

TRIPTYCH

Written Ludmylla Reis

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Start of Script:

Prologue:

A Tarot reading starts. Before we can see the first card drawn we cut to:

SCENE 1

Robin is sitting on the floor, scored in a wall. They deliver the following monologue in an intimate way.

ROBIN

All the world's a stage, And all the men and women merely players; They have their exits and their entrances; And one man in his time plays many parts, His acts being seven ages.

At first, the infant, Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms;

And then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel And shining morning face, creeping like a snail Unwillingly to school.

And then the lover, Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad Made to his mistress' eyebrow.

Then a soldier, Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard, Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel, Seeking the bubble reputation Even in the cannon's mouth.

And then the justice, In fair round belly with good capon lined, With eyes severe and beard of formal cut, Full of wise saws and modern instances; And so he plays his part.

The sixth age shifts Into the lean and slipper'd pantaloon, With spectacles on nose and pouch on side; His youthful hose, well sav'd, a world too wide For his shrunk shank; and his big manly voice, Turning again toward childish treble, pipes And whistles in his sound.

Last scene of all, That ends this strange eventful history, Is second childhood and mere oblivion;

ROBIN (CONT'D)

Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.

SCENE 2 - TAROT READING

Footage of the scene of the tarot reading that started the play.

We see the first card: the Hierophant.

SCENE 3 - KITCHEN - DAY

Robin is moving around the kitchen, getting things done. They are pleased, dancing and humming a little song.

VOICE OVER

Ok, my special mugs. They match, like us. Urgh...stop that, Robin. Uh, so sunny, it's a great day I'm feeling...inspired. Alright, let's start this. Ground coffee, hot water, maybe I'll try the electric kettle? But how about the plastic in it? They say that boiling water with plastic things is not healthy for you, and the taste changes...I'll get the stovetop one.

Robin rummages around the cupboards to find the right tools.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

OK, cool, cool, I'll just make a cup of coffee. Water, good. The grounds? Ok (they find the ground coffee)I have pre-ground from the grocery store, but as they say, fresh is better? Cool, cool, I have a grinder somewhere.

Robin pulls out more coffee tools.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

I mean, it's just a coffee. I'm sure she will like the coffee. She enjoyed the dinner. That was take out, though...should I buy coffee from that hipster place?

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

(laughs nervously) No, no...It's just dirty water. Why would I care?

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

I mean, I can just check one thing...

Robin stops and takes a breath. They check on their phone how to make a great coffee.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

Oh no, they are using that fancy machine. I think I bought that last year; I just never used it. Ok, that's cool.

Robin rummages more around the kitchen and makes a bigger mess.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

Wait, What kind of coffee she likes? Is she a latte or a black coffee person? Do I have oat...I have oat milk unsweetened, which is better...right? I mean, I can do a latte. I have the frother things.

I'm sure I bought two in 2018.

Robin finds all the frothers in the house.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

Alright, this can't go wrong...I have all the tools here. Maybe I'll do one the way I like: black no sugar, just like my ex's emotional response and one the way I think she wants...I think she likes the maple latte stuff. Wow, I just manic pixie dream girl her. Lord, shake the misogyny out of me. Maybe I'll also make one that no one would ever like. Like a keto coffee with coconut oil which chances are will be her favourite because I don't ever get stuff right.

Robin takes a deep breath.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

Why am I freaking out so much? It's not like I'm saving her by making coffee anyways. How important do I think I am? Nothing matters that much. What could go wrong? If I make a terrible coffee, then what? Will she just leave? Or not love me like my dad?

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

I managed fine without his approval. I moved on. Obviously.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

Ok, cool, cool. That's all I need. So now I get the coffee, and I will make it.

Robin successfully fills the kettle and uses it. They start getting the coffee grounds ready.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

(sings) Just a cup of dirty water, no one cares, no one cares. It's just a cup of muddy water, but I can't relax. I did a great latte last week. At least, I think so. It was great for me. I mean, no one tasted it. (pause) What if my taste is screwed up? I indeed failed in choosing a career. What if I'm too easy on myself? I keep living as if I have those great ideas for the plays I'm writing but like...are they excellent? Would people pay to see them? Not really. Unless I make a perfect one, I need to brew the perfect cup. She's not going to drink it and enjoy it just because I made it for her; I need to earn it. Earn the role of "coffee maker." Maybe I should get a barista certificate to validate my skills?

Robin notices they were distracted .

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

Oh shit. Ok, What time, is it? Great I have time; I can try a few times and only share what I think is good. What I know for sure is worth it. Urgh, I can almost hear my mom saying, “ you would be a successful artist if you showed your art to people.” Well, what if it sucks, MOM? I swear to god she is the master of optimism and only loves me because I took 19 hours to come out of her, so she has to love everything I do to give value to all that pain and struggle. I can't trust what she says.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

Focus: Coffee is an art of ratios. I need to measure this thing.

Robin grabs a scale to measure the materials.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

The perfect coffee is a ratio between grounds and water plus the time it takes you to brew it. Oh no, I need a timer too. So unprepared, so unprepared.

Robin moves searches the kitchen for a timer.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

That's a disaster; I am a disaster, I can't make the coffee without the timer and I don't have a timer and it's too early to buy a timer and delivery is not fast enough and I just can't seem to finish making this coffee, much like I can't finish that fucking screenplay I started in 2016. (a message pops on the phone) Oh wait, my phone, my phone has a timer. Yes! I can do this.

Robin gets back into making the coffee.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

That's it. I'll brew espresso and top it with Latte art. I hope she sees how much I like her through this art. This way, I don't have to share my emotions through words because that's what art is for right? For me to say things without saying them and people have to understand them without really understanding them because otherwise, I could have just showed them that I care with clear actions and obvious emotions but that wouldn't be hard, and so it wouldn't be art. And if what I'm doing is not art, then should I do it at all?

Robin puts the stovetop machine to work.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

I mean, if they can't understand me when I'm abstract, do they

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

understand me at all? And so can they truly love me? I can't just exist; existence is not free. I need to earn it, and at the same time, she needs to earn it too. She needs to like my coffee even if it is shitty garbage because otherwise, how would I know her love is true? It's easy to love when things are perfect, right?

That's why I need all to be perfect. But I shouldn't do all the work myself. People need to meet me in the middle.

Robin realizes they wasted the stovetop and burned it.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

No, no, no, no it's burned coffee now. Shit, I will use the cone thing...That's what happens when I care about things; they get messed up. People need to understand how hard it is to do something you care about. I still have nightmares from that critique I got on my solo "too much narration, not enough action" I mean, You didn't understand the action, you need to meet me in the middle I can't just translate my art to you as much as I can't translate my feelings to her. She needs to like me at my messy times. And that critic needs to read my mind. That's it. That's it. I'm not going to make any coffee. This way she can't judge it. If I don't try, I can't fail...

A voice from the background

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

Good morning!

ROBIN

Hi...ah...I don't think I can make this coffee.

SCENE 4 - TAROT

Footage of the scene of the tarot reading that started the play.

We see the card : it's The Hermit.

(This text is a significant adaptation from Franz Kafka's The Hunger Artist.)

The set is a theatre stage, with a soft light. Robin is rehearsing.

VOICE OVER

During these last decades, the interest in professional theatre has markedly diminished. It used to pay very well to stage such great performances, but today that is quite impossible. We live in a different world now. In the past, a whole town took a lively interest in the theatre artist; from day to day, the excitement mounted; everybody wanted to see them at least once a day; there were people who bought season tickets and sat many nights in front of their stage; it was the children's special treat to see the

theatre artist; for their elders, the artist was often just a thing that happened to be in fashion, but the children stood openmouthed, marvelling as the artist working in their black tights and fanciful clothes, sometimes giving a courteous blink, later answering questions with a constrained smile, and then again withdrawing deep into their work, paying no attention to anyone or anything.

Real theatre artists needed to separate themselves from anything that resembled a common life.

Besides regular audiences, there were also relays of specialized watchers, usually unpaid or overly paid by specific funders; strangely enough, and it was only their task to watch the theatre artist with utmost details and scrutiny. There was one of them every night, in case of some slipping of their mastery.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

Their job was nothing but a formality, instituted to reassure the masses of the quality of the artist's work. The initiates knew well enough that during a season the artist would never in any circumstances, not even under forcible compulsion, think of something beyond their work; the honour of this profession forbade it. Much to the artist's taste were the watchers who sat up close to the spotlight paid by their funder. The harsh light did not trouble the artist at all. They were quite happy to be under full light, to prove over and over again that no tricks were needed—only real artistry of blood, sweat and tears. The theatre artist's happiest moment was when they were challenged to perform, for the same pay, 15 characters. This would allow the artist to show their versatility and advocate - later - for their real worth. Such demands, anyhow, were a necessary accompaniment to the profession of theatre. It would be an insult to expect less. Unfortunately, no one could continuously watch the theatre artist, so no one could produce first-hand evidence that the artist worked tough day and night to prepare; only the artist could know that. They were therefore bound to be the sole completely satisfied spectator of their own art. They were bound to a life of being misunderstood and underappreciated and they saw that as a badge of honour.

The longest period of performing was fixed by their funder at two weeks, even in great cities, and there was good reason for it, too. Experience had proved that a steadily increasing pressure of advertisement could stimulate the public's interest for about two weeks, but the town began to lose interest after that.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

On the last night, the curtain closed, enthusiastic spectators, filled the hall and announced a nomination for a national artist award. The audience opened a hall for the theatre artist to pass and take photos with the local press. And at this very moment, the artist turned stubborn. Frozen at the spot, they thought: Why stop performing at this particular moment, after two weeks of it? They had rehearsed for a long time; why stop now at their best acting form, or rather, not yet quite in their best acting form? Why should they be cheated of the international fame they would get for performing that

piece longer, for being the only one of the few to perform for over two weeks since there were no limits to their capacity for repeating? If they could endure longer, why shouldn't the public stay longer?

Can't they appreciate the sacrifice?

But then there happened yet again what always happened. Still exhausted from the performance, the artist didn't perceive the person carrying them out of the stage and into their glory—a ritual to start it all over again. At the spectacle of the artist's passing the spectators melted away, and no one had any cause to be dissatisfied with the proceedings, no one except the theatre artist, them only, as always.

So they lived and worked like that for a few more years. Yet despite that, troubled in spirit, and all the more troubled because no one would take the artist's trouble seriously.

If some good-natured person, feeling sorry for the artist, tried to console them by pointing out that their melancholy was probably caused by performing non-stop, especially when they had been performing for so long, the artist reacted with an outburst of fury.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

An explosion that was always excused. They understood that it happened because of the difficulty of the work; a condition hard to be understood by regular people;

One day the aforementioned public interest had disappeared; it seemed to happen almost overnight; there may have been profound causes for it, but who was going to bother about that now;

Theatre would surely come into fashion again in the future, they all hoped. Yet that was no comfort for those living in the present, as the theatre artist. What, then, was the theatre artist do? Thousands had applauded them in previous times. There were no other people in their lives. And as for adopting another profession, they were not only too old for that but too fanatically devoted to theatre.

They had to defend it, preserve it, keep it alive.

So the artist kept to their natural habitat and only slightly changed their stage and their craft in an attempt to find a valuable way to perform their work even when the times were against them.

Robin got hyper focused on getting the movement right and trips.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

One day after working the whole month non-stop in a crusade to show the world that their work mattered, the exhausted theatre artist collapsed on a Livestream.

Text on screen:

ROBIN

The Theatre artist always wanted the audience to admire their work. When asked why they kept going they would say: "Because I have to perform, I can't help it.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

I couldn't find anything else I liked.If I had found it, believe me, I should have made no fuss and changed my life away from It like you or anyone else. “

VOICE OVER

During their last performance the audience watched frozen to the spot, unsure if they should applaud or silently leave.

SCENE 5 - TAROT READING

Footage of the scene of the tarot reading that started the play.

We see the card : it's The Tower.

SCENE 6 - A BATHROOM

Robin enter the bathroom to deliver the next monologue. They will be making their clown make-up as they speak.

ROBIN

Hi. I know you are there. Don't You think I don't...I'll share with you a secret. There is something that very few people know about me. And I think my parents know about but I don't think they know how I feel about it. I hope my attempt to do a make up I haven't done in seven years gives you a hint of what I'm talking about. You see I have a very serious relationship with circus and with clowning. Now, some of you might be thinking..."can they ever relax? "Can I chill? (laughs) Most of the time. But certain things are very, indeed very...

Tries to find words to complete the thought.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

Words don't do enough. I have a really hard time remembering where my relationship with clown started or why I got specifically obsessed about clowning.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

I know that I've always been to the circus and fun fact from where I am from , which has a temperate weather so it's much easier for a circus company to work all year long. We

still have a lot of circus and I grew up with it. I would go with my parents when the circus came in to town and we would just watch that whole thing and I was quite amazed about it. It was pretty amazing. I didn't like the animals part so when that went away I was pretty happy about it. I am quite scared of the acrobats though I like watching them. But there's something very special about the clowns themselves. I don't know if it was because of how usually like clowns. They make us laugh (jokes) maybe. But I always felt there was something more about that. I'm not saying anything new, there are many theatre shows that talk about the serious part of being a clown. Part of me was heavily influenced by Robin Williams' film with the clowns that go to hospitals. I think another big part of me came from my own training where I had the opportunity to

Robin makes a mistake with the clown make up.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

Rookie mistake...seven years...I had the opportunity to study with a woman that had a more psychological understanding of clown. Of how clown wasn't necessarily there to make you laugh, but it was there to make you feel. And that your clown was a very specific thing to yourself. What are the things that you are trying to hide? What are the things that you are scared of doing? Are you afraid of being alone? Is your clown a clown that is always searching for someone?

Are you afraid of being ridiculous? In front of people? So is your clown the clown that jokes? Goes and (imitates falling) in the banana?

ROBIN (CONT'D)

Or the clown that has the water - I don't have the effect here - falling on top of them? Are you afraid of losing? So, are you the clown that tries but doesn't really...it...it might go...it doesn't really go there? What are you afraid of? What are you truly afraid of? You see, when I worked with her it was really, really hard. Because she asked me to work with my childhood, which is something that I don't remember much. I don't have anything extremely traumatic to the point of being impossible to forget about it but I certainly had feelings that I didn't know how to deal with so I blocked them off all together.

I'm half blind. Hi (jokes on mirror) You see, she asked me to think about when I was a child and I was worried about the world. I thought the world was too big. I thought the world was very complicated and I just had this feeling of being really, really small. And everything I saw, I saw a tad higher than I normally would. That was my clown. And I think that even though I respect other ways of doing clown of course, one of the reasons why I haven't done much of it recently and why not any...pretty much anyone knows about this interest of mine.

Something that I trained for, something that I'm incapable of doing is that I lost track of what I fear at this point. I'm an actor, director, a theatre...I'm a teacher for theatre. I also always wanted to be a filmmaker, since I was way too young. But I don't know what any of that means now, now that I'm almost 30, I live in another culture, I experienced other things in life. Do I remember who I am? I did my training when I was 23...22...22 And at

the time I was delaying with my childhood but now...what am I dealing with? Is it the pandemic? Is it being an adult? Paying my own bills?

ROBIN (CONT'D)

Is it understanding that I have to sacrifice some things that I want to do things that I have to in order to live? I don't know. I don't know what I fear anymore.

Doesn't mean I don't have fears.

Looks in mirror to adjust make up

ROBIN (CONT'D)

What a funny face. What it means is that. I need to invent myself again. And maybe go back to my clown training, maybe go back to what brought me here in the first place. One of the things that I like the most about the circus is that you don't know what's gonna happen and that's the point of it.

They are all extremely talented athletes, even the clowns. And the whole point of being in the circus is that you don't know what's coming next but you are ready for it. And sometimes after having a career as a Stanislavskian actor and a theatre director in the way that people talk about theatre sometimes I wonder why those performers are seen less sometimes. I mean they are ready for everything. I'm sure a clown would know exactly what to do in the middle of a pandemic in about 12 hours. And I with my University degrees and years of market experience still don't know what to do 15 months after it.

So... here I am trying one more time to reconnect with the part of myself that actually got me into being a performer in the first place.

Plays in mirror with faces.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

And who the heck knows what's gonna come next?

SCENE 6 - EPILOGUE

Through the apartment's window Puck tells us about what happened. We hear PUCK's ending monologue from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in Portuguese.

END OF PLAY