



Learning Curve

Story by Jim Caswell

Audioplay by Jim Caswell and Doug Zeitlin

Episode Summary

Geist and Lindsey investigate a murder on a Florida navy base, but can they get past their personal differences in time to catch a killer?

Starring

Lindsey Capparelli
Derrick Geist

April Sadowski
Ryan Gilbert

and Featuring

Walter M. Wechsler
Commander Keltner
Military Police Officer
Petty Officer Bruce Pryor
Mrs. Cromberg
Mr. Cromberg
David
Colin Pryor
Deliveryman

Lee Sands
Roger Kelley
Jim Caswell
Mick Mize
Sheila DeKing
Erick Greeva
Justin Bills
Pete Nottit
Andy Greeva

PROLOGUE

SCENE 1 – ENTER INT.: Miami Hotel Suite

SOUND: Hotel room door opens and closes.

LINDSEY

Any word on the plane?

GEIST

Hi Derrick. How are you this morning? Oh, I'm fine Lindsey, how about yourself? I'm doing good; well rested. Glad to hear it.

LINDSEY

Yeah, yeah, yeah. All of that. Any word on the plane?

GEIST

They're going to be able to fix it, but it's going to take a few weeks, and that's with them dedicating an entire crew to the work.

LINDSEY

Wouldn't it be easier to just buy another one?

GEIST

Not really. First, it would cost a lot more.

LINDSEY

In case you forgot, you're a millionaire several times over.

GEIST

And millionaires stay millionaires by not wasting money. Second, it was a customized plane. It would take just as long to customize a new one as it will to fix the old one.

LINDSEY

Wouldn't it have saved money to just have a regular plane, or fly United?

GEIST

As much as we travel, it would end up costing more in airfare after two years. We don't have to deal with lines, airport security or limiting the amount of baggage to carry-on only.

LINDSEY

Oh, we know you have plenty of that.

GEIST

You should talk. And I didn't hear you complain about the comforts when you were unpacking your bags in the master bedroom.

LINDSEY

I'm not complaining. I'm just surprised you're willing to wait three weeks. You've been chomping at the bit ever since Paris.

GEIST

And ever since Chicago, we've been up against a dead end.

LINDSEY

Then why were we headed to Egypt in the first place?

GEIST

It was the best idea I could come up with at the time. We needed to get out of Chicago.

LINDSEY

Because you thought the attack at the club was directed at you.

GEIST

And I didn't want to see innocents get hurt because of me.

LINDSEY

But you could have talked to Ajit and me, gotten our opinions on the matter before taking off for the other side of the globe.

GEIST

Where is Ajit, anyway?

LINDSEY

He said that he was going to visit a friend. You know Ajit. He was being vague as usual.

GEIST

It's not like him to run off without telling me.

LINDSEY

You mean without asking for permission.

GEIST

Let's not get started on that again.

SOUND: Geist's stylized cell phone rings.

LINDSEY

That's exactly what we should be...

SOUND: Geist answers phone.

GEIST

Geist.

WALTER

Derrick. Are you OK?

GEIST

We're fine, Walter. Why do you ask?

WALTER

*I just received word that your plane crashed in the Atlantic Ocean.
What happened?*

GEIST

We had a run-in with some pirates. Nothing we couldn't handle.

WALTER

Pirates! Derrick, what have you gotten yourself into?

GEIST

We're fine, Walter. The plane's being repaired and we'll get back on track in a couple of weeks.

WALTER

I want you to come home, Derrick. This is far too dangerous.

GEIST

We're fine.

WALTER

You say you're fine, but you're also telling me you were attacked by pirates. You can't have it both ways, Derrick.

GEIST

We knew this wasn't going to be easy from the start, so we're not going to call it quits after one speed bump.

LINDSEY

Speed bump! You call getting shot out of the air a speed bump?

WALTER

Not easy is one thing. Life-threatening is another.

GEIST

I'm not giving up, Walter. The sooner you accept that, the easier this will be on you.

WALTER

The sooner you stop endangering yourself, the easier it will be on me. <beat> This isn't over, Derrick.

GEIST

I know. Good talking to you Walter. Bye.

SOUND: Cellphone closes.

LINDSEY

You can't blame him for being concerned.

GEIST

I can blame you for getting him worked up.

LINDSEY

Me? What did I do?

GEIST

Are you going to tell me you didn't submit a report to him about our island adventure?

LINDSEY

Not yet.

GEIST

Then how did he....

LINDSEY

You just took the plane in for repairs. Did you pay them in cash, or did you use the company account?

GEIST (abashed)

Oh.

LINDSEY

Damn right, oh. That's the problem with you. You assume that you're right about something and there's no discussing it. It's your way or the....

SOUND: Geist's stylized cell phone rings. Geist answers it.

GEIST

Geist.

KELTNER

Derrick. Are you busy?

GEIST

It depends. Am I busy, Lindsey?

LINDSEY (irritated)

Apparently not.

KELTNER

Am I interrupting something?

GEIST

Yes, and remind me to thank you later.

KELTNER

You can thank me now. I need your help up here at the Yard.

GEIST

What's up?

KELTNER

One of my officers has been found in his quarters. He's been hanged.

SOUND: Silence – 1 beat.

LINDSEY

What is it? What's the matter?

GEIST

It'll take a while to get from Miami to Jacksonville, but I'll charter a plane to get us up there faster. We'll be there in two hours.

SOUND: Cue Intro music and monologue.

ACT I

SCENE 1 – ENTER EXT.: *Gangplank – USS Montana – Naval Station Mayport*

SOUND: Oceanic background with sailors moving around the ship. Three sets of footfalls rise up gangplank and step onto the deck.

MP

Commander. You're guests have arrived.

KELTNER

Thank you, Lieutenant. I'll take them from here.

MP

Yes sir.

SOUND: One set of footfalls descends the gangplank.

KELTNER

Have any problems getting through?

GEIST

They didn't let Lindsey bring her camera.

KELTNER

Sorry about that. National security and all that.

GEIST

It's all right. We understand.

LINDSEY

Speak for yourself. What did they think, I'd turn around and sell the photos to the Al-Qaeda?

KELTNER

It's about as likely as you taking a plane hostage with a pair of fingernail clippers, but the rules are the rules.

LINDSEY

I guess.

KELTNER

Come this way.

SOUND: Three sets of footfalls walk across deck.

KELTNER

I see everything worked out with Wilbury helping you out of your predicament.

GEIST

Yeah. Thanks for putting me in touch with him. He was the right man for the job.

KELTNER

I thought he would be. He and I are drinking buddies anytime I find myself in Bermuda. A good officer, though he doesn't hold his liquor nearly as well as he thinks.

GEIST

Then it's a good thing lives depended on his sailing ability and not his drinking. So what happened here?

KELTNER

We had everyone fall in at oh-six-hundred hours. Ensign Cromberg wasn't present, so we sent a crewman below deck to check on him.

LINDSEY

Did he have any previous problem?

KELTNER

Behavior issues? No. He was a very capable officer. Showed good potential and was attentive to detail, but he was also capable of thinking on his feet. He was also very well liked.

LINDSEY

I meant trouble getting up in the morning, but that helps too.

KELTNER

Boot camp pretty much takes care of that.

GEIST

The crewman went down to look for him and...?

KELTNER

He found Cromberg in his quarters. He was hanging by his belt by an overhead pipe.

GEIST

Is the Naval Criminal Investigator Service sending someone out?

KELTNER

A coroner. Our Agent Afloat is convinced it's a suicide, and the captain agrees with him, so he's not going to call the director of NCIS or SecNav.

LINDSEY

"SecNav"?

KELTNER

The Secretary of the Navy. Our boss and the man the director of NCIS answers to.

LINDSEY

How long had he been out of training?

KELTNER

He graduated from Great Lakes in January. Did his eight weeks in Enterprise Barracks and came through with flying colors.

GEIST

He doesn't sound like the type that would give up. Had anything changed in the past few weeks to cause depression? Was he having trouble adjusting?

KELTNER

After five months, he was as adjusted to life aboard a battleship as you're going to get.

SOUND: Ship door opens. Footfalls step through.

SCENE 2 – CUT TO INT.: Below decks – USS Montana

SOUND: Door closes and footfalls continue forward. Outside noises are cut off, replaced by metallic echoes.

GEIST

I take it that things aren't that simple. You wouldn't have called us in if it were an open-and-shut case.

KELTNER

Like I said, he was well-adjusted, liked by his fellow crewmen and was a hard worker. I can't imagine why he would take his own life.

LINDSEY

Well, if you suspect foul play, he couldn't have been liked by all of his fellow crewmen.

KELTNER

Exactly the problem. There have been no reports of conflict between him and any other members of the crew.

GEIST

And if whatever it was that drove them to murder had been building up, there would have been warning signs.

LINDSEY

Unless it was a crime of passion.

GEIST

Or committed by someone who wasn't part of the crew.

KELTNER

You've seen how hard it is to get aboard. I have trouble believing that someone was able to get past the M.P.s.

LINDSEY

And it's a big ship. Unless you knew your way around or was being escorted, it's hard to believe someone could find the right place.

KELTNER

Watch your step.

SOUND: Three sets of footfalls going down a flight of metal stairs.

GEIST

A crewman from another ship could bypass both problems.

KELTNER

I suppose so. Again, though, I haven't received any reports on him from shore either.

SOUND: Return to walking on deck plating.

GEIST

We both know that not everything that happens gets reported.
Only when it's big enough to get noticed.

KELTNER

I guess I'm just hoping that it isn't something that could have been avoided; something that got ignored and ended up costing Cromberg his life.

GEIST

Whether we like it or not, it's going to be something that could have been avoided, but I understand what you mean.

LINDSEY

It's probably not the best of times to get pedantic.

GEIST

Has his family been notified?

KELTNER

The Captain called his parents, but I'm planning on visiting them this afternoon.

GEIST

I realize that it may be considered inappropriate, but would you mind if we tagged along. Depending on how they took the news, I may have a few questions for them.

KELTNER

Like what?

GEIST

I'm not sure yet. I just want to keep all my options open.

KELTNER

As long as you don't press them too hard, I don't see a problem with it.

LINDSEY

If that's the condition, then we might as well stay home.

GEIST

I'm going as an investigator, not a tabloid reporter.

LINDSEY

Gee, how original. Maybe we need to hire you a few writers; come up with some new material.

GEIST

Did Cromberg have any other family?

KELTNER

His parents are listed as his only living relatives, but he does have a different place of residence listed. Both are down in Miami.

LINDSEY

So home was close enough he could visit when he was on leave.

GEIST

Barely.

KELTNER

If he had a girlfriend, it might be her place. As he was raised in the Miami area, I'm not surprised he'd go down there any chance he got. Often he'd bum rides on our flights to Key West.

LINDSEY

Did he ever talk about a significant other?

KELTNER

Not that I ever heard of, but I know he went down there a lot. I can't really follow up on it, though, without clearance from the family. As they're the only ones listed, they get to call the shots as far as who learns what.

GEIST

I'm sure they appreciate that.

LINDSEY

How much further?

KELTNER

It's just up ahead on the left.

GEIST

Did you have the room taped off?

KELTNER

We did.

GEIST

It looks like someone beat us here, then.

KELTNER

Let me go in first.

LINDSEY

By all means.

SOUND: Walking stops.

SCENE 3 – CUT TO INT.: *Pryor and Cromberg's quarters.*

SOUND: Cabin door gets pushed open.

KELTNER

Ahh-tension?

BRUCE (startled)

Whaa.

SOUND: Snapping to.

KELTNER

Pryor? Is that you?

BRUCE

Sir. Yes sir.

KELTNER

What are you doing here?

BRUCE

Gathering my things, sir.

GEIST

Who is this, Commander?

KELTNER

Petty Officer Bruce Pryor. Ensign Cromberg's bunkmate.

BRUCE

Roommate, Commander.

KELTNER

What was that, sailor?

BRUCE

Cromberg was my friend, sir, and he preferred the term roommate.

GEIST

This is your quarters as well, then.

BRUCE

Correct.

KELTNER

Your quarters or not, this area was restricted. What are you doing here?

BRUCE

Captain Newman told me to take a few days leave. He thought it might be good for me to take some time off.

KELTNER

I guess I can understand that.

BRUCE

I needed a change of clothes and some other essentials. I made sure to touch only my things, though, sir. I didn't disturb anything.

KELTNER

We'll see about that. Do you have everything you need, sailor?

BRUCE

Yes sir.

GEIST

And where are you going to be staying?

SILENCE: 2-count.

KELTNER

Answer the man, sailor.

BRUCE

My primary contact, sir. I'll be at my brother's place in Fort Lauderdale.

KELTNER

Very well. Dismissed.

BRUCE

Thank you, sir.

SOUND: Footfalls leave room and exit down hall.

LINDSEY

Why did you want to know where he was staying?

GEIST

Just in case we needed to ask him about Cromberg. If anyone would know every aspect of the man's life, it would be his roommate.

KELTNER

You would think.

GEIST

Let's take a look around and walk me through the scene. Then we'll fly back to Miami see the parents.

SOUND: Transition music.

SCENE 4 – CUT TO INT.: *Cromberg's Parent's House*

SOUND: Footsteps entering living room.

MRS. CROMBERG

Thank you for coming, Commander. Please, have a seat and make yourself comfortable. Have you learned anything further

about...

KELTNER

Nothing yet, Mrs. Cromberg, but we're still trying to work out all the details. This is Derrick Geist, a friend of mine, who has agreed to do some external investigations.

GEIST

And this is my associate, Lindsey Capparelli.

MRS. CROMBERG

I appreciate whatever you can find. I just can't believe that my Charlie... my Charlie could...

LINDSEY

I'm terribly sorry for your loss, Mrs. Cromberg.

MRS. CROMBERG

Thank... thank you.

GEIST

I'm sorry for my bluntness, mam...

LINDSEY (under her breath)

That would be a first.

GEIST (irritated)

... but did your son ever mention something that could be taken as strange? Anything that, in the present context, could be taken as dangerous?

MRS. CROMBERG

No, of course not. If so, we would have already mentioned it to Commander Keltner.

GEIST

He wasn't acting strange in any way?

MR. CROMBERG (entering room – sour attitude)

There were a lot of strange things about Charles. A lot of things he didn't tell us.

MRS. CROMBERG

This is my husband. Honey, this is...

MR. CROMBERG

I know. I heard.

LINDSEY

We're sorry for the intrusion during this difficult time, Mr. Cromberg.

MR. CROMBERG

Not nearly as sorry as I am that you have to be here in the first place.

GEIST

You said that there were strange things surrounding your son's life. Like what?

MR. CROMBERG

Charles made some decisions that We didn't agree on. Ever since then, he kept his business to himself, and I didn't pry. I didn't ask and he didn't tell.

GEIST

Did you not agree with his choice to enter the military?

MR. CROMBERG

That's the one choice he made that I could agree with. I was a navy man myself back in the '70's.

GEIST

Then what was it?

MRS. CROMBERG

Please, Mr. Geist. We don't want to dwell on the negatives and mistakes we may have made. I'd rather us remember Charlie for the good times and his successes.

GEIST

I understand, Mrs. Cromberg, but if one of those choices he made led to him getting someone mad at him, it could answer a lot of the outstanding questions.

MR. CROMBERG

What outstanding questions. The official report says suicide. There isn't any proof to the contrary, so let us mourn in our own way. You don't need to go digging. Charles needs to be remembered in the right way.

GEIST (irritated)

And what is the right way? As a man who was hiding things? As a man who took the coward's way out?

LINDSEY (shocked)

Geist!

MR. CROMBERG (angry)

My son was not a coward, Mr. Geist. If he took his own life, then it was because he had a reason.

GEIST (still irritated)

And you'd rather believe that he killed himself than think his secrets could have driven someone to murder?

LINDSEY (angry)

Derrick. You're going about this the wrong way!

GEIST (angry)

What's wrong is a set of parents who are more afraid of the truth than the loss of their son. Tell me what you know!

MR. CROMBERG

That's it! I want you all out of my house right now!

MRS. CROMBERG

But Steven! What if they can help prove that he

MR. CROMBERG

My son was a good man! Leave it be!

GEIST

But...

KELTNER

We better go, Derrick. This isn't getting us anywhere.

GEIST

No! Not until...

LINDSEY

That's it!

SOUND: Lindsey storms out of the room, slamming doors behind her.

GEIST

Lindsey?

SOUND: Transition music.

ACT II

SCENE 1 – ENTER INT.: *Miami Hotel Suite*

SOUND: Hotel room door opens and closes. Items thrown into a suitcase in the background.

GEIST

Lindsey? You here?

LINDSEY

For the moment.

GEIST

What do you think you're doing?

LINDSEY

You seem to think you know everything. Figure it out for yourself.

GEIST

Well, it looks like you're packing, but I don't know where you think you're going.

LINDSEY

New York or maybe Los Angeles. I can try to get a job with the Star or maybe TMZ. I can't go to the Enquirer without those damn pictures surfacing again, thank you very much.

GEIST

Lindsey, stop. Talk to me. What's wrong?

LINDSEY

You know what you did.

GEIST

If I knew what I did, would I be asking what's wrong?

LINDSEY

If you don't know, then I don't see why I should tell you.

GEIST

Good God, do you hear yourself? You sound like every female stereotype out there. Pretend I'm just some stupid male and explain it to me.

LINDSEY

Not much pretending needed.

GEIST

Fine. Tell me.

SOUND: Packing stops.

LINDSEY

That's it exactly! It always has to be your way. No room for discussion, no room for anyone else's opinion. Your way or the highway. Well I'm choosing the highway. I'm not your girl Friday or your maid. I'm a woman who's been on her own for way too long to start relying on a man to make all my decisions for me, especially one who thinks with his fists before his head.

SOUND: Silence for 2 count.

GEIST

Are you done?

LINDSEY

In more ways than one.

GEIST

Don't go.

LINDSEY

Didn't you hear me? You can't tell me what to do anymore!

GEIST

I'm not telling. I'm asking. Please don't go.

LINDSEY

What?

GEIST

I'm asking you not to go.

LINDSEY

What are you talking about? You've been trying to get rid of me since we met.

GEIST

I know; it surprises me as much as it does you.

LINDSEY

Then why? Give me one good reason why I should put up with your garbage any longer; one good reason to not walk out that door and not look back.

GEIST

I'll give you three. First, you know too much to walk away now.

LINDSEY

That's what you're worried about, me reporting your secret? You don't need to threaten me. I've learned my lesson. I know better than to cross you and your industry flunkies.

GEIST

That's not what I mean, and Walter's not my flunky. Not by a long shot.

LINDSEY

What do you mean, then?

GEIST

I mean that you've gotten a taste of what we're doing here; the helping people and keeping them safe. You've seen the good that we can do, and I think you like it. I think you're <beat> good at it. You can't turn your back on it now.

LINDSEY

If I was the opportunistic paparazzo you always make me out to be, I certainly could.

GEIST

That's just it, though. There's more to you than that. Just like there's more to me than the millionaire playboy the world perceives me as.

LINDSEY

Yeah, there's also the guy who believes in shooting first and asking questions much, much later, not to mention making mothers who have just lost their sons cry.

GEIST

But the father wasn't telling us something, and my gut tells me that it's important.

LINDSEY

Then you come back later, when they've had the chance to calm down, and take a different approach. You don't charge in like a bull in a china shop and crash around until you get answers.

GEIST

And that's reason number two.

LINDSEY

What is?

GEIST

The alternate perspective. You make me look at things differently; explore other options. I'm grateful for Ajit and Jeremy, but they follow orders without question. That's needed – a lot – in what we're doing here, but I don't have all the answers and it's good to, every once in a while, get another opinion. Maybe not all...the...time...

LINDSEY

Then why do you ignore every suggestion I make, or ask for my opinion every once in a while?

GEIST

It seems to me that you rarely need an invitation to give your opinion on things. And I never ignore it; I weigh it against the facts I already know and make a decision.

LINDSEY

A decision you had already made before I ever opened my mouth. That's the same as ignoring it.

GEIST

Not always. If I had ignored your input completely, I probably would have knocked Pierre out, had his butt thrown into prison for kidnapping and dragged Michele back to her parents.

LINDSEY

One time. You listen to me one time.

GEIST

There have been others, but I'm still in the learning stages, just like you. You're not the only one who has been independent for years and isn't used to relying on others. I've been working.... preparing for years to find my parents. Now, we're closer than ever, and my patience gets a little thin in waiting for answers.

LINDSEY

A little?

GEIST

OK, a lot. But that's also reason number three. For some unknown reason, you occasionally have a calming effect on me. When things get heated, you somehow manage to convince me to go easy, back up and check to see if I'm going too far.

LINDSEY

So, in other words, if there's any hope in keeping you from killing someone or something in one of your fits, it's me? I'm not sure I want that kind of responsibility.

GEIST

I seem to have a very black-and-white approach to this.... job. The guilty get punished, the innocent get protected. The evil monsters get destroyed, the children get saved. I have moral codes that I'm not going to violate. But we don't live in a black-and-white world. Society is full of gray, and you seem capable of giving that point of view.

LINDSEY (semi-teasing)

I don't know. That one sounds a lot like number two to me. I think you need to come up with another number three.

GEIST

We fight well together.

LINDSEY

That's one I can agree with. If I decide to give you a second chance – and that's a big if at the moment – you need to promise me that things are going to change. I want you to listen to me more often.

GEIST

How about if I promise to acknowledge your input and make it clear that I've heard your point of view. In exchange, though, I'm going to ask you to follow my lead once a decision has been made. *Especially* when it's a dangerous one. Remember, I've been training myself for things like this for most of my life.

LINDSEY

I'm still not sure. A lot of guys promise to listen, then fall right back into their old patterns. I haven't seen anything yet to convince me that you'll be any different.

GEIST

I'll tell you what. I'm planning on going to Cromberg's other address and see what I can find there. Come with me, and we'll take it one step at a time.

LINDSEY

And if I decide I want to leave, you won't stop me?

GEIST

I'll pay for your airfare to New York and give you a letter of recommendation, if you'd like.

LINDSEY

We won't have to go that far. Let's go.

SOUND: Transition music.

SCENE 2 – CUT TO INT.: *Cromberg's apartment hallway*

SOUND: Knocking on door.

LINDSEY

What if Cromberg lived alone?

GEIST

He lived on the base, so I don't know why he'd have an apartment that would just sit empty most of the time. But if he did, we can always get the super to let us in.

SOUND: Footfalls on carpet approach from the other side of the door.

LINDSEY

You don't want to just bust it down?

GEIST

That would be a waste of....

SOUND: Door opens.

DAVID

Can I help you?

GEIST

My name is Derrick, and this is my associate... my friend, Lindsey. Is this the apartment of Charlie Cromberg?

DAVID

Yes. Can I help you?

LINDSEY

Are you Charlie's roommate?

DAVID

Yes. My name is David.

GEIST

I'm sorry to be the one to tell you this David, but there's been...

DAVID (scared)

Is Charlie OK? What happened? Was there an accident aboard the Montana?

LINDSEY

I'm not quite sure how to say this, but Charlie has died.

DAVID (shocked)

Oh, God. How? When? Why didn't anyone tell me? His parents, have they been told yet?

GEIST

Two days ago.

DAVID (sad and shocked)

And they didn't tell me.

GEIST

I hope you don't mind me asking, but what was your relationship to...

LINDSEY

Now might not...

DAVID (still sad through rest of conversation)

No, it's OK. Charlie's was my partner.

LINDSEY

And his military career?

DAVID

Don't ask, don't tell.

LINDSEY

But his parents knew.

DAVID

Knew, yes. Approved, no.

LINDSEY

Which explains why his father was acting the way he was. How long have the two of you been together?

DAVID

We've had this place for six months. We were dating for a year before that.

SOUND: Silence for two-count.

LINDSEY

Geist, you have anything to add.

GEIST

You're doing fine.

LINDSEY

No, really. Help me out here.

GEIST

I just figured you wanted to take the lead for a change.

LINDSEY

I don't necessarily want either of us in the lead. We need to be partners.

DAVID

So, how long have you two been together?

GEIST

We're not.

LINDSEY

We're not.

DAVID

Gotcha. I've met those that prefer to live in denial before.

GEIST

How did you feel about Charlie not coming out; being one of those that lived in denial?

DAVID

He didn't. He had to hide who he was at work because the government hasn't accepted our lifestyle yet, choosing to keep a blind eye with their "don't ask, don't tell." But that wasn't who he was. Who he really was is who he is was with me. <beat> You talk as though you think he was murdered. What happened?

LINDSEY

He was found... the belief is that he took his own life.

DAVID (shocked)

He would've never...

GEIST

His XO doesn't believe it. That's why he called us in, to look into the situation unofficially.

DAVID

No, you don't understand. Charlie was frustrated. Being forced to hide who you are will have that effect on anyone. And the fact that the two people who should have loved him unconditionally couldn't accept him for who he was didn't help matters. But frustrated is a far cry from depressed or suicidal. He loved his family, he loved being in the service and he loved me. He wouldn't have given up on those things.

GEIST

Well, David, I'll promise you this: Lindsey and I won't stop until we know what happened, and we'll be sure to keep you in the loop.

DAVID

Thank you Derrick. I appreciate that. And if I think of anything that might help, I'll let you know.

LINDSEY

Here's my card. It has my cellphone number on the bottom.

DAVID

Thanks, Lindsey.

LINDSEY

Goodbye.

DAVID

Goodbye.

SOUND: Door closes.

LINDSEY (other side of the door)

See, that wasn't so hard, was it.

GEIST

Like I said, I'm learning.

SOUND: Transition music.

ACT III

SCENE 1 – ENTER INT.: Florida Hotel Suite

SOUND: Hotel room door opens and closes. Footsteps cross room.

LINDSEY

Man, that was tough.

GEIST

It's never easy to break bad news, but when it's a loved one, it's even harder.

LINDSEY

That's very open-minded of you.

GEIST

It's not the way I would chose to live my life, but I'm not going to judge others. You were expecting something different?

LINDSEY

Well, the good news is that I don't know what to expect from you anymore. Before we met, I was sure I knew everything there was to know, but now I'm not so sure.

GEIST

Congratulations, Ms. Capparelli. After months of traveling together, you've finally gotten to the point of the first.... introductions.

LINDSEY

Good word choice. I just wish we had been able to learn more. No one seems to have any idea who might have been after Cromberg.

GEIST

Actually, I think we learned quite a bit. I mean, Cromberg's secret helped explain a lot, and while I may not be judgmental, there are still plenty of people out there who are.

LINDSEY

You think someone killed him because he was gay?

GEIST

I've heard of people getting killed for less.

LINDSEY

True, but who?

GEIST

The suspect list isn't that long. There's David...

LINDSEY

I don't think he would've killed Charlie. He seemed pretty content with the situation.

GEIST

Appearances could be deceiving.

LINDSEY

They could, but...

GEIST

But he was also pretty convincing in the fact that this was the first he had heard of the situation. That and its hard to see David being able to sneak onto the base, into the ship and back off again without being seen.

LINDSEY

True. We saw how tight security was first hand.

GEIST

But the father may have had an easier time of it.

LINDSEY

You think Mr. Cromberg could have attacked his son?

GEIST

He has to be on the suspect list. It was really clear that he wasn't happy with his son's lifestyle choice. And it wouldn't be the first time.

LINDSEY

But those situations are few and far between.

GEIST

True.

LINDSEY

He was plenty ashamed of the situation, but I can't believe that a father would kill his only son over it.

GEIST

They may be few, but the precedent exists.

LINDSEY

But he was so passionate about the situation. He tried to "man up" about it, but I could see how much losing his son was chewing him up inside.

GEIST

That's just it. Whoever killed Charlie, it was an act of passion. Love is a very passionate emotion, and so is hate. They aren't opposites like most people think. You have to care about a situation to hate it. Otherwise, you're just ambivalent.

LINDSEY

And love makes people do some pretty stupid things.

GEIST

That's the truth.

LINDSEY

God knows I've done some pretty stupid things in the name of love before.

GEIST

When every bone in your body says this is wrong...

LINDSEY

And you do it anyway.

GEIST

Exactly.

SOUND: Silence – two count.

LINDSEY

Anyway.

GEIST

Yes. Back to the situation at hand...

LINDSEY

I never left it.

GEIST

Me neither. Whoever killed Charlie, it was a crime of passion. One that was regretted, and therefore they tried to cover it up by making it look like a suicide, but passion none-the-less.

LINDSEY

So we're looking for someone that either really loved him or really hated him?

GEIST

Or really feared him. Fear and anger are just as strong as love and hate. Remember, we're talking raw emotion.

LINDSEY

So we're looking for anyone who is really passionate about him.

GEIST

Actually, its probably someone who should be passionate about Charlie's passing, but isn't. Someone who's pretending to be ambivalent to the situation, but shouldn't be.

LINDSEY

And had clearance or knowledge of how to get around the base. Captain Newman had the means, and it's kind of suspicious that he wouldn't press NCIS to dig and let the roommate leave the ship.

SOUND: Silence – two count.

GEIST

I think I know who we need to talk to next.

SOUND: Transition music.

SCENE 2 – CUT TO INT.: Pryor House

SOUND: Door opens.

COLIN

Can I help you?

KELTNER

Mr. Pryor. I'm Commander Keltner, Executive Officer of the Montana. This is my friend...

COLIN

Derrick Geist. I recognize him. My wife reads the sleaze rags.

SOUND: LINDSEY harrumphs.

GEIST

And this is my friend, Lindsey Capparelli. Do you mind if we come in?

COLIN

I suppose not.

SOUND: Footsteps advance and the door closes.

COLIN

What can I do for you?

KELTNER

Actually, we came to speak to your brother. Is he around?

COLIN

He's upstairs sorting through some of his stuff. We've been storing his things for him while he's been away, and I guess he's taking the time to go through some of it.

KELTNER

I understand. Could you get him for us.

COLIN

Sure. *<yelling>* Bruce! You have company!

LINDSEY (under her breath)

That'll work too, I suppose.

COLIN

He'll be down in a minute.

SOUND: Rustling through papers.

COLIN

You know, my wife will kill me if she learns you were here and I didn't get your autograph. Would you mind signing this?

GEIST

Oh look. A copy of the American Voice.

SOUND: Ballpoint pen pulled out, clicked open and signing page.

GEIST

Maybe Lindsey should sign this one too. It's her photograph.

LINDSEY

That's ok, I'll pass.

COLIN

You travel with your own photographer. That's pretty egotistical.

SOUND: Footsteps come down stairs.

GEIST

It's a long story.

COLIN

Or narcissistic...

SOUND: At bottom of stairs, steps stop abruptly.

BRUCE (snapping to)

Commander Keltner. Good afternoon, sir.

KELTNER

At ease, chief.

BRUCE

What can I do for you, sir?

KELTNER

As you know, Derrick is looking into Cromberg's death for me, and he had a couple more questions for you. Would you mind?

BRUCE

Whatever helps, sir, but I thought it was already ruled a suicide?

GEIST

Officially it is, but there are still a couple of loose ends that need to be tied up.

COLIN

Can I offer anyone something to drink? I'm afraid we've run out of Dom Perignon, Mr. Geist.

GEIST

Coffee would be great, if you've got it.

LINDSEY

Me too.

COLIN

All we've got is instant.

GEIST

That'll be fine.

COLIN

Be back in a few.

SOUND: Footsteps leave the room.

GEIST

How long were you and Cromberg bunkmates, Chief?

BRUCE

We shared the same quarters for about two years.

GEIST

So I'd guess you two would have gotten to know each other pretty well in that time.

BRUCE

What do you mean by that?

GEIST

Two people, sharing small quarters for extended periods of time. It just seems like you'd get to know each other *really* well.

BRUCE

What are you trying to say?

GEIST

I know that, in my freshman year of college, my roommate and I became good friends. We still talk, even though we didn't room together beyond freshman year. I'd think that bunkmates would be just as close.

BRUCE (slightly perturbed)

I prefer the term roommate.

GEIST

An interesting term, 'bunkmate.' I mean, I understand it means the same thing as roommate, and the British use the term instead of it, but the military tends to be the only ones that use the term in the United States. And if someone didn't know that the term was interchangeable with roommate, the connotations that could be drawn from it.

BRUCE (slightly more upset)

That's why I prefer roommate. I'd appreciate it if you'd remember that.

GEIST

I'll try to do that. *<beat>* So, how long did you know that Charlie was gay?

KELTNER (surprised)

What?

BRUCE

I don't know what you're talking about.

GEIST

Cromberg was in a long-term romantic relationship with another man. A relationship that began while he was bunkmates with you.

BRUCE (angry)

Roommate!

LINDSEY

That's a pretty big deal, and in spite of the don't ask, don't tell policy, I can't believe he didn't tell the person closest to him.

BRUCE

We weren't that close.

GEIST

Well, proximity-wise you were.

BRUCE (still angry)

We weren't that close!

LINDSEY

Settle down, sport. It's not like we're accusing you of being gay.

BRUCE

I ain't no fag! I told him, if people find out you're a flamer, they're gonna think I'm one too!

GEIST

I thought you just said you didn't know that Charlie was homosexual.

BRUCE

I didn't. I mean, he just told me. Out of the blue, he says that he's gay and that he was tired of hiding it from me. From me! I mean, I thought we were friends, then he goes and comes out of the closet. I didn't know him at all, man.

LINDSEY

I bet that hurt a lot.

BRUCE

Nah. Real men don't get their feelings hurt. Only pansies get all emotional and junk.

GEIST

But you were afraid of how it would reflect on you. I mean, you and Charlie were close. If it came out that he was gay, people might make wrong assumptions.

BRUCE

Exactly! He was planning on giving up his commission and coming out. Said he was tired of having to hide “who he really was.” He didn’t think about what that would do to me.

GEIST

After all, you’d have to stay behind and deal with the others judging you.

BRUCE

Yeah. I tried to talk him out of it, get him to just quit and keep his mouth shut, but he wanted to make a point. “Its unfair” he said. “People should be able to serve in the military no matter what their freakin’ sexual preferences are.” He didn’t realize that the rule is in place for a reason.

LINDSEY (sarcastically)

Because Charlie was obviously an inferior officer because he was gay.

BRUCE

You don’t get it. The rule’s there to keep people from judging; keep everyone on the same playing field.

GEIST

Keep people from feeling weird because the person next to them might be slightly different from themselves. While we’re at it, why don’t we limit so that only white men can join, or put everyone in hoods so no one can tell what color their skin is or what sex they are?

BRUCE

That would be racist!

KELTNER

When you found out he was gay, is that when you murdered him?

BRUCE

It wasn't murder! I didn't mean to hurt him! He just wouldn't shut up about it.

LINDSEY

He wouldn't shut up, so you made him shut up.

BRUCE

It was an accident! I pushed him, that's all. It wasn't my fault that he hit his neck on the bunk!

KELTNER

But it was your fault that you decided to cover it up by making it look like he hung himself. Chief Petty Officer Bruce Pryor, under naval law, I'm placing you under arrest for the murder of Ensign Charles Cromberg.

SOUND: Running.

GEIST

He's making a break for it!

SOUND: A struggle, ending with a punch to the face and a body falling to the floor. Footsteps rush in from other room.

COLIN

What's going on in here?

KELTNER

Are you OK?

LINDSEY

I'll be fine. My hand hurts, but nothing a little ice can't take care of.

SOUND: Transition music.

EPILOGUE

SCENE 1 – ENTER INT.: Florida Hotel Suite

SOUND: Ice cracking and wrapped in towel.

GEIST

How ya feelin', slugger?

LINDSEY

Very funny.

GEIST (laughing)

Actually, it is. Not more than six hours ago, you were ticked off that I thought with my fists first. But when the bad guy tries to make a run for it, you're the one that gets in his face and plants him on his butt.

LINDSEY

Trust me, the irony wasn't lost on me.

GEIST (still joking)

If I had known you could throw a punch like that, I might not have talked back to you as much.

LINDSEY

I told you when we met that I could handle myself. Remember that next time you go running into a fight and want me to sit back and be the damsel in distress.

GEIST (condescending)

Yes ma'am.

LINDSEY

Watch it.

GEIST (still kidding)

Ok, ok. Don't hit me or anything.

LINDSEY

Seriously though, I can handle myself. Like I said before, I'm not going to play the part of sidekick anymore, ok?

GEIST

And like I said, I'll try. Remember though to give me a bit of a learning curve.

LINDSEY

We both get to claim it, deal?

GEIST

Deal. Now put this on your knuckles, champ.

SOUND: Ice pack put on bruise. Body sits on couch.

LINDSEY

If it wasn't for the whole murder aspect of things, I'd almost feel sorry for Pryor.

GEIST

In what way?

LINDSEY

He obviously cared about Charlie. They were probably best friends, given what we said earlier about passion. He lost Charlie just like David and the Crombergs did.

GEIST

Yeah, sad, except for the whole intolerance, fear and murder part.

LINDSEY

Yeah, like I said. Haven't you ever been that passionate about someone or something? Something besides finding your parents, I mean.

GEIST (disbelieving)

Passionate enough to kill them?

LINDSEY

Well, not in those words, but

GEIST

Once. A long time ago, there was this girl. I really thought I was in love.

LINDSEY

What happened?

GEIST

She realized that she was second in my life, and I guess she couldn't handle it.

LINDSEY

Were you going to get married?

GEIST

We hadn't gotten that far, but I guess I could've seen it at the time.

LINDSEY

Did she know that?

GEIST

Apparently not.

LINDSEY

If she had, she probably wouldn't have left.

GEIST

Probably not.

LINDSEY

Is that why you're down on love?

GEIST

I'm not down on love. I'm down on people being taken advantage of.

LINDSEY

So you're not against falling in love?

GEIST

Not at all, when and if the right girl comes along.

LINDSEY

How will you know when she comes along?

GEIST

I'll know. Passion, remember?

LINDSEY

As long as it's the right kind of passion.

GEIST

Yeah, we wouldn't want to confuse love and hate.

LINDSEY

Yeah.

SOUND: Knocking on door.

GEIST

Who the heck is that?

LINDSEY

I wasn't expecting anyone. How about you?

GEIST

Nope. *<louder>* Who is it?

DELIVERYMAN (other side of door)

Mr. Geist?

GEIST

Who's asking?

DELIVERYMAN (other side of door)

I have a package here for Derrick Geist. Is he here?

GEIST

Who's it from?

DELIVERYMAN (other side of door)

A Heinrich Geist. It's from England.

SOUND: Body gets up off couch. Footsteps cross room. Door opens.

GEIST

A package from gramps?

DELIVERYMAN

Maybe?

SOUND: Money flipped through.

GEIST

Thanks.

DELIVERYMAN

Have a good night.

GEIST

You too.

SOUND: Door closes.

LINDSEY

What is it?

GEIST

I don't know yet. There's a note attached.

SOUND: Envelope opened and note unfolded.

LINDSEY

What does it say?

GEIST

"Derrick. As you're taking on the family business, I thought you might want to see what has gone before. Enclosed are your father's and my journals. I hope they will be of some use."

CUT: Ending music and credits.

**© Copyright 2009, 2011 – TimeWell Productions
A TimeWell Electronic Recording Production (TWERP) Online presentation.**

Ending Credits

You have been listening to the Adventures of Derrick Geist – Episode 6: Learning Curve, starring (in order of appearance) Ryan Gilbert as Derrick Geist and April Sadowski as Lindsey Capparelli.

This presentation also featured Lee Sands as Walter Wechsler, Roger Kelley as Commander Keltner, Jim Caswell as the Military Police Officer, Mick Mize as Petty Officer Bruce Pryor, Sheila DeKing as Mrs. Cromberg, Erick Greeva as Mr. Cromberg, Justin Bills as David and Pete Notitt as Colin Pryor.

Derrick Geist is a production and property of TimeWell Electronic Recording Productions; copyright 2011. Learning Curve was written and mixed by Jim Caswell and edited by Ken Hallaron. Music was composed and produced by Jason Feder. This has been a TWERPs Online Presentation.