



## THE TRIAL

By Jeff Dunne

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## CHARACTERS

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| ELDER ONE   | Charles is the lead Elder. He is a patient, thoughtful, and purposeful man.   |
| ELDER TWO   | Colin Farnsworth is an Elder from another city who has come to represent an “unbiased” perspective. He is judgmental, and strongly opposed to the practice of witchcraft. |
| ELDER THREE | Michael Downing has a fiery, intolerant personality, and enjoys serving as an Elder far too much. He is power hungry, blood-thirsty, and confidence-starved.              |
| WOMAN       | Mary is a smart and insightful woman who has a profound understanding of the nature of the universe, and through it found abilities that others consider to be magic.     |

## SETTING

A dark council chamber at some indeterminate time (but hinting at the era of the Salem Witch Trials, i.e. end of the fifteenth century).

*(Three men in cowled robes sit behind a table, or perhaps in a semi-circle, facing a woman who has been brought before them for trial.)*

ELDER ONE

You have been charged in the presence of this council with the practice of witchcraft. How plead you?

WOMAN

*(Distainfully...)*

Plead.

ELDER ONE

How do you plead? Guilty or not guilty?

WOMAN

I will not plead to this *court*. I will not plead before you.

ELDER THREE

You will plead guilty or not guilty, and if you say nothing we will levy summary judgment.

WOMAN

You've already passed judgment, long before this trial commenced.

ELDER TWO

She obstructs justice. She's deliberately making a mockery of the tribunal.

WOMAN

A mockery? There is nothing I could say that would make this more of a mockery than it already is.

ELDER TWO

If you won't answer the que—

WOMAN

*(Directed at Elder Two...)*

You, Colin Farnsworth. You, sitting there in that robe, a hood over your face like I cannot see you for who you are. For *what* you are.

ELDER THREE

You see? Witchcraft!

WOMAN

What do you know of witchcraft, Michael Downing?

ELDER THREE

*(Pushing back his hood...)*

I know it when I see it. When a devil-spawn wo—

WOMAN

Devil-spawn? You know my parents. We were practically raised in the same house, you sanctimonious hypocrite.

ELDER TWO

We will have civility from you, witch.

WOMAN

See. You passed judgment long before—

ELDER ONE

This trial is for *your* benefit. If you'd—

WOMAN

*My* benefit? My *benefit*?! This trial is nothing more than an excuse. An excuse for you to kill a woman who frightens you.

ELDER THREE

You don't frighten me!

WOMAN

I scare the very bones out of your heartless chest!

ELDER TWO

Whether we are frightened or not is of no matter. A man is right to be scared of your dark magic.

WOMAN

And is that why you hide like a coward? Ashamed to reveal your face, even when you know that I—

ELDER TWO

*(Uncovering himself from the cowl...)*

I will face you. Will you face yourself?

WOMAN

*(Smiling, surprised that the man had even that much courage.)*

I face myself in every moment of every day.

ELDER ONE

Enough of this. How do you plead?

WOMAN

Show me your face.

ELDER ONE

How do you plead?

WOMAN

Show me your face, Charles.

*(There is a pause, and then Elder One removes his cowl.)*

You want to know how I plead?

ELDER ONE

Yes.

WOMAN

I don't know yet.

ELDER TWO

What nonsense is this?!

WOMAN

You accuse me of practicing magic, and so I ask you: what is magic?

ELDER THREE

She's stalling.

WOMAN

You accuse me of a crime, but cannot even define what that crime is. If you want to pretend that this... mockery... is a form of judgment, then at least play by your own rules. Define my wrong-doing.

ELDER ONE

You are accused of practicing witchcraft.