

THE FOXES

A COMEDY IN 3 ACTS

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

SARAI GEHROOD: a gambling-addicted, progressive-minded heiress, age 24
TUCKERSON: the leader of a local think tank, The Fox Den
THARA GEHROOD: the practical, politically savvy sister, age 34
ZAHRAA GEHROOD: the modelesque sister, age 17
LINK: a madman who believes he is battling Ganon, the King of Evil
SHATTINY: Fox Den employee, a zealot
GRUMFELD: Fox Den employee, the funny guy
THE HEN: the arbiter of the Council of Pathetiques
THE PERSECUTED: a persecuted Jew with an Arab accent
THE RAPED: the most anally raped member of society
THE ENSLAVED: a Nigerian man
THE IMPOVERISHED: a man who has nothing
THE SCHISMED: a pathetic looking creature
THE WHITE WOMAN: a member of the Council
ELDERLY WOMAN: an old hag, near death
LOUIE: a comedian/ sexual predator
ENFORCER 1: a law man
ENFORCER 2: another law man

ACT I

SCENE I.

An open field. Two butterflies on a tree branch, an ELDERLY WOMAN observing them. Enter SARAI GEHROOD, a young woman of Arab descent, who approaches her.

ELDERLY WOMAN

Aren't they gorgeous? Such density of beauty. I don't think there's anything as sublime in our museums of contemporary art as the colors on these two butterflies.

SARAI

Two? I only see one.

ELDERLY WOMAN

Which one do you see?

SARAI

The one that is sapphire blue and white, with bullseyes of white rings around darkened blue and white.

ELDERLY WOMAN

Well, there's also a yellow one, the color of ripe saffron, without a pattern or blemish on it, just a little bright spot near the body. It blends in with the fall leaves.

SARAI leans in closer

SARAI

I see it.

The butterflies fly up into the air, and SARAI and the ELDERLY WOMAN jump back.

ELDERLY WOMAN

You shouldn't have stuck your nose in so close. Now you've spooked them both, and they're flapping about in the air.

SARAI (casual)

I'll bet you the blue one lands before the yellow.

ELDERLY WOMAN (aside)

I've been watching these bugs for an hour now. I've seen how much more comfortable the yellow one seems in the air. (then to SARAI, calmly) Fine. I'll take you up on that. How much?

SARAI

How alive do you wish to feel watching these critters flap about?

ELDERLY WOMAN

At my age, the more alive the better.

SARAI (casual)

Five hundred dollars.

ELDERLY WOMAN (in shock)

Five hundred dollars! (aside) At this stage in my retirement, five hundred is my budget for a whole week. Oh, but I'm so sure of what the outcome will be. (then to SARAI) You're on!

The blue butterfly starts to descend

ELDERLY WOMAN

Stay up you, stay up!

SARAI

No yelling, lady. You and I aren't allowed to interfere now.

The blue butterfly approaches a branch

ELDERLY WOMAN

Oh, shit. Come on, come on. Oh, don't you dare.

The blue butterfly lifts up

Oh, few!

The blue butterfly approaches and quickly touches down upon a branch

Shit!

The yellow one lands shortly thereafter

SARAI

The blue butterfly has landed. And now the yellow one has landed beside it.

ELDERLY WOMAN (distressed)

You've won. Can I write you a check?

SARAI

You can keep your money. Money means nothing to me.

ELDERLY WOMAN (scoffing)

I can tell you're a rich person.

SARAI

Not anymore.

ELDERLY WOMAN

Well, going around making outrageous bets, and then refusing to even collect when you've won... I can imagine why!

SARAI

It's not that. Not entirely. My father is dead. My sisters and I paid the standard tax on the estate: 10%, but now we're being told we owe 90% of what remains. Have you ever heard of the Council of Pathetiques?

ELDERLY WOMAN (with spite)

Have I heard! The Council of Krill, is more like it.

SARAI

That's what my sisters call them. It's not a nice thing to say. Those people have gotten the rough end of the stick in life.

ELDERLY WOMAN

Every one of those dikes and kikes and ass-pushers and pushees deserves the lot they've drawn and ten-fold more, if you ask me.

The two butterflies fly up into the air

ELDERLY WOMAN

You've gotten too close again, and startled the insects. (She thinks for a moment, then excitedly) You wanna place another bet?

SARAI

The horse races start in twenty minutes. I don't want to miss the opening race. Take care, old hag.

Exit SARAI

SCENE II.

An open field, where ten cardboard cutouts of domesticated pigs are arranged at random. ZAHRAA and THARA look out over the field, contemplating the pending misfortunes of their family's farm.

ZAHRAA (like a child having a tantrum)
If that's not idiotic, then there really isn't such a thing as injustice anymore.

THARA (annoyed)
Oh, don't get yourself into a stir. I won't be able to tolerate it right now.

ZAHRAA (she persists)
It truly is ridiculous, Thara. We'd need to sell every last pig on this farm just to keep the land we'd need to raise them. This is our father's land! I remember when just over there, Father would burry me up to my neck in mud, and we'd pretend I was a severed head brought back to life by the ground's magic.

THARA
You were such a beautiful head. But let's not get sentimental. Father is dead. He's not here any longer, not in this world, not in any other world.

ZAHRAA
Don't say such things!

THARA
This is about the three of us who are still here. You might find this egotistic, but I happen to know the value of a woman's reputation in this city, its advantages, and more importantly, how it may hinder her. I've pulled out my fair share of coupons at the grocer; I won't have everyone staring at me, hoping to see me do that again. I refuse to be such a pitiable creature, not again, or at least not until I'm old and shriveled, and I'm in need of a handsome grandson or two to dote upon me: to put my socks on, and clip my nails, and put my vitamins into those plastic containers marked Sunday through Saturday.

ZAHRAA
You may not have the luxury of so much time.

THARA
You may be right.

ZAHRAA
Tell me I'm not.

THARA

If the Council wasn't a large enough thorn in our side, now we have Sarai's gambling debts to add to our worries.

ZAHRAA

Sarai's creditors are for Sarai to deal with.

THARA

Sarai's debts are now our debts, since her estate, for the time being, is our estate.

ZAHRAA

Nothing makes sense anymore.

THARA

You know, I had a creditor visit me this morning, and the man informed me, in the most gentle-hearted manner, that last Sunday our sister placed a bet on a horse to win that was 2,000-to-1. The horse didn't even finish the race, apparently. I don't want to tell you what she bet, but I'll tell you this, it could have saved us a pig or two.

ZAHRAA

Saved us a pig or two?

THARA

Did I not tell you?

ZAHRAA

What does that mean?

THARA

Sarai's creditor had some advice to offer. He suggested we could sell a pig or two and use that money to pay off the Council of Pathetiques. He's under the impression that anybody can be bribed.

ZAHRAA

These are our father's pigs! (she thinks for a moment) Oh, but I suppose if we have to sell one or two to keep the rest, it would be a worthy compromise.

THARA

These pigs mean nothing to me aside from the sum I'd get for each of their heads...

ZAHRAA (offended)

Thara!

THARA (continues)

But I refuse to sell even one in the name of this council.

ZAHRAA

We need to be realistic here, Thara. You may need to humble yourself for once in godsknowshowlong, and be willing to compromise. Otherwise, we might not come out of this so unscathed.

THARA

I've never once compromised for my status: not with someone higher up, and not, especially not, with some lot who are clearly lower. This is why the wealthy and established in this city invest so much of our fortunes into Tuckerson and his Fox Den, so that we need not compromise. I give my word, sister, on that beautiful head of yours, we won't be selling a single one of these pigs. Tuckerson will tell us the way, and if there isn't one, he'll think of one.

Exit ZAHRAA and THARA

SCENE III.

Same as before.

The theme from The Legend of Zelda (1988, NES 16-bit version) begins to play aloud. As the theme changes tempo, at the beginning of the 5th bar, an arrow suddenly flies out, and strikes one of the pigs dead. In quick succession, another arrow flies out and strikes a second pig dead. Enter a man dressed as LINK, the protagonist from the Legend of Zelda video game series (hitherto referred to simply as LINK); he's armed with a sword, and wears a bow upon his back, along with a quiver of arrows. LINK slays every remaining pig but one with his sword in an acrobatic display of swordsmanship, and then, approaching the final pig, he delivers an impassioned monologue:

LINK (with a religious zeal)

Ganon, King of Evil, if your present form has ears, hear me well. Starting with these incarnations of your spirit, I will progress until I rid this world of all your presence. What you would sacrifice for power, I would for the world, to return it to its original design, as the three goddesses, of courage, of wisdom, of power, formed it in procreant trifectum. You've made this world a little bit messy, a little bit distracted, a piece of the righteous: somewhat hostile, slightly uncertain; I will make it complete. As certain as the moon is to fade at daybreak, so

too shall your darkness vanish from this world, by the hero's sword. There will be light again, Ganon, thou blue-faced boar, and the dark shall be vanquished till time's end, till time reverts from three and becomes one again, when evil shall fail to become part of time's completion.

LINK swiftly beheads the final pig, and then with composure he sheathes his sword and exits.

SCENE IV.

The Fox Den. TUCKERSON's face is magnified behind a fish bowl. SHATTINY and GRUMFELD listen attentively.

TUCKERSON

When water is placed in a vessel, the water conforms to the shape of that vessel. Would you agree?

SHATTINY

Obviously, this is the truth. This is the nature of water. It's well known.

TUCKERSON

Grumfeld, do you agree, or disagree?

GRUMFELD

I would be a fool to disagree with such an assertion, Tuckerson.

TUCKERSON

(standing up straight, no longer obscured by the fish bowl)

So when I poured the water into this fish bowl, which is spherical in shape, were you surprised that it took the form of a sphere?

SHATTINY

Quite the reverse.

GRUMFELD

Nothing very unusual about water inside a fishbowl taking the exact same shape as the glass which contains it.

TUCKERSON

Well, then, what outcome would have surprised you, such that you would have leaped off the ground and declared, (he becomes cartoonishly enthusiastic) "That which you've poured into the bowl cannot be water!"

GRUMFELD

Perhaps, if you'd have poured the water into the fishbowl, which is a sphere, and the water took the form of a cube, (attempts to be funny) then I'd have accused the fish of witchcraft!

TUCKERSON

This isn't a joke, Grumfeld. I'm onto something significant here.

GRUMFELD

You are? What is it, Tuckerson?

TUCKERSON

This is consequential. I asked you a question.

GRUMFELD

(becoming dead serious)

My god. Then, I'll say it sincerely. If you'd have poured the water into the fishbowl, which is a sphere, and the water took the form of a cube, I would have asserted, in earnest, with my feet and arms both flailing about in the air, that exact statement, (with energy) "That which you've poured into the bowl cannot be water!"

TUCKERSON

And do you agree with this, Shattiny?

SHATTINY

Certainly I do. If water rejected the form of its surrounding vessel, I would indeed say that what you poured couldn't be water!

TUCKERSON

Really? Even if it were a simple shape, such as a cube?

GRUMFELD

Only a fool would believe that water could behave in such a manner!

TUCKERSON

Not even if it took on the shape of a giraffe, or a crab?

SHATTINY

Now you're just being ludicrous, Tuckerson.

GRUMFELD

And you were just telling me to take this proof seriously!

TUCKERSON

This is no joke.

SHATTINY

This is a serious matter, then, on the tendency of water to take the form of a crab.

TUCKERSON

So tell me, in all sincerity, would you say a man was a *COMPLETE IDIOT* if he bought into the idea that water could take on the form of a crab, even if it weren't inside a vessel, let's say a fishbowl, that itself was expertly blown by the glassmaker to take on the shape of a crab?

GRUMFELD

This is no joke, Tuckerson, so I'll say this with my mouth straight. You'd have to be an absolute fool to get tripped up on such a yarn, without a doubt.

TUCKERSON

Don't you see what I've proven, my fellow foxes?

SHATTINY

I have no idea what you're circling about with this proof, if I must be honest, let alone what your target might be.

TUCKERSON

We're all idiots!

SHATTINY

I mean, just because I'm not following every nuanced twist and turn of your argument doesn't make me an idiot, Tuckerson.

TUCKERSON

I don't mean you, I mean all of us. Every last one of us are fools, and I've just proved it, *without a doubt*, to use your exact words, Grumfeld.

GRUMFELD

Explain it to us!

TUCKERSON

I just did. We're all fools!

GRUMFELD

All of us, except for you, Tuckerson, since you've revealed the truth.

TUCKERSON

This isn't a competition, my den-mates. We were told by our parents and our teachers, in whom we placed our undivided trust when we were in grade school, that as it pertains to the clouds, these structures are composed of water. All of us, as children, nodded our heads and said, *Well, okay sure, this is how it is, this is truth*; and, *Well, okay, sure; this is justice*.

GRUMFELD

What does justice have to do with it?

TUCKERSON

Never mind that... Did you not affirm, Grumfeld, just minutes ago, that one would have to be an absolute idiot to believe that water could take the form of a crab?

GRUMFELD

Indeed, this IS what I affirmed, and I will stand by my original assertion.

TUCKERSON

I stand by it as well, yet I've seen many clouds take such a form.

SHANNITY

My god, Tuckerson, you're right. By that reasoning, the clouds really couldn't be made of water, and as you asserted, one would be a fool to believe that water could take on the form of a crab unless it was held by a container, such as a fishbowl, that was itself expertly blown by a blower to take on the form of a crab.

TUCKERSON

Here's an even better question for you both... Why am I the only one talking about this?

SHATTINY

Nobody else dares ask these sorts of questions, Tuckerson. We all know this to be the case. Thank the heavens that the Fox Den is here to summon ideas from the aether that no others would summon. Who's this coming now?

TUCKERSON

That's Thara, the daughter of the late pig farmer, Hamza Gehrood, who was a very well-to-do man. I know her well.

GRUMFELD

She's not a... *you-know...* is she?

SHATTINY

(lacking impulse control)

A muslim!

TUCKERSON

A muslim? No! I convinced Hamza Gehrood many years back that it would behoove him to renounce his godhead and replace it with the same one, but called by a different name. You two, be gone. Back to your holes. This is a business opportunity, as should be obvious to you.

TUCKERSON herds SHATTINY and GRUMFELD away, and ALL three men exit.

SCENE V.

Same as before.

Enter THARA, followed by SARAI and ZAHRAA

SARAI

I could be staring into the eighteen eyes of god right now.

THARA

You need to stop chasing the eyes of god in the three dice.

SARAI

Stop chasing god? That's a despicable thing to tell a person. Would you have told father to keep away from the church?

THARA

The dice table is not a church.

SARAI

It is for me. Life is the product of two entities: the decisions we make, and something that is beyond our control and knowledge, which fluctuates by chance. If there is any greater meaning to this life or what comes after it, this isn't a decision I can make, so therefore, the meaning of my life, your life, everything around us, it comes down to a game of odds.

THARA

Either which way, it's time you found a cheaper religion. Either that, or start taking account for all the losses your god is incurring. As if the slaying of the pigs wasn't a great enough loss, the Council is still insisting that the market price of every one of those pigs be included in the valuation of our estate.

ZAHRAA

That hideous council.

SARAI

What did you say, Thara? What has happened to Father's pigs?

ZAHRAA

Someone went to town on them with a sword.

THARA

Of all two hundred, not one of the pigs was left standing.

ZAHRAA

Though twelve were still alive.

SARAI

Did we submit a complaint to the Council?

THARA

The Council said the Gehrood family has too much status to have our complaints heard.

SARAI

That doesn't seem right. And what of the pigs? What about their status? Did they also have too much of it when their lives were stolen?

THARA

That's beside the point. The vultures swarm not for the pigs, they swarm for you, in spite of how pleasant your creditors seem to be, Sarai; these are people who behave like they've been taken good care of in the past. But, as they say, once a hyena, always a hyena.

SARAI

Unless they're vultures.

THARA

The point is, Sarai, that Father is not here anymore, and I don't plan to be the one entrusted to tying up all your loose ends. From hereon, you'll be taking responsibility for your own mismanagements. If I have to come here today to consult Tuckerson, then you can bet you'll be coming along with me.

SARAI

Fine, I'll hear this Tuckerson guy out. Is that him, over there, the one who looks like he's balancing a beaver pelt upon his head?

Enter TUCKERSON, and the three sisters begin walking towards him

THARA

(to SARAI)

Be polite.

(to ZAHRAA)

Zahraa, shoulders back.

ZAHRAA straightens herself out

THARA

Tuckerson may be on our dime, but his mind works in a way that's much more fluid when he's sympathetic to a cause. You can put your shoulders further back than that, I'll pray.

ZAHRAA sticks out her chest further, nearly bending herself backwards.

ZAHRAA (uncomfortable)

You know, I understand the politics as well as you do.

THARA

Keep that to yourself, if you know what's best for this family.

SCENE VI.

Same as before. They arrive at where TUCKERSON is standing, near the fishbowl.

THARA

It's good to see you, Tuckerson.

TUCKERSON

Can you really be sure of what you're seeing? How do I really know that seeing me makes you feel good, Thara Gehrood?

SARAI

This man is already getting on my nerves. Is this the one who's supposed to save us from the Council?

THARA

My father didn't invest \$50,000 a month for you to summon thoughts such as these from the aether. My sisters and I have come to this think tank because we need you to pull forth an idea that will work for us.

TUCKERSON (clarifying)

Though I may appear to be a salaried employee, in truth, I don't work for any one person, nor do the ideas I conjure. I'm a mere philosopher, a voice for an entire generation of men.

THARA (aside)

Now entrenched in their middle age.

SARAI

Our father spoke very highly of you, Tuckerson. He said in all the world, there wasn't a more intelligent man. As you know, my father passed away last month, and when he passed, we payed the standard tax on his estate: 10%, which as you could probably surmise..

THARA (interrupting)

The initiative is noted, Sarai, but Tuckerson has already been apprised of our situation. We're here for strategy, not recapitulation.

SARAI

Does your free-wheeling philosopher friend know that the Council of Pathetiques is demanding 90% of the estate's original value?

ZAHRAA

I thought it was the remaining value..

THARA

95 now.

SARAI

95 percent! That would leave us with so little. At that rate, we'd certainly have to apply for work.

ZAHRAA

Ew.

THARA

It'll be 99 before the council is done playing this game of theirs, as it's a game that never tires or relents.

TUCKERSON

That's how it is with the Council, once you agree upon 50, they'll ask for 75, and once you agree upon that, they'll ask for more.

SARAI

And how do you force them to settle on a number?

TUCKERSON

There is only one way.

SARAI

What's that?

TUCKERSON

When everything you have is theirs, they'll stop changing their numbers.

THARA

Tell me you've conceived an idea that would be helpful to my situation... (correcting herself) that of my family.

TUCKERSON

Not only have I conceived an idea, but I've borne it to fruition.

THARA (relieved)

Then I should be thankful to the Fox Den.

TUCKERSON

Not the Fox Den. This idea is one I managed to give birth to all by my own devices, without any assistance from the other Foxes to push things along.

THARA

Tell me more.

SARAI

Thara, stop encouraging him. I really might vomit if I have to confront any more mental images of this man's birthing canal.

(to TUCKERSON)

But do tell us, with imagery as scant as the import of this matter is great, just how we might go about protecting what belongs to my father's estate.

TUCKERSON (to SARAI)

You tell me. What does the Council profess to believe in, as a matter of their founding principle?

THARA

Oh, Sarai can tell you all about the Council. She finds their methods noble.

SARAI

I never said noble. I understand why they do what they do. They're the seven people, after all, who have been most traumatized by society, or by the citizens who compose it.

TUCKERSON

But what does the Council signify? What do they stand for?

ZAHRAA

That every woman, once in her 20's, should by then be so impoverished that she'd never again be able to convince another person that she was still in her teens.

SARAI

The idea behind the Council is simple: that those who don't have a voice should be given one, and that the most effective way of ensuring that such voices are heard is to empower a court that has the authority to advocate for the interests of the most pathetic members of society.

TUCKERSON

This is the argument of the Council, perhaps, on the surface.

SARAI

On the surface?

TUCKERSON

They'd like you to believe they stand upon some essential, vaporous thing, but really what they stand upon is much more solid: an intention.

ZAHRAA

Speak straight, Tuckerson.

SARAI

I'm listening.

TUCKERSON

If every school of thought is a weaving and warping of arguments, and, being that this is the case, and that every argument is composed of statements, wherein any time you assert something to be the case, in the form of a statement, there resides an underlying premise that serves as the foundation to that statement... then... what is the premise of this council?

ZAHRAA (confused)

I'm lost in the fabric, like a fly in the proverbial philosopher's web.

SARAI (somehow following along)

Wait a minute. So if every school of thought is an assertion that is dependent upon some premise, then what is your premise?

TUCKERSON (assertive)

The truth!

THARA

Would you please simplify whatever it is you're getting at, for those of us who don't have the patience to follow the long and winding algebra of your reasoning? I don't care to understand your method, as long as I see results. Cut to the take-home message.

TUCKERSON

I'm almost there. I'm working on it.

THARA

I thought you'd already given birth to it.

TUCKERSON

And now I'm nurturing the idea. So tell me, Sarai Gehrood: when I assert, *You shouldn't steal*, what's the premise of this assertion, which is what's actually being asserted?

SARAI

That you yourself are not the thief.

TUCKERSON

Ah, she's got a sense of humor. No, the premise, is that *stealing is bad*. And I'm telling you: there's an assertion and an underlying premise as well, that gets at the heart of the Council of Pathetiques...

ZAHRAA

Pathetiques... Why the French?

TUCKERSON

It's the most snobbish of the peasant languages. They felt the French would make them come across more authoritative, but at the same time, more terrifying and more trod upon, like the peasants in the revolution.

THARA

It does have that effect.

TUCKERSON

All seven members of The Council of Pathetiques: the man who has been raped, quantitatively, the most via the rectum...

ZAHRAA

Less specifics, please.

TUCKERSON

The man with the greatest number of enslaved ancestors.

SARAI

Pains me to hear it.

TUCKERSON

The white woman, since there always has to be one of them.

SARAI

They really do make their way into every movement.

TUCKERSON

No matter which of the seven we might wish to interrogate so as to reveal the premise of their

argument, the seven of them share the same core belief: justice should be determined by those who have been wronged by the greatest number of people who exist above them in the social hierarchy, and furthermore, that because this hierarchy is but a social construct, it might as well be done away with... like a wrecking ball to a pyramid... and so, I ask you, (to SARAI), if this is the Council's argument, then what is the premise that buttresses up their argument?

SARAI

You tell me.

TUCKERSON

I will. It's this: that that which is a social construct, doesn't exist, except for the way a crab might exist among the clouds, which, by the way, are not made of water.

SARAI

Are we sure this is the man we should be trusting with our fortunes?

TUCKERSON

The cloud may resemble a crab, but it's still a cloud.

THARA

I'm sure you're onto something, Tuckerson, but how do we save our farm?

TUCKERSON

By their own reasoning, couldn't you say, "He who is the most downtrodden" doesn't exist? Or that "She who is most downtrodden" can be birthed much like how an idea may be birthed from the canal of one's mind?

SARAI (aside, to THARA)

Make him stop.

TUCKERSON

Those with status don't exist! Who's to say that those who are at the bottom exist aside from how a crab exists among the clouds?

THARA

He who thinks he is krill, will be krill.

ZAHRAA

What does he intend for us to do with this idea that he's suckled to its teenage years?

SARAI

Zahraa, stop. My lunch isn't sitting right.

TUCKERSON

What's to stop the crab, daughters of Hamzaa, from blowing into a new shape?

ZAHRAA

Into krill... Who would believe that I was krill?

THARA

Everyone in this city knows my status, I've made sure of it.

SARAI

Tell me he's not suggesting what I think he is. I'm certainly not doing it. It's unethical.

TUCKERSON

Don't listen to your ethics, because they don't exist.

SARAI

Ethics are an insurance policy, a matter of probability, which says, if I were to ever become as pathetic as those seven on the Council, how would I wish to be treated by others?

THARA

You're our best shot, Sarai.

SARAI

They'd never believe I was so pathetic.

THARA

You're a gambling addict.

SARAI (defensive)

I am a woman who's not ashamed of her devotions.

THARA

You are twenty five years old, and have nothing to show for those years.

SARAI

I have two masters degrees.

THARA

We'll make sure to burry you with your two papers.

TUCKERSON

Does she speak a second language?

THARA

Arabic and Chinese.

TUCKERSON

Oh, with her education, and those arms, she'll fit right in.

SARAI

My arms?

TUCKERSON

Plus, you're at least two skin tones darker than your sisters.

SARAI

What's that supposed to mean?

ZAHRAA

We always used to say, mom left her in the oven a week too long.

SARAI

That's a racist thing to say.

ZAHRAA

We're of the same race.

THARA

Even if Sarai were accepted onto the Council, she'd only be one of seven justices. I still don't see how this will protect our estate.

TUCKERSON

If she follows my guidance, she'll not only argue her way onto the Council, but she'll be able to influence over *The Arbiter*, the lowest of the low. Not all voices on this council have the same volume, and the Arbiter influences the voices of those higher up, like an echo that erupts from a trembling gorge.

TUCKERSON farts

SARAI

I'm not okay with this. Forging my identity, as a means of influencing justice.

THARA

It's this or poverty for you. Your sister is young, and she still has her looks. I have my career. You on the other hand, do you figure the casinos will want you chasing the 18 eyes of god without any money... Or that the horse track will allow you on the grounds when you're too broke to bet the minimum?

SARAI

I'd do anything, I suppose, if it meant not being that poor.

TUCKERSON

Alright! I'll tell you exactly what to say.

SARAI

If it's truly the only option... Talk to me, Tuckerson. I'm listening.

TUCKERSON

The first thing they'll come after you for is your status. When someone tells you that you have status, don't ask yourself, *That word, status, what does it really mean?* That's the natural instinct, but it's the wrong question. For example: if I were to ask you, what does the word "rich" mean, how would you define it?

SARAI

Having a lot of assets, more than what other people have.

TUCKERSON

So, if I were to say that *'The crème brulée is rich,'* does that mean my dessert of custard and toasted caramel has a lot of assets?

SARAI

Not in that sense.

TUCKERSON

Thus I've proven the premise of my assertion, which is what was really being asserted: ask not what the word rich means, but rather, *Why is the speaker using this word, "rich," in reference to me?*

SARAI

So when they tell me I have status, I should start by asking them why their preference is to use the word "status" to describe me?

TUCKERSON

Exactly.

SARAI

And when they insist that it's just their way of punching upwards, how do I respond?

TUCKERSON

By asking them, *'Why do you punch me at all?'*

SARAI seems queasy.

SARAI

So, in other words (she pauses) I punch down?

SARAI vomits.

ZAHRAA

Ew. Sarai, that got on my shoe.

TUCKERSON

Come with me to my hole. I'll teach you everything else you need to know about confronting the most pathetic members of our society.

Exit TUCKERSON, accompanied by SARAI

ACT II

SCENE I.

The seven members of the Council of Pathetiques sit around a dais. The dais is an inverted pyramid, where THE HEN, aka "The

Arbiter," sits at the bottom. In no particular order, the other steps are occupied by: The Persecuted, The Enslaved, The Raped, The White Woman, The Schismmed, and The Impoverished.

THE PERSECUTED

Next up is Louie, a comedian, who's been accused of exposing his penis to three women, who were also comedians.

THE HEN

This penis, was it white?

THE PERSECUTED

It was indeed.

THE HEN

And rich?

THE PERSECUTED

Very much so.

THE HEN

And the women, were they virgins?

THE PERSECUTED

No, they were not.

THE HEN

Even worse!

THE RAPED

How's that worse?

THE HEN

Not only have these women been assaulted, but they've been reminded of all their past traumas with penises.

THE RAPED

Not every encounter with a penis is traumatic.

THE HEN begins to stand up

THE RAPED (in fear)

I rescind my statement, Arbiter!

THE HEN sits back down, and begins to relax once again

THE HEN

Send in the accused.

Enter LOUIE

THE HEN

Louie, you've been accused of exposing yourself to three women who were previously traumatized. Do you have anything to say for yourself?

LOUIE

Hi, everyone. I'm Louie. I'm an awkward guy, always been kind of an oaf when it comes to the ladies. I definitely have some sexual kinks and perversions, if you will, that I clearly haven't addressed, but which the public was surely aware of, because this was the content of my comedy, which they loved, before they turned on me for the content of my comedy, when they realized there was some truth to the stories that gave them their hoots and hollers, and now they despise me for it.

THE HEN

So you admit then, that you exposed your penis to three women who were already coping with past traumas?

LOUIE

What traumas?

THE HEN

We'll give you this chance to come clean, in exchange for a more lenient sentence.

LOUIE

Did I expose myself to these women? Yes, I did. I realize now that I was wrong.

THE HEN

Will you apologize?

LOUIE

No, I'm not going to apologize. For misreading the situation, sure. For traumatizing them, are you serious? You can go fuck yourself.

THE HEN

If you refuse to show remorse, then we will tack that on to your punishment.

LOUIE

For not apologizing? Since when was justice determined by whether or not a person falls to the floor in remorse? Can I just say something? You know, like, I don't wanna be THAT GUY, but I feel like for the sake of fairness, this needs to be said. These girls, you know, they're not the types who are pure as snow and quick to defile... if you pissed on them, nobody would be able to spot the difference. Half their jokes are about how mangled their vaginas are from all the so-called trauma they've been enduring down there. It's a big mystery why they haven't had more success in comedy! Blame my white hairy ass. You fucking people.

THE HEN

It is forbidden to speak of one more downtrodden than oneself in this chamber! Time for sentencing.

LOUIE

Remember that whole leniency thing.

THE HEN

Leniency will be applied. Your sentence is death.

LOUIE

What about the fucking leniency?

THE HEN

Death is lenient.

LOUIE

Listen, whatever baggage you've got in your life... It's not gonna make it any easier, taking your shit out on me. You fucking bird.

THE RAPED

(concerned)

I think that's a little much, Arbiter.

THE HEN begins to stand up, and takes an aggressive stance

THE RAPED

I mean it this time.

THE HEN pecks the person next to him, who also stands up, and begins pecking the others. All six approach THE RAPED.

THE RAPED

He made one or two misjudgments. In a liberal society, the boundaries of sex can be confusing.

The other six members begin pecking at THE RAPED

THE RAPED

Stop! Stop! You hit my eye! Okay, I rescind! His sentence is death!

THE HEN

Take him away.

ENFORCER 1 and ENFORCER 2 escort LOUIE off stage, politely persuading him to follow. They Exit.

THE HEN

Who is next?

THE PERSECUTED

Next up is Sarai Gehrood, the daughter of the late pig farmer, Hamza Gehrood. She's requesting a seat on the Council of Pathetiques.

THE WHITE WOMAN

Isn't she wealthy?

THE PERSECUTED

Sarai's claim is that by this time next week, the Council and her creditors will have taken all of her wealth.

THE HEN

Then she can come back next week, and petition for her spot on the Council then.

THE PERSECUTED

Sarai is insisting that time is a social construct, and that it shouldn't matter if she applies this week, or next week, because after all, we're not slaves to time.

THE ENSLAVED

(thick Nigerian accent)

I resent that phrasing!

THE HEN

Of course you do. And that's your right, as the living descendent of the most enslaved persons. But as to her assertion, that we're not beholden to social strictures, I'll allow it, if you all would as well? (ALL COUNCIL MEMBERS nod theirs heads, fearful of THE HEN).

THE PERSECUTED (sycophantic)

Nothing oppresses the downtrodden as much as clocks and calendars.

THE HEN

Send her in.

Enter SARAI

SARAI

Whoa, you're a bird.

THE PERSECUTED

Indeed, zor is a bird.

SARAI

Zor?

THE PERSECUTED

Zor is a majestic, heavenly-looking hen, selectively bred by open-coop cocks and regularly checked for parasites and bacterial calamities. Tell me you don't mean to imply that you find something vaguely discomfoting and odd about zor?

SARAI

Do you keep saying ZOR?

THE ENSLAVED

Zor is the arbiter's referential term, zor's pronoun, if you will, whether it be the subject or the object of a clause.

SARAI

I understand. For I also go by zor.

THE PERSECUTED

Zor also goes by zor! What's zor (indicating SARAI), trying to unseat zor? (indicating THE HEN)

THE WHITE WOMAN

I'll take it from here.

THE HEN

Patricia has the floor.

THE WHITE WOMAN

Thank you, Arbiter. Now, when I ask you this, it should be obvious to you that I am speaking on behalf of all seven members of the Council of Pathetiques, not only white women, so if you will, tell us, what makes you feel you're any more downtrodden than us seven, by which I mean, the collective of members sitting here before you?

SARAI (aside)

What did Tuckerson say? Answer any questions with a question, and load my own question with an accusation. (then to THE COUNCIL) If you don't recognize how downtrodden my life is, then is it possible it's because your own lives haven't been downtrodden enough?

THE PERSECUTED

(an even thicker Arab accent)

I had ancestors killed at Treblinka, Sobibor and Auschwitz. My own family died in a terrorist bombing outside of Tel Aviv. Then I was captured by Palestinians and tortured for *thalath sanawat*... (clears throat, then corrects himself)... three years.

SARAI (aside)

Is this Jew speaking Arabic?

THE ENSLAVED

(Nigerian accent)

I count 128 ancestors who were enslaved... here... in America.

THE WHITE WOMAN

I am a woman! There's no creature so low that their fight is not mine to inherit.

THE IMPOVERISHED

I possess nothing.

THE SCHISMED remains silent. The other members stare at THE SCHISMED, as if awaiting a statement, but when nothing is said, they proceed.

THE WHITE WOMAN

What makes you feel you've been so downtrodden in your life, that you would be entitled to a seat on this council? I find your claim interesting, as it comes from someone who was raised in unique affluence. The Gehrood family has a reputation. How can one who has so much lay claim to being this downtrodden?

SARAI

(aside)

Tuckerson says, give them the benefit of the doubt, and admit they've made a point. The validation will put them at ease. Then once they believe they've found an opportunity to sit back and relax, spring upon them a question so blunt it will put the Council on the defensive. Attention will be deflected away from wherever I don't want the Council to be focusing: namely, my wealth.

(then, to THE COUNCIL)

You seven have suffered much, and it troubles me to hear how much you've suffered. But this forces the question... by your standards, which I'm assuming would be at least somewhat quantitative since this is what determines the very course of justice in our city... How much should I have suffered? Give me a number.

THE WHITE WOMAN

How much should she have suffered? Give her a number?

THE HEN

How do we answer such a question?

SARAI

(aside)

Tuckerson says, force them to answer a question that has no answer, and then ridicule them for not providing one. This will make their other arguments appear weak and arbitrary, by proxy of their inability to answer such an innocuous question. If they do go ahead and provide an answer, be ready to pounce on them, regardless of how they respond.

(then to the COUNCIL)

In order to be qualified to sit amongst you seven— or at least amongst six of you,— I'd expect it to be within my rights as a citizen, a member of this society we share, to ask such a simple question: what is the exact quantity of suffering that I should have endured in my life that I would be qualified to represent the downtrodden? What's the number?

THE HEN

What do you want us to say?

SARAI

So you won't answer my question?

THE HEN

What is the question?

SARAI

It's a simple question! Dare I say you're avoiding it, so as to not give my candidacy its fair consideration? Why do you tread on me?

THE HEN

What's the question again?

SARAI

Will you answer it? Should I have been beaten? Raped up the (gags) rectum? Abused by ten million words? Would this be enough? More importantly, can you give me an exact quantity! It's a simple question, and you seem to be avoiding the answer.

THE HEN

How do you *quantify* the downtrodden?

SARAI

Tuckerson says, now that they've forgotten the original issue, my father's wealth, hammer it home.

Once they seem eager for mercy, that's when I advance my own agenda. (then, to THE COUNCIL) Is the quantity of my own downtroddenness more than your own! Is that not what we're trying to determine? (aside) And now that the focus of the discussion is in my control, I can maneuver it as I please. (then to THE COUNCIL) If being a woman were enough, then I have the parts. If being poor were enough, then in three days I'll be poor as the impoverished one (indicating THE IMPOVERISHED). If being persecuted were the measure, you should know my father had to change his religion under pressure from Tuckerson himself, the same man who makes a living off of invalidating this council's work, and persecuting you and you and you, and, well, (she addresses THE SCHISMED) whoever you are..

THE HEN

We don't talk to the schismed.

SARAI

The schismed?

THE HEN

There is a schism between what goes on in there (points to THE SCHISMED's head) and what goes on out here (indicating "the world"). It's remarkably Hegelian, but, you know, without the resolution.

THE WHITE WOMAN

(to THE HEN, indicating SARAI)

I don't think someone of zor background has any business being on this council.

(aside)

She thinks that she can just come in here and claim my seat? Not the case!

SARAI

(aside)

This one is clearly on the defensive. Tuckerson says, repackage their emotions to suit your own needs.

(then to THE COUNCIL)

Why is it that you hate anyone who's struggle has been slightly different from your own, Patricia?

(aside)

Then ask another question, pointed as pointed comes, before she has time to defend herself.

(aloud)

You probably believe, by the same warped logic, that there are none in this city as downtrodden as yourself, not even the arbiter zorself.

(then to THE ARBITER)

Arbiter, you still haven't answered my question, what would make me more qualified than this woman here (indicating PATRICIA), to sit on your council? I ask you kindly, can you give me a number?

THE WHITE WOMAN

She is indeed coming for my seat! Tell her to beat it, Arbiter. She's defaming me in order to distract you from something important, though I can't remember what she wants us to forget, for I'm in such a raging heat right now.

SARAI

It's a simple question, Arbiter. This woman here clearly hates me for how my struggle has been different from her own. Tell me you other six aren't blinded by hateful prejudice, for why else would you refuse to acknowledge my lot in life?

THE HEN

This woman would be an asset to the Council of Pathetiques.

THE RAPED

With all she's been through, it's clear to me that she not only deserves to serve upon the Council, but that she should be second in rank, above only the arbiter zorself.

THE PERSECUTED

Zor, in other words, will be vice to the arbiter zorself.

THE WHITE WOMAN

(aside)

The girl has said nothing of her own situation. I should ask for specifics! No. She'd just ruin me. Better to be patient, Patricia. You'll find your way back in due time.

THE HEN nods to THE WHITE WOMAN, who stands up and begins to leave

THE WHITE WOMAN

Don't get used to my absence.

THE PERSECUTED

She has a habit of returning, like a bird to its shitting branch. If nothing else can be said of Patricia, she is a creature of habit.

SARAI (to THE ENSLAVED)

The Schismed. There's something gravely off there.

THE ENSLAVED

There is indeed. More so than any of us, there is something pathetic about The Schismed.. It's difficult to look at.

SARAI

Well, that begs the question. Why isn't The Schismed arbiter?

THE ENSLAVED

The Schismed doesn't assert.

THE HEN

Let's move on. Who's next on the books?

SARAI

Five thousand dollars that the next guy is guilty.

THE ENSLAVED

Five thousand! No way in hell! (aside) Although, I know that the defendant on deck is a vegetarian woman from Belarus who was imprisoned for fifteen years on the charge of menstruating in public. There's no way such a pathetic creature would ever be found guilty in this court. Five thousand dollars? You're on!

SARAI and THE ENSLAVED shake hands

THE HEN

No gambling in the Council!

SARAI

I won't be persecuted for practicing my religion. I petitioned to join this council so that I could

continue to practice my religion, not so I could practice it even less.

THE PERSECUTED

Did someone say persecution?

SARAI

The bet is 5,000 dollars, that the next defendant will be found guilty.

THE HEN

There will be no gambling in the Council of Pathetiques!

THE HEN aggressively pecks SARAI

SARAI

Not only am I persecuted. I've also been assaulted!

THE PERSECUTED

Do you wish to press charges?

THE ENSLAVED

You must say yes!

SARAI (confused)

Yes, I do! I wish to press charges.

THE PERSECUTED

How does the Council vote? Hands raised to convict the perpetrator of this double offense: of persecution and assault.

THE ENSLAVED (aside)

Zor has pecked at me enough.

ALL raise their hands

THE PERSECUTED

And the sentence is death. Do we all agree?

THE ENSLAVED

You must agree.

SARAI

Since you're a hen, I really shouldn't feel so guilty about this. You know, I had kabob for lunch.

ALL put their hands down. ENFORCER 1 & ENFORCER 2 enter and persuade THE HEN to accompany them offstage.

SARAI (to THE ENSLAVED)

You've lost.

THE ENSLAVED

Oh, by the gods of the Niger, did I just vote to forfeit five thousand dollars?

SARAI

You can keep your money. It means nothing to me.

THE ENSLAVED

Thank you, Arbiter. You must be rich.

SARAI

Not in the way a crème brûlée can be said to be rich. Wait. Arbiter?

THE ENSLAVED

Yes. The second has become the first.

THE HEN is heard offstage, aggressively making clucking noises. There's a pathetic sense of despair in these cries.

SARAI (concerned, to ALL)

Can we take a quick break?

THE ENSLAVED

You're the Arbiter. Tell them what you want.

SARAI

Everyone, let's take a ten minute recess!

ALL begin to stand up, except for SARAI, who appears rather petrified and affixed to her seat. THE ENSLAVED begins to stand up, but SARAI surreptitiously pulls him back down into his seat, and waits patiently for the others to exit. SARAI and THE ENSLAVED look up as THE SCHISMED walks by them.

SARAI

The poor creature.

THE ENSLAVED remains silent. Once everyone is out of the room, SARAI, in a panic, confronts THE ENSLAVED.

SARAI

They're not really going to kill zor, are they?

The sound of a chicken flapping its wings and frantically clucking is heard, followed by the sound of a bird choking on its own blood, then dead silence. SARAI covers her mouth in horror.

LOUIE (offstage)

Hey, sugar tits. Now that the arbiter is dead, does that mean I'm cool to go?

A gunshot is heard, and then, silence.

SARAI (aside)

Tuckerson's little word games have gotten way out of hand! Tuckerson neglected to mention this complication. False power, justified by false weakness. I never asked for this power. (to THE ENSLAVED) Have mercy on me.

THE ENSLAVED

For what, lady?

SARAI

I'm an imposter.

THE ENSLAVED

We're all imposters.

SARAI

It's natural to feel that way, but you don't understand. I am an imposter! I don't belong on the Council of Pathetiques.

THE ENSLAVED

The arbiter was a corrupt hen. There's a reason zor's own council voted to have zor killed. Don't let what has happened here bother you.

SARAI

Do you know how a child gets scared by thunder? This is how I felt when I was told I'd be losing all and everything. The council is the bed I've come to hide under, and it's even more frightening down here than it was up there. I didn't intend for anyone to die. I'm really not downtrodden at all.

THE ENSLAVED

I'd advise you to keep these concerns from the other members. Let me assure you, you're more trod upon than most of the other members on this council.

SARAI

That's not true. That poor hen.

THE ENSLAVED

You were kind to forgive my debt to you, so allow me to return kindness with kindness; your confession with my own confession. There aren't 128 slaves in my lineage.

SARAI

Two to the seventh power. I knew that was too perfect a number. How many slaves were there?

THE ENSLAVED

I come from Nigeria. My family sells men for their forced labor.

SARAI

You're a slave trader?

THE ENSLAVED

By the gods of the Niger, no.

SARAI

Oh, thank the eighteen eyes of god for that.

THE ENSLAVED

It's how my family earned their fortune, but really, I'm not part of the family business. You're not the only one who doesn't belong. The Persecuted one, who claims to be a Jew; I suspect he's not a Jew at all. He does know much about how Jews behave when they are tortured.

SARAI

Oh, by the eyes.

THE ENSLAVED

The man who claims to be the most raped via the rectum, he certainly has much experience with these sorts of sexual encounters, but I doubt he's ever been the recipient.

SARAI

Oh by the eyes! And that poor creature, The Schismmed? If The Schismmed isn't pathetic, then I may lose all faith in my senses.

THE ENSLAVED

The Schismmed is what The Schismmed appears to be. This is the nature of The Schismmed.

SARAI

Then what do you stand for?

THE ENSLAVED

Same as you.

SARAI

And what do I stand for?

THE ENSLAVED

Nothing?

SARAI

That's not true. Even right now, I'm on a religious pilgrimage.

THE ENSLAVED

As are we all, as are we all. Here comes the Council. Be careful around the man who calls himself The Raped.

SCENE II.

A clearing in the woods. SARAI sits upon a tree stump, overwhelmed by a sense of melancholia and uncertainty.

SARAI

I've narrowed it down to three possibilities: that all men are good, that all men are evil, or, the most terrifying of all, that every man is something in between. In the case of the first and last, there would be nobody to fight, none to oppose, not righteously; in the case of the second, I should throw humanity upon a sword...

SARAI stands up

SARAI

A hen that stands for power forged from weakness... Wisdom that reveals that the clouds are made not from water... The gambler that spills blood not by her decision, nor by chance. Never once did I dream of power. Couldn't we have the trial now, so I could renounce what I never dreamt of? All I desire is to roll those three dice and wait for my sixes, or to witness the racehorse who defies the odds. Even if I were to lose every wager, I'd perhaps be happier than I am at this moment, waiting idly by for my own blood to be spilled.

Enter a WILD BOAR, upstage right, it grunts and SARAI is startled, nearly falling off the stage. SARAI backs away towards stage right. THE WILD BOAR follows her.

SARAI

Oh god, stay back! Why are there so many damned pigs wandering about these days?

THE WILD BOAR approaches SARAI, who trips to the ground, and begins crab-crawling away from the pig. The 16-bit theme from The Legend of Zelda (1988) begins to play. Enter LINK, at the start of the 5th bar, with sword drawn. In a show of great courage and heroism LINK promptly slays the pig. SARAI is stunned, and remains frozen upon the floor.

SARAI

Please, leave me be! I have a wallet with five thousand dollars. It's yours. Just take that sword and get yourself far, far away.

LINK kneels on the ground before SARAI

LINK

Oh, great fairy of the Gerudo Plains, it is I, Link, the hero prophesied through the generations, the one who's destiny it is to rid this land of its darkness. I kneel humbly before you, and request that you grant me your powers.

SARAI

I'm afraid the only way to grant you my powers is by taking advantage of you in a horrible way.

LINK

(suspicious)

That's never been my experience with fairies thus far.

SARAI

I am Sarai Gehrood, daughter of the late pig farmer, Hamza Gehrood. I'm not a fairy.

LINK

So you are Gerudo?

SARAI

I am certainly no fairy. You've seen fairies before, have you? What's that on your back, there, a bow? Hey! You're the one who slaughtered my pigs! Stand back! You are mad, aren't you? Hey... You know, if you are mad, you just might be entitled to some of my powers. I wouldn't even have to take advantage of you to grant you what you desire.

LINK

I accept. I'll employ these powers with utmost responsibility. I trust in the destiny foretold of our world's hero.

SARAI

To rid the world of its darkness. It's a fool's errand. How much could you trust what's impossible? Do you trust it enough to risk your freedom?

LINK

My freedom, and more.

SARAI

How much more?

LINK

My life. And you, what would you give to see this land cleansed of that dark shadow?

SARAI pulls out her wallet

SARAI

Five thousand.

LINK

That's all?

SARAI

What do you wish of me, to bet the farm?

LINK

Why not?

SARAI

I'd become poor. I'd rather not be poor.

LINK

You're already poor! You'll be even more destitute of spirit when you lose all because you wouldn't risk all. If you wish to be a little bit of many things, then you'll never be all of one. That's been the downfall of your tribe, hasn't it?

SARAI

I'll take your word for it.

LINK

It's a sickness born to your people. Not a one of you Gerudo women is whole. If you wish to be something, be all of it. Heed your destiny, not what pleases you.

SARAI

There is no destiny. Destiny is what fathers name their daughters when they wish them to grow up to be strippers.

LINK (steadfast, zealous)

Taunt me, prod me, question the soundness of my mind. No part of me wavers, my will stands firm. Sanity is of no value to me, for it affords nothing to my mission. I've withstood your tribulations and

deceptions, oh Fairy of Gerudo, and if you're finished now, hurry up! Grant me the power I've requested. Bestow upon me what you will. I'm in need of aid from the goddesses, as transmitted through your airy vessel.

SARAI lifts up LINK from his kneeling stance. She kisses LINK in a state of confused passion, and LINK returns the kiss with similar passion, but then pushes her away in protest.

LINK

Though Zelda lives no more, my loyalty is ever to the princess.

SARAI hands LINK a great wad of cash

SARAI

Five thousand dollars. Take it.

LINK

Your money means nothing for me. Money cannot buy the hearts of men.

SARAI puts the cash back in her wallet

SARAI

(aside)

That's proof that he's mad; he feels as I feel about the value of money. But I have excess. Those with excess don't value excess, despite its value; men don't value air. For one such as this man, who lacks and still does not value what he lacks; this is clearly madness. He's a man I can't not pity.

(to LINK)

I can give you information to aid you on your journey. (short pause) There are two sources of evil in this land, one of power, and one of wisdom.

LINK

And courage shall overcome them. This is the legend. Every child knows this, it's no secret, fairy. Your information is also of no use to me.

SARAI

I'll bet the farm.

LINK

Gambling is of no use to me. If you want the hearts of men, you must risk the hearts of men. If you want life, risk life. Farewell, Red Fairy.

Exit LINK

SARAI

No more betting some, and winning some. If you want life, risk life. This isn't madness at all, or is it stupidity?

SCENE III.

The Fox Den.

TUCKERSON

Tell me, Grumfeld. What parts make up a fly?

GRUMFELD

I don't know, Tuckerson. I'm quite ignorant when it comes to matters concerning flies. I'm no enterologist (malaprop. entomologist).

TUCKERSON

Surely you know *something*, play along. Shattiny, how about you? If you were to assemble a fly from its component parts, what would you need?

SHATTINY

Well, I suppose you'd require some legs, and a body, and a head.

TUCKERSON

How many legs?

SHATTINY

Two legs.

TUCKERSON

Two should be enough for a fly. They're very small. You couldn't fit more than two.

GRUMFELD

And don't forget the wings! Two wings!

TUCKERSON

And eyes. And their proboscis.

SHATTINY

Ah, of course. The proboscis.

TUCKERSON

And then you'd have a fly?

SHATTINY

Don't forget the innards!

GRUMFELD

And the sphincters!

TUCKERSON

How many sphincters?

SHATTINY

Two. Flies are very small. Two sphincters should be enough for a fly.

TUCKERSON

We're in complete agreement. Only, I believe flies have eight legs, much like their close cousins, the spider.

GRUMFELD

Oh, of course. Spiders do have eight legs. It would only make sense for flies to have eight legs as well, since, as you said, they are related to their cousins, the spider, not only by blood, but by consumption.

TUCKERSON

So once I put together the eight legs, the two wings, the head and thorax, and the innards.

GRUMFELD

And the sphincters!

TUCKERSON

And two sphincters... Would you agree that we have a fly and that the legs and wings and proboscis no longer exist?

GRUMFELD

Yes, Tuckerson. I agree.

TUCKERSON

Do you? Are you sure?

GRUMFELD (embarrassed)

Grumfeld swings for a slider. Oh, Tuckerson, you shouldn't ask trick questions.

TUCKERSON

So?

GRUMFELD (humiliated)

Of course the parts still exist, even though they've been joined to form a new whole.

TUCKERSON

So once we put the parts together and we have a fly, we somehow still retain legs and wings and sphincters, yes?

SHATTINY

Of course. It would be unreasonable to assert the contrary, that legs and eyes and sphincters no longer exist.

TUCKERSON

Would you say that we could extend this proof, and claim that any whole composed of some component parts still retains those parts?

GRUMFELD

It would be quite reasonable to extend this proof, since the fly itself is a component part of the world. I couldn't imagine any qualifying circumstances, where this wouldn't be true.

SHATTINY

This is a clear cut case. No further proof would be required. For all things composed of component parts, those parts still exist.

TUCKERSON

Then, I've proved it!

SHATTINY

What is it that you've proved, Tuckerson?

GRUMFELD

Tell us, Tuckerson! What truth have you revealed?

TUCKERSON

That I too am a person of color.

SHATTINY (concerned)

Oh, let's leave that one here in the Fox Den, Tuckerson.

TUCKERSON

If color does exist, then though my skin be white as sunburnt snow, I, much like white light, am composed of all colors, and thus, it can be said, I too am a person of color.

GRUMFELD

I find humor in nearly all things, but I find nothing lighthearted in this particular proof on colors.

TUCKERSON

Someone's coming. Back to your holes, gentlemen!

Exit SHATTINY and GRUMFELD. Enter ZAHRAA and THARA, who approach TUCKERSON.

THARA

Tuckerson, it's been days now since Sarai left for the Council of Pathetiques. We've heard nothing from her.

ZAHRAA

We're worried sick!

THARA

Are there any rumblings in the aether about Sarai's whereabouts?

TUCKERSON

Be at ease. Your sister hasn't returned home because she has been in session.

ZAHRAA

They sent her to therapy?

TUCKERSON

Sarai Gehrood is now the arbiter of the Council of Pathetiques.

THARA

Well, that's good news, isn't it?

ZAHRAA

We'll keep the farm?

TUCKERSON

It's a done deal.

THARA

It's not done until it's done. What's next?

TUCKERSON

As arbiter, your sister will be able to influence the vote of the other six members of the Council. As long as she asserts her will, then as I said, it's a done deal. You'll have the suit against your estate dropped, and if she plays her cards right, she could even have her gambling debts expunged.

THARA (to ZAHRAA)

Your agent will be disappointed.

ZAHRAA (defensive)

He's not my agent.

TUCKERSON

Agent?

THARA

Some man who believed the stunning, long-torso'd Zahraa was bound for poverty and so implored her to be the star actress in his upcoming feature. (she laughs, playfully ridiculing ZAHRAA)

ZAHRAA

Shut up, Thara. Even if I had nothing, you know I would never say yes to anything so undignified.

TUCKERSON

There's nothing undignified about acting, only when actors play themselves...

THARA (interrupting)

And speak their own minds. You're a broken record.
(laughs playfully)

ZAHRAA (bashful)

You promised you'd mention that conversation to nobody.

THARA

It just amuses me, is all. The sorts of people who approach a seventeen year old girl once the gossip gets out that she's suffering financial hardship. It's nothing to get this flustered over, Zahraa.

Enter ENFORCER 1 and ENFORCER 2

ENFORCER 1

Tuckerson, you've been summoned by the Council.

ENFORCER 2

We're here to escort you.

ENFORCER 1

And to persuade you to respect the summons, should you wish to defy our request to let us escort you to the Council. The arbiter has charged you with sedition.

ZAHRAA

The arbiter?

THARA

Our sister?

ZAHRAA

Why would Sarai be levying charges against you, of all people, Tuckerson, the day before our family's trial?

THARA (concerned)

Don't go.

TUCKERSON

(to THARA and ZAHRAA) It's fine. (to THE ENFORCERS)
You may escort me, gentlemen. As if I've never

overcome the charges of the Council of Pathetiques.
Onwards, onwards, come gentlemen. I choose to go.

Exit TUCKERSON, followed by ENFORCER 1 and ENFORCER 2

ACT III

SCENE I.

The council chamber. TUCKERSON faces the audience.

TUCKERSON

How you've been affected, oh men of Dana, by the words
of my accusers, I cannot tell; but I've forgotten who

I am, because of how persuasive their words have been, even though not a word they've spoken has been the truth.

SARAI

Face the Council when you speak, Tuckerson.

TUCKERSON

I'll face the jury.

SARAI

We are the jury.

TUCKERSON

I'll face my peers.

SARAI

There's only defendants in that direction.

TUCKERSON continues to face the audience.

TUCKERSON

Although a wise man once said,— Socrates himself, if I'm not mistaken— that a man who represents himself in court has a fool for a client, it is, on the contrary, my own belief that even if my words be not as impressive or polished as those of my accusers, the truth, even if it is plainly spoken, will make itself known to all those who are willing to listen for it. I, Tuckerson John Phillip Tyson IV, am a man of the street, who spends more time on the wharf than he does here, in the courtroom. If I am unable to speak in the jargon of the court, and prefer to speak as a man who holds most of his conversations in the harbor or at the market, I hope those listening, including the Council, might not hold that lack of sophistication against me. I'll begin my defense, first, by recounting all three of the accusations that have been leveled against me, as if reading the affidavit.

SARAI

We just went over your charges.

THE ENSLAVED

We can silence him and begin sentencing.. whenever.

SARAI

I've a bet. I can't interfere now.

THE ENSLAVED

A bet? On what?

SARAI

Do you see my hands shaking?

TUCKERSON

The charges that this council has set against me and my colleagues at the Fox Den are three: impiety, misleading the youth, and sedition. I will begin with my proof against the first charge listed, and proceed sequentially from there to the second, and then the third. It may appear that I am starting with the most nonsensical accusation and proceeding to the less unreasonable, as part of my strategy, but I ask you to lay your suspicions aside, for I am telling you, this isn't the case.

SARAI

On with it, man!

TUCKERSON

The first charge: impiety. What could that possibly mean? According to Webster's dictionary...

THE PERSECUTED (interrupting)

This court does not recognize the static nature of languages as connoted by dictionaries.

SARAI

Yes, mutability, that's the name of the game. Dare I ask that you define impiety in your own words?

TUCKERSON

Here's a question for you, Sarai Gehrood. Could a man who has never known darkness define light?

SARAI

I suppose he wouldn't be able to define light, if he'd only known light.

TUCKERSON

Then could a man with impious words define impiety?

THE PERSECUTED (interrupting)
Anything is better than a dictionary.

SARAI
The council will make a note that your words may not be accurate, since your words are suspected of being impious.

TUCKERSON
Impiety: showing an inappropriate casualness towards matters of the gods... Exhibiting undue levity when discussing the gods in front of those who insist that the gods be payed reverence. But this council, I must ask, when it comes to such matters, is there a member within the dais who believes in god?

THE PERSECUTED
We believe in the gods we represent.

THE ENSLAVED
The raped. The persecuted. The trod upon. Once a white woman named Patricia, but no longer a white woman named Patricia.

THE SCHISMED
We believe in possibilities, what could have been.

SARAI (aside)
Oh, the pathetic creature.

THE PERSECUTED
Once a hen who went by zor, but no longer a hen who goes by zor.

SARAI
I believe in all three goddesses.

THE SCHISMED
You must believe in the god you represent, the basest of base.

SARAI
I will not entertain false idols.

TUCKERSON

There are the traditional gods; there are the local gods, some have their individual gods, and still there are the newer breeds of gods. If one god tells you to reach for the heavens to pay respect to the sky, and then another tells you to press your nose against the ground to pay respect to the earth, whose right is it to say which position is the more pious? I spend my days with my face pressed against the dirt and you tell me I'm irreverent because I won't reach for the air. The council would have me pay reverence to their gods, the airy gods, which cannot be gods, since they are not grounded. The Christian god has his roots in charity, the Hebrew god in wrath, the Islamic god in mercy. Your gods cling to justice, which lifts upon the air. I don't reach for the air! I must be impious! Anyone who believes that there are merits to this first charge against me must be grabbing for the air as well.

SARAI

Do you rest your case on the first charge?

TUCKERSON

I've said enough.

SARAI

Pray make your defense against the second charge more efficient. I'm hungry.

THE ENSLAVED

We're not required to sit through this.

SARAI

I want to hear what he has to say.

TUCKERSON

Well, Arbiter, I find the phrasing of your second charge confusing: that I corrupt the young. Do you mean the young who follow me around of their own free will? The young take pleasure in hearing me question men who believe they have some knowledge. Then, in their attempts to do themselves what they've seen me do, they've begun to question these men as well. The young inquire about such things as why we've been told that the clouds are made of water.

SARAI

This is what we mean by corruption, that you are a wellspring of false wisdom. There will be no idol-worship in this city, not as long as I'm Arbiter. You've misled hundreds of youths. You've even led some to believe that right and wrong, good and evil, were a matter of perspective. I was such a youth myself.

TUCKERSON

If we're to define corruption, then perhaps we should first attempt to come to a consensus upon what it is not. Surely you know, Sarai Gehrood, that which is the opposite of corruption?

SARAI

Purity.

TUCKERSON

What do you know of the pure?

SARAI

Very little. I've only known a madman who harbored a nasty vendetta against pigs, domesticated and wild. He seemed pure.

TUCKERSON

So you admit you know little about purity. Who's job is it to educate the young, and to ensure that they remain uncorrupted in their acquisition of knowledge?

THE PERSECUTED

This is the Council's responsibility.

TUCKERSON

Not that of the parents?

THE PERSECUTED

The parents cannot be trusted. This has been established.

TUCKERSON

Would you agree that it would be best for the purity of young minds if they were instructed by a teacher whose mind was pure?

SARAI

I'd have to agree.

TUCKERSON

And yet you just admitted, Sarai, that you know little of the pure, and you're this Council's arbiter. How can the Council ensure that the minds of the young are kept from corruption if the minds of the Council cannot be said to be pure.

SARAI

I'll concede you've a point, but it's you that has misled so many youths, and this is the truth. Is there more than one truth? I'd say there is only one truth.

TUCKERSON

If I corrupt the young to be better, then how is that corruption? I know little, and unlike these other men who claim to be pure, I admit I know little, but am willing to ask questions. The city is like a horse that must keep running to stay alive. What spurs the city to run forth, and remain a functional whole because of its moving parts? Is it the truth the city chases, or do we pursue an agreed-upon fable? I am a man of truth, and so I believe the answer is "the truth." The citizens are the gadfly on the horse's rump, the one that bites down and stings the city into motion. I, Tuckerson, am the most colored part: the portion that inserts deep into the rump. The horse doesn't appreciate my position, because it only knows that I am completely inside the rump, the city only knows the pain, not that I am the truth keeping the city alive. I ask questions, but I only ask those that are best for the city. I rest my defense on the second charge, and as to my defense against your third: that of sedition, there's ambiguity as to what the charge is I'm opposing. Perhaps what the arbiter is referring to is how I instructed an aspiring arbiter to leverage the authority of the city's courts to her family's own financial advantage.

SARAI

I'll admit it. I lied to get on this council, and did so to protect my family's fortunes. It wasn't right, but it wasn't wrong. For nothing in this city can be said to be either. And now, before the Council votes

on my punishment, and demands perhaps my own life, I hereby resign.

THE PERSECUTED (feigned outrage)
You feigned to be pathetic to gain entry onto this council?

THE RAPED (also feigned)
That's strictly forbidden!

THE SCHISMED (sincere)
The penalty is death.

THE ENSLAVED (concerned)
I think that's a little bit harsh. We don't want to set a precedent of being overly harsh. I say we give her a firm rebuke, and demand she never ever do this again.

THE PERSECUTED (concerned)
We don't want to set a precedent of being overly harsh.

THE SCHISMED (unassertive)
The penalty is death.

THE RAPED
We'll vote. Those in favor of a firm scolding?

ALL but THE SCHISMED raise their hands

THE PERSECUTED
You're a bad girl! Don't ever do that again. The punishment is fulfilled, and let's take note, the precedent of punishing those who dare infiltrate the Council has been established. Nobody else sneak onto our council or you will get just as nasty a scolding, do you hear? And now onto the business at hand: Tuckerson John Phillip Whathaveyou the Fourth... your sentencing.

THE SCHISMED
Tuckerson, you've taken advantage of hundreds of youths.

THE RAPED

And his penalty for such transgressions, what will it be? Death?

THE PERSECUTED

In my country—Israel!— if you steal, you have your hands cut off. If you cheat on wife, the *gadib*, if you run from the police, the feet.

THE ENSLAVED

What would we do with a man who's taken advantage of hundreds of youths?

THE RAPED

He should be taken advantage of 99 times. Do we all agree on this punishment? Raise your hands for yes.

ALL raise their hands.

TUCKERSON

I'd like to cite the case of *The Hen v. Arbiter Patricia Greene Atwood* to invoke an emergency petition to be admitted as this council's new arbiter.

THE RAPED

I thought he said he was unfamiliar with the language of the court!

TUCKERSON

If I'm to be violated 99 times, then that would make me the most pathetic man in the entire city. Would it not?

THE PERSECUTED

We would all have to agree on this. You may come back here and petition, *after* your sentence has been, um, consummated.

TUCKERSON

Sarai Gehrood versus the Council of Pathetiques: "time is a social construct and thus doesn't exist but as a crab exists among the clouds." I move to be given the same allowance, in the name of fairness and legal consistency. Thus, even now, my claim to be the most pathetic person in the city must stand, and so I hereby request that I be named Arbiter of The Council

of Pathetiques, not tomorrow, nor next month, but at this moment.

THE ENSLAVED

I don't see how the Council could contradict any of this reasoning.

THE SCHISMED

We couldn't possibly agree.

THE ENSLAVED

The only way to disagree would be to defy the very algebra of his logic.

THE SCHISMED

Then we must defy the algebra!

THE PERSECUTED

Those who disagree with algebra?

THE SCHISMED's hand rises up, with timidity.

THE PERSECUTED

Congratulations, (addressing TUCKERSON) Arbiter.

THE ENSLAVED

Congratulations, (addressing TUCKERSON) Arbiter.

TUCKERSON

How pathetic a man is in the eyes of other men is merely a construct of the social order. This council previously was in agreement that anything that exists as a social construct only exists as a crab exists among the clouds. Correct?

THE SCHISMED

This, we agreed, most certainly, to be the truth, especially when these constructs reinforce stagnant power structures.

TUCKERSON

Thus, I've proved it.

THE SCHISMED

What has he proved?

TUCKERSON

This council only exists as a crab exists among the clouds, which aren't made of water.

THE ENSLAVED

This I do not concur with, obviously, at all.

THE PERSECUTED

None of us agree with this conclusion.

TUCKERSON

I, Tuckerson, as legal Arbiter of the Council of Pathetiges, hereby dissolve this council, like a krill floating upon the sky.

THE PERSECUTED

The law of this city has been dissolved.

THE ENSLAVED

The law is no more!

Enter THARA and ZAHRAA

THARA

You did it, Sarai! The farm, the fortune, our reputation in this city, it's all been saved!

SARAI

I bet the farm, Thara.

THARA

You did what?

ZAHRAA

Tell me the dice rolled eighteen!

SARAI

I bet the farm that Tuckerson would accuse me of not believing in the gods. He did make that claim.

THARA

So you doubled our money! Bless you, Sarai! Tuckeson is a predictable creature, I'll give you this one. Risky to bet everything, sister, but not an unclever wager.

SARAI

And that wasn't enough, so I doubled down.

THARA

You didn't!

ZAHRAA

Oh, god.

SARAI

I bet that Tuckerson would become the new arbiter.

THARA

You should have led with the condition! Sarai, you doubled our fortunes, twice? We'll be like the Medicis of Dana. Our status will felt for centuries.

SARAI

Then, that still felt like it wasn't enough, Thara, so I tripled down; the condition was an over-under, that Tuckerson would remain arbiter: for more than one month. I bet the over.

THARA

Oh, god!

SARAI

Before the dice rolled, I'd never felt that alive. After the third dice did not show a six, I tell you, sister, I witnessed the goddesses. The estate, the farms, the wealth, it's not life. The farm is death, I find it evil.

ZAHRAA drops to her knees

ZAHRAA

Oh god!

THARA

I've tried and I've tried to pull you up, Sarai. I don't know what more I could have done. I'm done. I want nothing more with this family. We have to take care of ourselves now.

ZAHRAA

Thara, wait! Thara...

Exit THARA

ZAHRAA

Sarai?

SARAI

You'll thank me someday.

Exit SARAI. ZAHRAA, alone, begins weeping. THE RAPED picks up TUCKERSON, and carries him over his shoulder.

TUCKERSON

Hey get your hands off me! I know who you are... I mean who you *really* are. (aloud) Hey! I'm pathetic! Look at how pathetic I am right now! Help me!

THE RAPED

Nobody is listening to you.

Exit THE RAPED, with TUCKERSON

SCENE II.

In the woods. THE RAPED is stripping a protesting TUCKERSON of his pants. The Legend of Zelda opening theme plays. Enter SARAI, carrying a sword. SARAI stabs THE RAPED, who runs off in a panic and exits. TUCKERSON runs away in the opposite direction, with his pants around his ankles. A WILD BOAR enters. SARAI faces down the WILD BOAR, and the WILD BOAR charges her. She is pierced twice by the WILD BOAR's tusks, once in the gut, and then again, in the rectum. SARAI falls to the floor, bleeding, and the WILD BOAR runs off and exits. Enter LINK, who takes out an erlenmeyer flask of "red healing potion."

LINK

Drink this potion... it will revitalize you and heal your injuries.

A fountain of blood starts pouring out of SARAI's stomach wound, and LINK runs off.

LINK

You'll need more of it. I'll fetch the second bottle from my roanhorse.

SARAI turns over on her stomach.

SARAI

Oh, beautiful creator, your eyes are everywhere. I pray you will lift your charity and carry it across this land, and free men from the money and human dogmas that prevent them from witnessing your glory as they inhabit the earth. Or better yet, let me live.

A volcano of shit and blood violently erupts from SARAI's rectum. She pulls out a set of three marble-red dice and rolls them.

SARAI (observing the dice)

1, 1, 4. Nope.

Curtain. Moments pass. The curtain rises, and as it does, SARAI is back on her feet, grabbing her anus as if it were sore. SARAI appears confused. The WILD BOAR returns, and approaches her. Enter LINK, who slays THE WILD BOAR. SARAI limps over to a log, and carefully takes a seat. LINK sits down next to her. He pulls an apple from his pocket, and the ENDING CREDITS THEME from "The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past" begins to play.

LINK

Apple?

SARAI

Ew.

LINK

Ham sandwich?

SARAI

Yes, please. (she takes a bite, and her eyes light up) Mmm... this is delicious. (curious) Where'd you get the bread? (short pause, she takes another bite) You haven't been breeding wild boars out here, have you?

LINK

The boars were summoned by the wizard Tuckerson.

SARAI

What could he be trying to prove with all these boars?

LINK

The wizard is trying to resurrect Ganon, the king of evil. He must be destroyed.

SARAI

In our next adventure.

SARAI rests her head upon LINK's shoulder, as she takes another bite of her ham sandwich. The ending theme from A Link to The Past continues to play. CURTAIN.