

Lateral Sink_{ing}

By Jonny Hopkins

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Lateral Sinking***By Jonny Hopkins***

Television quiz show contestants Daphne and Jim are walking into the backstage room just before the show begins. Adrenalin is pumping through Daphne's body; the energy is directed towards Jim who is rather underwhelmed by the whole proceedings.

DAPHNE Get a move on Jim, hurry, hurry, hurry and stop dragging those heels.

JIM I'm not dragging my heels Daphne, I'm just not as spritely as you are right now. In fact, I've never been as spritely as you.

DAPHNE Well you should be, I'd like you to be spritelier.

JIM Not right now Daphne please, it's a little too early for sprightliness. But I will endeavour to put my best foot forward.

DAPHNE I'd rather you put both of your best feet forward.

Jim does a couple of little hops.

JIM How's this Daphne?

DAPHNE Much better Jim.

JIM Thank you, Daphne.

DAPHNE That's alright Jim, we have to keep at least one step ahead of the rest tonight on this quiz show. Let's stay sharp, sharp, sharp, questions, questions, questions, answers, answers, answers.

JIM I can't wait, wait, wait. *Sarcastically.*

DAPHNE That's the spirit Jim, we have to hit the studio running.

JIM But, the show doesn't start for a while yet.

DAPHNE Yes I know, but I've had a quick look around and I want to set our stall out early.

JIM Set our stall out, what stall exactly?

- DAPHNE** To stand tall and rise above the rest. *Daphne gets to her tip toes, while there prompts Jim to do the same thing, which he does.* To make our mark on the competition that's going on right now before the show begins.
- JIM** Right now? What competition?
- DAPHNE** What competition! Well said Jim, I'm loving your confidence.
- JIM** No, I meant.....
- DAPHNE** The other contestants, Jim and you can get down now, round one to us.
- JIM** Thank you, Daphne, yes I'm sure you've made a mark on them. You normally make a mark on people.
- DAPHNE** We did it together Jim, that's what tonight is all about, getting us through together.
- JIM** I know that, Daphne, I just wish my achilles did.
- DAPHNE** So, anyway, this is what a TV show looks like behind the scenes. I was expecting something a little more glamorous.
- JIM** It looks fine to me, I don't know why we have to be here anyway.
- DAPHNE** You do know why Jim, it's our last chance to show each other that we can be a well-oiled unit.
- JIM** Well oiled?
- DAPHNE** To channel our energies, maintain our focus as one joint mass of togetherness.
- JIM** Maintain our what?
- DAPHNE** To show that we can still function together, both grab onto that rope and wrap it around ourselves and heave as hard as we can. *Daphne pretending to heave on a rope, Jim joins in but pulls from the opposite direction.* No, Jim, in the same direction.
- JIM** Of course, how silly of me. *He switches sides and they both pull together.*

- DAPHNE** That's better Jim, doesn't it feel good?
- JIM** It feels amazing, Daphne. *Humouring Daphne.* But can we stop now, my hands are burning. *They both stop.* So why are we here again?
- DAPHNE** To save our marriage Jim, to save our marriage. Remember?
- JIM** Aww that, yes I remember now.
- DAPHNE** Yes Jim that, and win the prize holiday, two weeks away just you and me all alone together on a desert island. *Daphne turns away as she's saying it looking excited, Jim's not looking so excited then changes as Daphne turns to face him.*
- JIM** Let's hope we win. *He matches her excitement.*
- DAPHNE** We will Jim, we will, I can feel your hunger.
- JIM** You're right Daphne, they've just opened the buffet. *Jim goes to walk to the table but Daphne holds him back.*
- DAPHNE** And where exactly do you think you're going?
- JIM** For a quick bite to eat.
- DAPHNE** A quick bite to eat, are you being serious?
- JIM** Yes, I'm hungry.
- DAPHNE** Take a look at it, Jim.
- JIM** *Jim walks towards it trance like with arms out.* I'm looking I'm looking. *Daphne yanks him back and he snaps out of it.*
- DAPHNE** Sausages on sticks, crisps, pork pies, whatever where you thinking of?
- JIM** Well, they do look very nice.
- DAPHNE** Forget how nice it looks.
- JIM** I can't forget, it's there right in front of me, teasing me, tempting me, calling me over.

- DAPHNE** Don't look at it then, do you really want to jeopardise our chances of winning by eating that after weeks of hard dieting on brain food?
- JIM** Well I.....
- DAPHNE** I can't believe you Jim I really can't, not on a night as important as this.
- JIM** But, those weeks of walnuts, sardines and pumpkin seeds has made me desperate for something a little less brain boosting. Can't I have just the one pasty? I'm being beckoned and I can't help myself.
- DAPHNE** *She blocks his way with her legs and arms out.* Hold out for tonight Jim, that one pasty will lead you on to a sausage roll, cheese puff and then an onion bhaji. It's a well-known downward spiral.
- JIM** You're right Daphne, I don't know what I was thinking of. *Not sounding as though he means it.*
- DAPHNE** Of course I'm right, we don't want any of that rubbish clogging up our craniums tonight. But I tell you what, after we've won you can go over and feast away.
- JIM** That's a great idea Daphne, I'll go over there now to put some things aside for later. *Jim goes to walk to the buffet but Daphne yanks him back again.*
- DAPHNE** No Jim, just in case one of the other contestants forces a spring roll down your throat as an act of sabotage. Obviously they can see we're a cut above and will try anything to drag us down to their level.
- JIM** Well then, the worst we'd be on is a level playing field.
- DAPHNE** We're not going to be the same level as that lot, look at them stuffing themselves.
- JIM** I'm looking, I'm looking. *Jim still longing for a go at the buffet.*

- DAPHNE** We should have gone on Super-Heads instead, that's the supreme quiz show. You would never see a slice of pizza with a spicy chilli dip backstage there.
- JIM** Pizza, I didn't see pizza. *Jim drooling over the thought of pizza.*
- DAPHNE** Hold on there Jim and remain focussed, it will all be worth it I promise you. By the looks of things we're up against a bunch of no-hoppers.
- JIM** How can you tell, they look like a decent lot to me?
- DAPHNE** Decent? I'd say they look quite unintelligent, quite unintelligent to say the very least. They've got no stall to set up and there's certainly nothing to put on it, and that was obvious before they stampeded their way to the buffet.
- JIM** Are you sure, Daphne? There's a man over there wearing corduroy trousers and a cardigan, now cardigan wearers are always clever aren't they?
- DAPHNE** You're right, Jim.
- JIM** Well, thank you very much Daphne.
- DAPHNE** In normal circumstances that is, but these aren't and he isn't.
- JIM** How can you tell?
- DAPHNE** Trust me Jim.
- JIM** But he's putting his glasses on now, and they're the thin framed reading type with a chain, he probably reads a book a day. Look, he's even balancing them on the end of his nose now, what more proof do you need?
- DAPHNE** He's just trying to make you think he's clever, it's a form of pre-quiz intimidation.
- JIM** Is it?
- DAPHNE** Oh yes Jim, it's a well-known tactic.
- JIM** I didn't know that, I'm so glad you're on my side.

- DAPHNE** You see people like him try to get to the opposition before the show begins, but we aren't going to fall for it.
- JIM** Aren't we?
- DAPHNE** Certainly not Jim, take a closer look. Every button is still sewn on well and there's not a bobble or hole to be seen, it's too smart.
- JIM** You're right, I can't see a single loose strand.
- DAPHNE** I know I'm right, and he hasn't got a single crumb on his clothes. The very cleverest people aren't bothered by crumbs, they're far too small to take their attention.
- JIM** You're right again, look he's brushing them off right now.
- DAPHNE** And his glasses aren't on properly.
- JIM** They look okay to me, they're perfectly level on his nose.
- DAPHNE** Schoolboy error, clever people, and I mean genuinely clever people always wear wonky glasses.
- JIM** Can you get wonky glasses then?
- DAPHNE** No Jim, they just don't wear them at an angle perpendicular to the ground, intelligence and spatial awareness never go together. But the real clincher is that he's wearing expensive aftershave.
- JIM** Expensive aftershave?
- DAPHNE** I caught a whiff of it earlier, a genuine egg head would never smell that good, it's a well-known scientific fact.
- JIM** But you're exceptionally intelligent aren't you Daphne? You dress well, smell fantastic and as far as I can see your spatial awareness has always been of the very highest order.
- DAPHNE** I'm the exception.
- JIM** I thought you would be, it's as if that man has gone on the internet and searched for a "how to make yourself look clever and intimidate the opposition on your next tv quiz show kit," as if we'd do that?

DAPHNE We couldn't do that.

JIM Right enough Daphne, we don't need to.

DAPHNE And they've sold out in your size.

JIM What? You mean.....

Johnny Platinum makes a big entrance and makes some poses as he talks to the other contestants.

DAPHNE Hey look over there Jim, look who's just come in.

JIM Oh my God, I didn't think he'd paying us a visit so soon.

DAPHNE What was that Jim? *Daphne paying little attention to Jim as she gazes towards Johnny Platinum.*

JIM I said I didn't think we'd be seeing him this early.

DAPHNE Johnny Platinum. *She says fawningly.*

JIM Yes, it's that dreadful host Johnny Platinum, I wish I'd dragged my heels a bit more now. Look at him, I don't know who he thinks he is. I hope he doesn't want to talk to us.

DAPHNE Johnny, Johnny. *Daphne tries to grab his attention.*

JIM What are you doing Daphne?

DAPHNE Johnny, over here Johnny. I'm over here.

Platinum here's the call, stops talking to the others, checks he's looking good and walks to Daphne peacocking the whole way.

JIM Oh no, look what you've done, he's coming over here.

DAPHNE Oooooohhh.

Platinum gets to them, stands there with showy off stance directed entirely towards Daphne. Daphne is all ga ga, Jim not looking so happy.

PLATINUM It's Johnny Platinum, more precious than gold but nowhere near as old.

DAPHNE Oh Johnny, you're even nicer looking in real life than you are on the television.

JIM You think so?

Jim is totally ignored.

PLATINUM Really? I'll have to make sure there's enough lighting on stage, I wouldn't want the masses to miss out. Well are you looking forward to the show? You look like a girl who's in the know. I believe it's Daphne isn't it?

DAPHNE Ooohhh you know my name.

PLATINUM I'd be a fool not to, I'm feeling very good about tonight Daphne. Are you feeling very good too?

DAPHNE Yes I am feeling the same.

PLATINUM Excellent, I think I'm definitely looking at tonight's winner.

DAPHNE Johnny, I know you're looking at tonight's winner.

PLATINUM I love that attitude, there's just not enough of that cock-sure self-confidence around for my liking. I only wish I had some of that swagger.

JIM What, are you being serious?

Jim still ignored.

PLATINUM I think you're right, for someone so bright this just must be your night.

JIM My Gawd.

Jim still ignored.

PLATINUM I can see you're incredibly sophisticated, intelligent, beautiful, delectable. I never thought I'd find one.

DAPHNE One what, Johnny?

JIM Yes, one what Johnny, please tell?

Jim still totally ignored.

PLATINUM Isn't it obvious Daphne? An equal to talk to.

DAPHNE Oooooohhh thank you Johnny thank you, that's one of the nicest things I ever heard.

JIM Stop, I've had enough of this.

PLATINUM Excuse me Daphne, I think my earpiece is playing up.

JIM Now listen here Platinum.

PLATINUM I can hear something, there's some kind of interference coming through.

JIM I'll show you interference. *Jim getting angry towards Platinum*

PLATINUM Ah yes I forgot this is a quiz for pairs. Daphne you haven't introduced me to your uncle.

JIM She's my wife.

PLATINUM Is this true Daphne?

DAPHNE Yes it's true, I'd like you to meet my husband, Jim.

PLATINUM Well Daphne, what a lucky lady you are. *He says very sarcastically/smugly, then speaks to Jim.* And how intelligent you look as well, ha, I hope you've been doing your homework.

JIM Yes, I've been doing my homework, not that it's got anything to do with you.

PLATINUM Excellent, so I suppose you've got the two times table and the alphabet covered.

Jim losing his cool

PLATINUM Waa-hey, feeling the heat already are you? I do believe you're in a rage, just wait till I get you on my stage.

DAPHNE Yes, calm down Jim.

Platinum smirking at Jim.

PLATINUM I do believe it's time for Johnny Platinum to say goodbye for now, got to make sure the camera men have got their angles right. Wouldn't you agree Daphne?

DAPHNE And their lenses are clean.

PLATINUM I will Daphne, for the both of us.

Platinum swans off, Jim glaring at him, Daphne waving.

JIM What a complete tool.

DAPHNE Wasn't he so charming.

JIM There's nothing in this world that I wouldn't do to shut him up.

DAPHNE I don't know what you mean Jim, anyway it's time to get our neural pathways on open with no speed limits.

JIM What?

DAPHNE We need to get our brains revved up right now. Just some fun questions and answers to each other, let's start with a little quantum chemistry.

JIM No thanks Daphne, not quantum chemistry just yet if that's ok with you?

DAPHNE OK Jim maybe you're right, I wouldn't want you to peak too early.

JIM I'm so glad you've recognised that.

DAPHNE Ooooh isn't this exciting, I can't wait to get out there and show the world what I know. *Plenty of enthusiasm.*

JIM Me neither. *Equal enthusiasm which stops abruptly as Daphne turns away.*

DAPHNE I've worked so hard over the last few weeks since I entered us into this.

JIM Me too, and I'm so glad you brought us here.

DAPHNE My head is bursting with knowledge, bursting Jim bursting.

JIM I'm also finding it hard to keep it all in. *Mocking but Daphne doesn't see it.*

DAPHNE History.

JIM History?

DAPHNE Yes history Jim, I've got it all covered.

JIM I'd be surprised if you hadn't.

DAPHNE There's not a battle that I haven't studied, if I don't know about it.....

JIM Then it just hasn't been fought yet. *Jim playing to Daphne's ego.*

DAPHNE Geography.

JIM Geography?

DAPHNE If I can't name the place.....

JIM Then it hasn't been discovered yet, what about astronomy?

DAPHNE Come on now Jim, the universe is expanding every second, you'll have to give me a moment to catch up.

JIM Let's just hope there's not a star being born tonight. *Daphne staring at Jim.* Apart of course from you.

DAPHNE Thank you Jim, so you'll have to tell me what subjects you've been reading about, it's all about us going forward together remember.

JIM Oh I won't let us down Daphne.

DAPHNE I know you won't, so what topics have you been devoting every moment of the days to then Jim.

JIM And the nights Daphne don't forget the nights.

DAPHNE I'm so sorry Jim, of course the nights. I imagine it's sport, literature, and films for starters. Johnny always asks questions on those sorts of things.

JIM No, nothing like that.

DAPHNE Oh, television, cooking and music then?

JIM Nope.

DAPHNE What none of those either?

JIM Correct.

DAPHNE And why not? *Daphne not impressed.*

JIM No need. *Jim very sure.*

DAPHNE No need? Well then Jim what exactly have you been studying, there can't be many subjects left.

JIM You won't like it.

DAPHNE Why won't I like it?

JIM I just know you won't like it.

DAPHNE Try me.

JIM Have I got to?

DAPHNE Yes.

JIM I'm not sure you're ready for it.

DAPHNE Tell me. *Daphne screams.*

JIM Alright then, so long as you promise not to get angry.

DAPHNE Oh I'll promise.

JIM Ok then, you'll have to have faith in me with this Daphne. I've devised a theory you see.

DAPHNE Go on.

JIM It's what some might say is a little far out there, only the most expanded of minds will see its merits.

DAPHNE And has this theory been proven?

JIM Not yet.

DAPHNE You're jeopardising our marriage on an unproven theory?

JIM I wouldn't say jeopardising, more like securing. Our place on that paradise island is guaranteed believe me Daphne.

DAPHNE Right I'm trying to stay calm here Jim, just tell me what you've been studying, please.

- JIM** Well the thing is Daphne my darling I've watched every single episode of this quiz show and it's been on for years.
- DAPHNE** Yes.
- JIM** Well there's one subject that hasn't yet been touched and I think, well totally confident that it will come up tonight. I mean they've exhausted all other avenues.
- DAPHNE** So under what field is it?
- JIM** Oh, science and nature I suppose.
- DAPHNE** Excellent Jim, so you've learned all there is to know about science and nature. I'm so happy you've put so much effort in, you must really love me. *Daphne pleased with Jim.* There's botany, biology, ecology, and it goes without saying that you'll have the entire periodic table in your pocket.
- JIM** *Jim pulling out his empty pockets.* It must have fallen out. *Daphne not paying any attention to Jim.*
- DAPHNE** You shouldn't have Jim, I've learned it backwards as well but I'm so proud of you. Isn't this wonderful both of us striving for the same thing in equal amounts.
- JIM** Well, I haven't quite studied all of those things.
- DAPHNE** Pardon, did you just say you haven't covered all of the aforementioned?
- JIM** Yes that's right. *Jim sure of himself.*
- DAPHNE** Alright, so can you narrow it down for me please?
- JIM** Narrow it down? Ok then, but this will take quite a few narrows. Tell you what Daphne, think of the sea.
- DAPHNE** Well that's not bad Jim, the sea covers two thirds of the world's surface. I can see what you're doing, trying to take the burden on yourself by leaving me with only one third of the planet to deal with.
- JIM** Well....

