

LESSON 14

HOW TO TALK ABOUT SICKNESS AND HORROR MOVIES

Janet was at my house for one of our marathon horror-movie nights. Tonight's theme was evil zombies and we were watching *28 Days Later*, which is about this crazy virus that turns the population of London into a bunch of nasty, vomiting ape-like people. It's a good thing my brothers weren't around tonight – this movie would have given them way too many ideas. Come to think of it, they already resemble nasty, vomiting ape-like people plenty enough as it is.

Janet was getting over the flu, so she was curled up on the couch with a bowl of soup. She kept blowing her nose with these big, honking noises that, if she weren't my best friend, would have totally grossed me out. "You better not finish those Kleenex, because I don't have anymore. You'll just have to use your sleeves."

"Thanks, Alex, I appreciate that," she replied. Only it sounded more like, 'Dags, Alex. I abbresh' dat."

I waited until she blew her nose again – the loudest one yet – before I asked, "So, you've worked it all out with Andrew?"

"Yup," she replied, crumpling up her tissue. "Done and done." In the past few weeks, Rex and I had gone out a few more times, and talked on the phone for what seemed like a million hours. So I decided I was going to ask him to the Winter Ball. Normally, I hate stuff like that; it gives me a rash. But Janet had been working so hard on it and had even arranged for Tom the DJ to spin instead of the lame guy the school normally gets. So I agreed. I was even getting a little excited – but if you quote me on it, I'll deny it. The plan we'd come up with was to pretend I was writing a feature on local bands for the *Tatler*, and during the interview I'd ask Rex to go with me. I figured, if I was going to ask a guy to a formal, I should at least do something cool with it. Janet had gotten Andrew, the music editor, to call the Giants up to arrange it all. My dad wandered into the room at that point and stared at the TV for a minute. "Reminds me of Mike and Wayne: he said at last." Alex, these came for you in the mail." He passed me a bunch of large envelopes, which I tore open. They were the travel brochures I'd requested. Mexico, China, Nepal . . . I flipped through them excitedly before passing them to Janet. "What are these for?" my dad asked cautiously. "Some kind of school project?"

"No, Dad," I said breathlessly. "I think I might do some traveling." "After college? Sure, that might be a good idea"

"No, Dad – I mean next year. Maybe instead of college. Or before college, at least: My dad's face turned a shade of purple unknown to Crayola. "Totally out of the question!" he said. "You'll be going to college next year and that's final. End of discussion." He looked at Janet and then thought better about getting into a fight at that moment. "You talk some sense into her, Janet. I'm going to bed. We'll talk about this tomorrow:

Ugh. I'd rather meet a flesh-eating zombie than have *that* conversation.

Fantastic. Best birthday ever.

WORDS ABOUT BEING ILL

This was a really **inopportune** moment for Janet to fall sick, because she had a big debate tournament this weekend.

inopportune (*adj*): coming at a bad time

She had lost her voice for three days, and she was worried it had **atrophied**.

atrophy (*v*): to weaken from disuse

RELATED WORDS

The flu had **debilitated** her, and her strength and energy had suffered a **diminution**.

debilitate (*v*): to weaken

diminution (*n*): a shrinking or reduction

Two days earlier, she had been in **abject** misery.

abject (*adj*): no hope of relief

She must have caught a **contagion** from school. People were dropping like flies from the flu that week.

contagion (*n*): an illness that spreads from one person to another

Janet's totally self-conscious about her dry elbows, so she always carries **emollient**.

emollient (*n*): a cream

She also carries an **unguent** for her chapped lips.

unguent (*n*): a healing ointment

Janet had been feeling gross for a while; it took her a few days to get the **malaise** diagnosed as the flu.

malaise (*n*): a general feeling of sickness. The word can also refer to a general feeling of dissatisfaction or worry: "My brothers were suffering from some kind of *malaise*, but they just said it was the blues."

I should have taken the hint and gone to the doctor to get **inoculated** against the flu, but I never bothered.

inoculate (*v*): to make immune to a disease

I'm not very knowledgeable about **pathology**; I guess I just figured I wouldn't catch the flu if I just concentrated really hard on staying healthy.

pathology (*n*): the study of diseases

Janet was **recuperating** nicely-it didn't stick around too long.

recuperate (*v*): to recover from illness or injury

The pain and fever had **abated**.

abate (*v*): to ease, to lessen. A synonym for *abate* is **subside** (*v*): to become less active or intense.

Yesterday, though, she had looked totally **decrepit**, so we postponed our movie marathon and I made her go home to take a bubble bath.

decrepit (*ad*): old and worn out

WORDS ABOUT PLANNING

Janet and I had been **formulating** the plan for days.

formulate (*v*): to plan carefully and in detail

She was my primary **accomplice** in the whole thing.

accomplice (*n*): someone who knowingly helps another person commit a **crime**

RELATED WORDS

Janet will always be there to **abet** me during any of my crazy schemes.

abet (*v*): to help someone, especially in doing something illegal

The day before the plan went down, I was **fraught** with tension.

fraught (*adj*): full of nervous anxiety; filled with dangers or complications

It was a **momentous** occasion-this was the day I was finally going to let Rex know I really liked him.

momentous (*adj*): extremely important, especially in terms of its effect on future events

We tried to be very **clandestine** about the planning-we didn't want my nosy brothers to find out anything.

clandestine (*adj*): secret, often illegal

I can always trust Janet to be **discreet** about these things. She's got a mouth like a steel trap. And you've got to be really **surreptitious** around my brothers- they're always **conniving** something or other, and they can sniff out another plot a mile away.

discreet (*adj*): done without being noticed; modest

surreptitious (*adj*): done sneakily

connive (*v*): to secretly plot to do something, usually something illegal

Janet came up with the **machination** of having me write a "special report" on the local indie music scene.

machination (*n*): a cunning or complicated plot designed to achieve something particular

It was, of course, just a **contrivance** to get me to a band rehearsal. If Rex saw through the **ruse**, he was very polite about it.

contrivance (*n*): something cunning done to accomplish something

ruse (*n*): a trick designed to fool someone

WORDS ABOUT HORROR MOVIES

I love a good horror movie-the **gorier**, the better. In my opinion, a horror movie isn't worth my time unless I see at least a dozen bodies wallowing in blood.

gory (*adj*): disgusting, bloody

RELATED WORDS

Gruesome (*adj*) and **grisly** (*adj*) are synonyms for **gory**.

Janet shares my love of **macabre** stories-underneath that sunny exterior is a really twisted girl! We especially like movies that expose the **sordid** side of everyday life. Our movie marathons are not for the squeamish.

macabre (*adj*): including dark, horrific elements and concerned with themes of death

sordid (*adj*): dirty, depressing

squeamish (*adj*): easily disgusted or shocked

In this movie, the hero manages to off one zombie by **defenestration**.

defenestration (*n*): throwing someone out of a window

These words all describe ways of killing people.

disarticulation (*n*): separating at the joints

decapitation (*n*): cutting someone's head off

dismemberment (*n*): cutting someone's limbs off, tearing into pieces

It was pretty disgusting, though, when the zombies started **gorging** themselves on dead bodies.

gorge (*v*): to greedily eat excessive amounts of something These words have to do with eating.

What would happen if you were a vegetarian zombie and couldn't deal with being **carnivorous**, let alone being **cannibalistic**?

carnivorous (*adj*): eating meat

cannibal (*n*): a human who eats other human beings

That night, I knew I was going to dream about **carcasses** walking around my house.

carcass (*n*): dead body

Personally, I like my dead bodies **supine** and suffering from a bad case of **rigor mortis**.

supine (*adj*): lying on the back

rigor mortis (*n*): when a dead body goes stiff

I also like werewolf movies, particular *Teen Wolf*. Michael J. Fox, in my opinion, is way cuter in his **lupine** form.

lupine (*adj*): having to do with wolves

Despite my love of movies with lots of bloody effects, I still can't manage getting **sanguinary** tests done at the doctor's office.

sanguinary (*adj*): having to do with blood