some zombies were actually down on the road, twitching and moaning eerily. Others were slowing their advance and their eyes were uncoordinated.

She asked us to quickly turn around and take her back to a small village we had passed. While in the car, she told me that she saw me looking into the eyes of those creatures. She said I was in need of protection because otherwise they would intrude my dreams until I became insane. That was the power her rival had given the zombies. She taught me certain words to say that would stop any malicious advance. Then she placed a spell on me that gave the words power.

We asked about the zombies: What are they? We thought they were mere superstitions. She explained that some voodoo priestesses were able to convince followers to become zombies. This was in exchange for forgiveness of some serious crime committed in the past. She gave them strange drugs until they became trance-like and then placed them under a sheet in a shallow grave. It was covered with loose soil, and after some time low aeration deteriorated their minds. Then they were “resurrected” to follow her commands.

After that time I taught school, and a misbehaving student interrupted me. I wanted to say “Your behavior is bad, and if you continue you will be sent to the principal’s office.” However, I was angry and my words spilled out too quickly. I accidentally mispronounced words and they came out as phrases of a magic

incantation. Instantly he grew *huge*, long ears like a donkey and started screaming. He ran out of the classroom, and to this day, his exact whereabouts are unknown. It is rumored that he eventually got a job in pest control where he listens to walls for evidence of termites.

So now you know why I speak slowly and carefully. Even whispering or surprise utterances during an accident might cast a spell on you that would cause bad luck. The unintentional spell would also affect your memory so you would never know things had been different.

I am honored that years ago you accepted a non-millionaire such as I into the Multimillionaires' Club ... You don't remember that being the name? Each of you still has your millions, right? ... What?

Did you-all overhear me when I closed the car door on my finger?

More Short Stories & Readers' Theater Scripts at

Storylandscapes.net