

101 HUMILIATING STORIES

Lisa Kron
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The year is 1975. A young unnamed midwestern girl, of Jewish descent, runs back and forth across the playing field behind her junior high school. It is gym class. It is the track segment. The girl is wearing a green and white striped polyester gym suit. Green is not her color. It is not anyone's color but it is particularly disturbing on her. She has long hair -long 1970's junior high hair with a center part (known in the 1990's as "the dreaded center part"). [Pause]

[To sound operator] Janet? Janet? Janet? Janet? Janet? Janet? Can you turn the sound off for just a second? No, off! Cut it. Can you just cut it for a second. Yeah. And then we'll come back to it but if you could just cut it... Thanks. [To audience] I just wanted to say that I know that these stories can be very evocative for people. And I know that the junior high segments in particular can be very resonant. And I want to be responsible to that as an artist and not bring up a lot of feelings and then send you back out into the world with a lot of things unresolved. And so, you know what? I can check in periodically to make sure you're all doing ok. And if you have feelings that come up that you would like to talk about I want you to feel free to raise your hand and I think everyone here would feel fine about focusing on you for a second... I'm sorry, not you in particular. I don't mean to infer you have deeper psychological problems than anyone else here... but... And then, when you're feeling better we can go on. So is everyone OK so far? OK? OK. Alright, Janet, let's continue.

Where was I... [mumbles through the beginning] Ah! The gymsuit does not fit her well. It doesn't fit anyone well except for Tricia Pickett. Tricia Pickett. But on this girl the gym suit is tight across the butt and bust and the elastic hits her a few inches below her waist giving her a permanent wedgie which she must constantly and inconspicuously try to adjust without using her hands. With the gym suit she wears knee highs, navy blue, nerdy knee highs which she keeps up with rubber bands. She tells herself that no one looks good in gym class. There is an illusion of anonymity in numbers. The girl holds her breath and runs back and forth, back and forth.

On the way back to the locker room she begins to feel confused. "Where is my locker?", she wonders. "What is my combination?" She goes into the gym office to ask. What she says is, "Ms. Roper, hello. I'm going to pass out." This is as surprising to her as it is to Ms. Roper. Ms. Roper thinks the girl is on drugs. The girl would probably be having a much better time in junior high school if she were on drugs. Ms. Roper gives the girl a wastebasket and goes to get help. Ms. Roper's idea of help is Jan the Narc. Jan takes the girl out of the locker room and into the hall... Into the hall where one never, never ventures in a gym suit. Luckily, it is between classes. The girl will go to the clinic. They will call her mother. But the

girl starts to get dizzier and dizzier. She begins to lean heavily, overwhelming Jan who is the size of a jockey. Please Jan. You're tough! You're a narc, Jan! Get her to the clinic, Jan! Heave her over your shoulder and, for the love of god, get her to the clinic before the bell rings! Jan lets the girl slip to the floor. The girl lays there. And yes, the bell rings. Jan does not help the girl up but finds it more efficient to let her lie there for a full five minutes until the hall is clear again. The story is true. The girl has never recovered.

[X to chair to put on lipstick.] I just have to take a minute here to freshen... and check... Sometimes in the exertion of that first piece, in some of the complicated dance movement, I get a little bit of a clowny face, you know, a little bit of a lipstick goatee. And I like to brighten a little before I go on. [Applies lipstick] And I like to just check for any damage. It's a little hard since the mirror is a little small and I can only see my face a piece at a time. And I have to put it all together in my head later. A little powder so that I don't fade too early. It'll happen eventually but... It's a good color, right? The lipstick? It took me a long time to find the perfect color because for a long time I didn't know what I obviously know now... that I'm an autumn.

[Phone ring]

Hello? Yes, this is Lisa... Kron, I pronounce it Kron, actually. Debby Downs.... from my high school. Sure I remember you. Really? Well, yes, I guess it is about that time, but, you know, Debby, I'm really very busy so I don't think I'll be able to attend... Really? Well, Debby, what an interesting idea. I'm very flattered but, you know, Debby, I don't think I'm probably the right person for that. I don't actually do "skits." Yeah, well, Debby, I still don't think I'm probably the right person for that. Why? Well, Debby... because I'm a big lesbian, actually, is the reason. So I don't think it would be such a good idea. Probably you should get a magician or something for that. Well, alright, we can talk about it. But can we talk later? Because I've got an audience here. Great. Alright, let me get your number. Hold on. Let me get a pen. [To audience] Does anyone have a pen I could borrow? Thanks. I'll get it back to you. OK, Debby. Deb? [pause] Hi, De... Yeah, that Little Mermaid is cute, the kids like that... OK, let me get this number. 517, of course, [mumbles the rest] OK, Debby, I'll call you back later tonight. How late can I call? 9:30. OK. That's going to be a little late for me. Can I call you tomorrow? OK, great, I'll give you a call tomorrow then. Bye... yes, it was good talking to you too. Bye... OK, well, if you run into her again you tell her I said hello. OK, bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye.

Where was I?... Oh, yes. I'm an autumn...

[Phone ring]