

# **THE DEVIL'S MISTRESS**

*Genre: Historical tragedy*  
*Playwright: Brenda Love Zejdl*

**This script is copyright protected and may not be reproduced, distributed or disseminated without the prior written permission of the author.**

## **Contact Information:**

Email: [brendazejdl@gmail.com](mailto:brendazejdl@gmail.com)  
Address: Dusni 1/928, Prague 11000, Czech Republic  
Cell phone: 011 (420) 739.078.229  
Skype: brendazejdl

## **THE DEVIL'S MISTRESS**

### **SYNOPSIS:**

This play is inspired by actual incidents from 1620. Acts I and III are set in a prison in Leonberg, Germany and Act II takes place in the Prague castle. KATHARINA is the mother of the King's Chief Mathematician, JOHANNES KEPLER. She is imprisoned in a dungeon and pressured to confess to witchcraft; first by treachery and then by intimidation through being shown torture instruments used on another woman while her son debates the validity of witchcraft trials with JEAN BODIN, the leading demonologist of that time, (*in reality Bodin died in 1596, over 20 years before and never met Kepler*). The result of this debate will determine her fate: freedom, torture or execution. This is an expose filled with the political intrigues and corruption that existed during these witch trials. .

### **CAST OF CHARACTERS: [7-8 actors needed if 2 can double, 2 women & 6 men]**

**KATHARINA KEPLER:** **[60+ yrs old]** Johanne Kepler's mother, an herbalist unjustly jailed for witchcraft. Pious, and disliked by people in her village for meddling and insolence.

**JOHANNES KEPLER:** **[40-50yrs old]**- Kepler was a slight man with a goatee, wears a dark suit with a starched ruff collar; he was slightly stooped from bending over his calculations and he squinted from bad eyesight. He was loyal to his mother and the chief advocate and defender in her criminal case.

**WARDEN SCHREK:** **[20+ yrs old]** Jail keeper, tasked with getting Katharina to confess while in prison and recording her confession.

**PRISONER MULLER:** **[20+ yrs old]** educated but jailed for habitual drunkenness, wearing donkey mask but he and Katharina can't see each other from their cell doors.

**DUKE JOHANN FRIEDRICH OF WURTTENBERG:** **[30-40 yrs old]**. He was a well-meaning and peaceful Lutheran ruler, appearance doesn't matter but he wears casual attire for an aristocrat.

**JEAN BODIN:** **[40+ yrs old]** He has a French accent. He is a political philosopher, member of the Parliament of Paris and professor of law in Toulouse. He has large ego and enjoys celebrity for his courageous battle against the Devil and his minions.

**EXECUTIONER:** **[40+ yrs old]** Has German accent and finds sadist pleasure in his job. He wears brighter clothing, including a red hood or collar.

**Possible Double role: PROSTITUTE LADY ANDREA FARBER :** **[20+ yrs old female or guard dressed as a woman]** Hired to pretend to be lady accused of witchcraft undergoing torture.

**Double role: CONSTABLE EINHORN: [30-60 yrs old]** Arresting officer – wears black hood or helmet with beard [Executioner can double] A newly appointed constable wants to impress and befriend others with his manipulating the law for profit.

**Double role: GUARD 2 or Prostitute dressed as a male guard:** attire: black hood or helmet with beard- [not a speaking role, *The Duke or Kepler can act as double*]

**Optional role: BUTLER STEFAN:** [20+ yrs old] May appear or even introduce Boden to the Duke and Kepler if more actors are desired.

### **SET REQUIREMENTS:**

**Act 1:** One chair and desk for Warden beside 2 cells with barred doors facing audience. Each cell has a bench for sleeping. A box [or bag] to carry K. Kepler into cell (stage right), 2-3 sets of hoods for guards, a beer flask, beer mug/cup, a pen and paper for warden's desk, 1 set of leg irons with chain attached to a black ball for Katharina, and fireplace/fire pit.

**Act 2:** Visiting Room of Duke in a castle setting with 3 chairs and a bell for ringing butler. Two sabers for the Duke, Kepler and one dagger or shorter saber for Bodin. Optional window.

**Act 3:** Same set as Act 1 but will need 4 chairs total and the following instruments of torture: straight razor, long pricking needle, hot iron pincers for burning and for pulling and tearing skin from the body, rope for tying prostitute to a chair.

**COSTUME SUGGESTIONS:** Donkey mask for Prisoner MULLER can consist of a headband with donkey ears attached and black face paint to mask eyes; Black hoods for Constable and Guard(s), Black clothes for Warden, sombre colours for Bodin as Interrogator in Act III, Executioner wears bright red hood or collar and flamboyant clothing. Others, wear attire appropriate for their class in the 1600's including Bodin, Kepler and the Duke in Act II.

## ACT I – KATHARINA’S ARREST - Friday, August 7, 1620

[At Rise:]

[A conversation between a prisoner and jailer. The set has dim lighting until Katharina is put in chains.]

**WARDEN SCHREK:**

[Rattle something]

Wake up you worthless drunk!

**PRISONER MULLER:**

[Laying on bench with feet toward audience]

Moans

**WARDEN:**

I’m told you will have a cell mate tonight. A lady should cheer you up, wouldn’t you say?

**PRISONER:**

A lady in the next cell? I would be of more cheer if she shared my own. Like in the dream you just woke me from. Why so late in the night with this news? Do I know this lady?

**WARDEN:**

You may, she is from here in Leonberg. She is well off I hear with a son who is Chief Mathematician to the King.

**PRISONER:**

Ahh, and I bet a looker as well. I could be betrothed before I leave here to a fine lady with a nice house and a full wine cellar. Or, at least give her the favour of my company during these cold lonely nights. Yes indeed, I would be doing you a favour by saving you the expense of a night fire. Just leave our cell doors unlocked. That would be quite considerate of me don’t you think?

**WARDEN:**

[Hah] Considerate yea, but not on my watch. I am going to propose something different; something you may even find more favourable to yourself.

**PRISONER:**

[Rises and walks to front bars of stage right cell so audience sees his donkey mask.]

So, perhaps there is a reason you couldn’t wait until morning. This is not more of your knavery humour at my expense?

**WARDEN:**

I am most serious, and if you succeed I can have your punishment for habitual vagrancy cancelled. If you fail it would be carried out as scheduled. I mind you that then no lady, not even this one, will ever want to share your company. Certainly not after seeing you paraded in public wearing that charming mask of an ass.

**PRISONER:**

Consider me your humble servant. I am all ears.

**WARDEN:**

[Sarcastically.]

See, I told you one day you would come to delight in your pretty new face. Seriously, it would benefit everyone if this lady would confess to her crime before her inquisition. If you can loosen her tongue, Constable Einhorn has promised to release you.

**PRISONER:**

That is generous, might I know the crime to which I am to get her to confess?

**WARDEN:**

It is a crime against God, man and nature. She is a witch.

**PRISONER:**

Ugh. There goes my dream of a life of luxury. A question then; what if we were married before she is executed? Would I inherit her property?

**WARDEN:**

You are a scoundrel; you might make a fitting couple at that. But, I doubt there will be anything left of her estate after she pays damages to all her victims.

**PRISONER:**

Then I assure you, given my renowned ability to charm the most timid and frigid of women, I will easily loosen this lady's tongue.

**WARDEN:**

You will find the task of getting a lady to admit to a crime that costs her life more difficult than simply bedding one of your barflies. She has already admitted to being able to heal but the law requires her to confess to doing harm.

**PRISONER:**

A good witch, or a bad witch. Seems as if I win either way. If I succeed in getting her to confess, I gain my freedom. If I fail, I could end up happily married.

**WARDEN:**

You can forget her ever walking out of here, and you can certainly forget about marriage even if she did. [Listen] That must be her now. I warn you, not a word from you of our agreement. I will be watching you closely, a small reward for my part is also at stake.

[A detachment of 2-3 armed GUARDS enter, large men with swords and helmet/hoods carrying a wooden chest or bag with Katharina inside.]

**WARDEN:**

Constable, what have we here?

**CONSTABLE EINHORN:**

Warden, We are releasing a Katharina Kepler into your custody to be kept here in chains until trial.

[Staggering drunk, he rolls Katharina out of box onto the floor in the cell on Stage Right. Katharina can already be hidden away under the bench in her cell. When the box is placed down and turned over where it blocks audience's view of the bench, KATHARINA can roll out from under the bench.]

[Lights are raised enough for actors to be seen more clearly]

**CONSTABLE EINHORN:**

This calls for a celebration drink.

[Takes flask out of pocket and takes a drink while other Guard fastens chain and ball to Katharina's ankle.]

**PRISONER:**

[Looking through the bars.]

Why the box [bag]? Was the lady too much for you to handle?

**CONSTABLE EINHORN:**

Only her vulgar tongue. The box [bag] was recommended for our security. We aren't worried a bit ourselves, but she could cast a spell and escape her shackles.

**GUARD:**

We are done here. She won't escape now.

**CONSTABLE EINHORN:**

We leave the old woman in your care now and wish all of you a most pleasant night together.

**PRISONER:**

It would be quite pleasant if you were of such generous spirit as to share some of that ale you were drinking.

**CONSTABLE EINHORN:**

[Turns toward Prisoner.]

Warden. Give me that cup.

[Pours ale into the cup and places it on the Warden's desk.]

I'll leave it here by the door. Whoever reaches it first can have it. Good luck with that!

[Laughter]

**CONSTABLE AND GUARDS**

[Exit]

**PRISONER:**

Warden, a bit of ale might help lubricate my parched tongue. If you feel like sharing that is.

**WARDEN:**

I should have extortion added to your list of crimes.

[Hands beer to PRISONER]

**KATHARINA:**

Release my shackles young man!

**WARDEN:**

I suggest you get used to them.

**KATHARINA:**

Then I want a different cell. This one is damp and has a wretched smell, don't you clean it? I have seen better pig-sties.

**WARDEN:**

You'll be able to make the odour your own very soon. But I will buy some wood to start a fire, I'm feeling a bit chilled. Now with your money I can afford to heat the whole jail.

**KATHARINA:**

What do you mean my money?

**WARDEN:**

Prisoners don't get free room and board here, you have to pay for it.

**KATHARINA:**

Blasted government, everyone has their hands in my pockets. Then, give me a better cell!

**WARDEN:**

Surely, but you would have to share with Herr MULLER.

**PRISONER:**

My dear lady, at the risk of you not taking me as the gentleman I am, I would be willing to extend you my hospitality. You are welcome to share my humble accommodation. I find the manner in which these rogues treated you to be deplorable. A lady of your stature should be shown the utmost respect.

**KATHARINA:**

Sir, I keep that reputation by not sharing rooms with strange men.

**WARDEN:**

A witch who declines all offers except the Devil's, I hear.

**KATHARINA:**

I see I am already judged guilty. I have you know I am falsely accused by my conniving neighbour, Ursula Reinbold, who is scheming to avoid having to pay damages in our family's lawsuit against her. You are all being fooled.

**WARDEN:**

That is what all you miserable hags say. Right now I think I will go outside and bring in more firewood.

[Motions for PRISONER to talk to KATHARINA]

**KATHARINA:**

[Lays down, exhausted.]

**PRISONER:**

Madam, I, for one, believe you. I am wrongly accused as well. I sit shackled here for no just reason. We both could use a friend; you can trust me to be your ally. I apologize if my invitation offended you. I fear my time in this dungeon with, might I say, lower class companions, has temporarily tarnished my otherwise pristine character. I expect to be released very soon with the aid of a friend in, let's say, a high position of authority. Perhaps if I know your story I could persuade him to intervene on your behalf as well.

**KATHARINA:**

[Sits up.]

Not that I don't trust you, but who is your friend?

**PRISONER:**

I am not at liberty to say right now. I hope you can understand his need for discretion.

**KATHARINA:**

Of course. Then, what was your crime? It couldn't be worse than the charge I face. I might add, betrayal by a supposed long-time friend.

**PRISONER:**

I too was falsely charged. I was arrested for public drunkenness but I expect to be released very soon; and with an appropriate apology. My condition was merely a common illness suffered by many. It was unfortunate that I was overcome by a temporary state of unconsciousness in the Marktplatz and not my own bed. Like you, I am confident that I will clear up this misunderstanding.

**KATHARINA:**

Assuming I believe you were really sober, how is it you are unemployed? You sound like an educated young man.

**PRISONER:**

As you notice, I favour a good ale. I own a brewery that has been in my family for over 400 years. It mostly prospered generation to generation. It was our family legacy.

**KATHARINA:**

You no longer own it?

**PRISONER:**

I suppose I still own, it but it now sits idle and going to ruin.

**KATHARINA:**

Why is that?

**PRISONER:**

First, the yields from our hops fields declined. Then we started losing our workers. First they joined the King's army to fight against the Turks. Then the plague swept through my village and we lost even more of our workers. Finally my parents and brother died of the cursed plague. The final calamity came when a troop of deserters from the wars, passed through and helped themselves to the last of my inventory. But they couldn't leave it at that. They went on to carry away most of my brewing equipment. I had only taste tested my ale to that point. But that night I drank my first full mug of beer. I confess to you, I kept that mug full and never saw the bottom of it until I landed here.

**KATHARINA:**

Others lose their businesses and find work.

**PRISONER:**

You may not understand, since you have a family. But I had not yet married and now without a profession or membership in a Guild I am not permitted to marry. This disaster not only cost me a family of my own but I lost a business that had survived for untold generations of MULLERS. Now, even our family name will disappear thanks to me. How am I to live with this failure on my shoulders? I deserve this humiliation and punishment for that alone. How could I to face my family if I were to see them in heaven? I am so ashamed.

**KATHARINA:**

I am sorry, this is truly a great burden for you to carry. I often thought I might have had an easier life if I had been born a man. Listening to your story, I am not so sure. I do suspect that if I were a man I would not so easily be charged as a witch. I am even double cursed.

**PRISONER:**

What do you mean?

**KATHARINA:**

I was born with a dark complexion in a village of all blonds. It always marked me as different in their superstitious minds. I don't think I was ever really accepted no matter how pious I was or how much I practiced Christian charity to others.

**PRISONER:**

Why are you darker? Are you part Jew or Gypsy?

**KATHARINA:**

Well, most suspect I am a half Jew. Now they say it is because I signed a pact with the Devil.

**PRISONER:**

[Whisper to himself.]

My, a Jew and a witch! [Louder.] Well, I trust it was not because you are a witch. Why did they think you were part Jew?

**KATHARINA:**

That was because I worked for a while as a servant for some Jews. They hire outsiders to keep their fires going during their winter holidays you know. Then later they were suspicious of my son's interest in Jewish teachings. He also became friends with the Rabbi Loew.

**PRISONER:**

How does he know that Rabbi?

**KATHERINA:**

He says he met him when Tycho Brahe, my son's famous astronomer friend, took him to the alchemist lab near the Rabbi's home. They shared many interests, not just religion. But we are not Jewish.

**PRISONER:**

Then why are you darker?

**KATHARINA:**

Oh hell fire. What do I care about letting family skeletons out of the closet now? My mother was ravaged by a Spaniard. He was one of the mercenaries passing through our town. When my grandfather discovered she was pregnant, he beat her for weeks to try to cause a miscarriage. He had the best intentions and hoped to save their reputations. My presence here is proof of his failure. My mother and grandparents then wanted nothing to do with me. I don't think I ever caught my mother looking me in the eyes. Fortunately my dear aunt took me as her own.

**PRISONER:**

And then, I hope your life improved.

**KATHARINA:**

Only until I was 12. Then my aunt died and I was on my own for a while. But I was attractive and pious. My grandfather, who was a respected city official, felt pity on me and had me betrothed to a young merchant here in Leonberg. I thought then I would live a charmed life. It all looked so promising. But that was not to be.

**PRISONER:**

How so?

**KATHARINA:**

My husband, like your workers, felt it was his patriotic duty to join the King's army and left me alone. I raised four young children, worked our fields and managed the family business. Then Johannes came down with smallpox and I could no longer survive without help. So I travelled over 90km to find my husband and bring him home. Our son survived but has remained puny. Then our second son started having seizures. The doctor said he would have them his whole life. My husband soon decided he would make more money in the army and he missed the camaraderie of his men. I assumed being a soldier must be his calling, so I gave him my blessings and he left.

**PRISONER:**

So you were left alone again?

**KATHARINA:**

Yes again. I had hoped that my sons would soon be old enough to help in the business or the fields. Johannes could not but fortunately, he was very bright and was accepted into the Lutheran university when he was 14. Now he is the King's Chief Mathematician. Then Heinrich, despite his epilepsy, left to join his father in the army. After his father died he gained a position as an Imperial Guard. So for a while both my eldest sons were in Prague in service to the King. My third son, Christoph, took over the family pewter business and my daughter married a local pastor and moved away.

**PRISONER:**

So like me, you are now alone?

**KATHARINA:**

Yes, now I am. I thought I might have Heinrich live with me after King Rudolf died. He moved home but was quite ill and died a year later. I felt even more alone. You obviously know what it is like to lose your whole family.

**PRISONER:**

Yes I do. How did you manage to deal with it?

**KATHARINA:**

I made God and the church my family. I attended more services and started volunteering and devoting my time to care for sick neighbors who couldn't cook or clean for themselves. I enjoyed just plain hospitality too, sharing a meal and wine with friends. Sitting here, I felt so betrayed. I wish that, like most of the friends my age, I might have already met my Maker. It would have been a happier ending for me.



[Enter JOHANNES KEPLER AND WARDEN]

**WARDEN:**

I told Herr Kepler you would be sleeping but he insists on seeing you.

[**KEPLER** hands some coins to the **WARDEN** and the **WARDEN** brings **KATHARINA** outside of her cell to meet with **KEPLER**.]

**KEPLER AND KATHARINA:**

[Hug]

**KEPLER:**

Margaretha came over in hysterics telling me you were arrested tonight. Let me look at you. Did they hurt you?

**KATHARINA:**

Only my belief in a fair and just trial.

**KEPLER:**

Here, sit down with me.

**KEPLER:**

We were all so sure that the lawyers and I had repudiated all the charges against you. I am astonished that with this proof and all the letters from the Duke, that the charges would not be dropped. This is such a shock.

**J KEPLER AND KATHARINA:**

[Sit on bench in her cell.]

**KEPLER:**

We have to come up with a different plan now. I'm sorry but the Warden only gave me five minutes with you. I must quickly prepare you for what to expect now.

**KATHARINA:**

I am listening.

**KEPLER:**

The Court and anyone they send to see you will use every trick to confuse you into a confession. Don't say anything they can twist and use against you. Always state clearly that you are innocent, don't mumble a yes or no.

**KATHARINA:**

I have done that. I even insult them to show I am not such easy prey.

**KEPLER:**

Mother, I am not sure that will work in your favour, but it should throw them off guard a bit. The very least you can expect now is having to stay in cold and unsanitary conditions. A good diet will keep you healthy so I will pay to have food brought to you and I will appeal to have you moved to a better prison.

**KATHARINA:**

Thank you. I don't have to tell you how disgusting it is here. [Whisper.] The Warden included.

**KEPLER:**

If we lose our next appeal, the court could sentence you to one of two things. They may sentence you to watch someone else being tortured while the Executioner shows you his instruments. At this point, don't be afraid, remember they cannot use them on you, unless you confess.

**KATHARINA:**

I will not confess, but I don't know how I can handle watching someone tortured.

**KEPLER:**

Remember there is nothing you could do to save them anyway. Fill your mind with prayers

**KATHARINA:**

Prayers haven't worked well.

**KEPLER:**

Then try religious hymns, anything to keep you from focusing on what they want you to see or hear to make you frightened. Now, I don't want to consider the second possibility [Choke up].

**KATHARINA:**

You mean torture?

**KEPLER:**

Yes, and I am afraid that since we have already disproved all the charges against you it obviously means the Court is biased against you. God forbid it, that sentence is now possible.

**KATHARINA:**

At my age no one survives torture. They would all finally be rid of me, and I of those bastards.

**KEPLER:**

Mother, but we don't want to be rid of you, not this way. Please don't be concerned about what the courts and neighbors want. To hell with them. It anguishes me to have to say this to you, but you must know. I have talked it over with Christoph and Margaretha, and if it comes to torture. [Looks up to heaven and in anguish says.] God forbid. We want you to confess immediately. Promise me you will confess.

**KATHARINA:**

Why would I do that?

**KEPLER:**

Because then we will plead for a merciful and quick execution without being tortured. I can't bear to think of that as your fate. [Cry and grab KATHARINA's hands.] I have been summoned to Prague and this may be our last time together. If the Court prescribes torture, I beg you to confess.

**KATHARINA:**

Please don't cry. You have to be strong. I don't want you upset but I would never confess to being a witch. It is not because I'm afraid of dying. Right now I would welcome it. It is because I don't want the reputations of you children tarnished because of me. You have all achieved so much. How many other women have raised such pious, noble and talented children on their own? And you, my little Johann, you have brought me such joy and pride.

**KEPLER:**

Mother. [Choke] No one survives torture without confessing. Don't worry about our reputations. You don't deserve such a death. If you are concerned about our social status in Leonberg, we will ask the Court to grant us the favour of having you [choke] you know, in a small village where we are strangers. You don't have to face dying in the Marktplatz in front of your neighbors.

**KATHARINA:**

Some people do die without confessing. Promise me that if I am condemned to torture you have the person bringing my food to bring me the little green bottle I keep hidden at the back left corner of the pantry.

**KEPLER:**

What are you saying?

**KATHARINA:**

If I am sentenced to torture, it is the only way I can end my life without torture or confessing. I will cheat these bastards out of my confession or my torture.

**KEPLER:**

Mother. Suicide would be a mortal sin.

**KATHARINA:**

I think God would make an exception for me in this case. I have been more than a perfect servant.

**KEPLER:**

Promise you won't do anything until I plead your case again before the Duke. I will see him while I am in Prague and send you word of what he says. I do so worry you are too frail to survive here too long and might perish before I can return. [Hold Katharina's hands again.] Mother, in case God takes you before I return I want to tell you now how much I love you and beg your forgiveness for anything I might ever have done to hurt you or make your life more difficult.

**KATHARINA:**

You know that is not necessary, you have only ever brought me joy.

**KEPLER:**

I might have believed you before I had children of my own. Only now can I fully appreciate the sacrifices you made for us all. I have never known a woman as strong as you. Even now you think of us, and not of yourself.

**KATHARINA:**

[Chokes]

I love you with my whole heart, but don't make me cry.

**WARDEN:**

Your time is up, you have to leave before daylight so no one sees I let you inside.

**KEPLER AND KATHARINA**

[Hug goodbye and **GUARD** escorts **KEPLER** to exit]

**GUARD:**

[Sits down in his chair in front of **Prisoner** MULLER's cell.]

**KATHARINA:**

[Kneels and silently prays]

**PRISONER:**

Madam, are you okay? Do you feel like continuing our conversation?

**KATHARINA:**

Why not? I can't sleep now.

[Stands and sits down on her bench.]

**PRISONER:**

May I ask how you came about being unjustly accused? Surely there must have been something specific your neighbour used to prove you were a witch.

**KATHARINA:**

She falsely, and I say falsely, claims to have become ill after drinking a potion I gave to her. I happen to know that the reason she almost died was because she self-aborted yet another pregnancy. Her illness was punishment from God for her chosen profession, and my potion did her no harm.

**PRISONER:**

Are you positive the potion might not have had some small effect on her health? Perhaps she drank too much of it.

**KATHARINA:**

That claim was hogwash, it was the same remedy I had given many others before, including her. I am not the only person to treat her. I hear she also foolishly paid a travelling quack for **his magic potion**.

**PRISONER:**

Without offending you madam, I hear there must be multiple, shall I say 'victims', before a person can be arrested. Surely, she is was not your only accuser.

**KATHARINA:**

You know that once accused of being a witch the news spreads and all sorts of ruffians come forward with outrageous claims. Then there are simply the superstitious ones. If my free treatments cured them they were happy, but if they failed, they assumed I must be a witch. Maybe not right then, but certainly after someone else accuses me of it.

**PRISONER:**

I have never thought of it. But do you suppose that if God intended his plants to be used for good, it might make sense for the Devil to use them for evil?

**KATHARINA:**

I know nothing of the Devil and I know of no one who has willingly used God's gift of healing herbs for evil. Definitely, I did not.

**PRISONER:**

I believe you. So you say there were more accusers. Who were they?

[Pause] Oh, I only ask because I am fascinated with your story, I have never had the opportunity of speaking to a person accused of witchcraft, Um, wrongfully in your case.

**KATHARINA:**

That surprises me, it seems like every midwife or woman over 50 years old has been accused these days. But, yes, another was a young village girl who, **after** I was branded as a witch, said she fell ill and collapsed after passing by under my window. I wasn't even home at the time.

**PRISONER:**

That is amazing. What would cause her to become ill so suddenly, and under your window?

**KATHARINA:**

I couldn't say at the time, but my son, Johannes, proved her wrong. He was just here, did you see him? Anyway, he spoke to her and other witnesses and discovered that the little urchin was simply exhausted from carrying too heavy of a load of wood all day. Her fear and dull superstitious nature was to blame.

**PRISONER:**

So then it is still only your neighbour who became ill. No one else became ill from your remedies?

**KATHARINA:**

Well, it was not from my herbs. But one friend claimed that he became lame and his wife died after they drank wine at my home. It can't be true because only she died and we all three drank the same wine. My wine is of the best quality in the area, it couldn't be to blame.

**PRISONER:**

[Alert.]

A winemaker, you are a lady of many talents. We would have made excellent business partners.

**WARDEN:**

[Clears throat and motions to prisoner to continue]

**PRISONER:**

Who was this lady that died, what happened?

**KATHARINA:**

Her husband was my son's professor and he would often write letters I dictated to be sent to Johannes.

**PRISONER:**

He wrote letters for you?

**KATHARINA:**

Yes. I am quite clever otherwise, if I must say, but was never schooled in reading. Anyway, one night, after such a meeting, I brought out my best wine from the cellar and we all drank. They both left in fine spirits but after this accusation, he testified at court against me.

**PRISONER:**

That sounds very serious, you must have been worried about that testimony against you.

**KATHARINA:**

I was very distraught when I heard she had died, but that was years ago and no one said my wine was to blame back then.

**PRISONER:**

If we forget about this unfortunate incident, and the young village urchin, and the false accusation by your neighbour, then what cause could the constable have to arrest you?

**KATHARINA:**

There is nothing of importance to mention, they are all lies.

**WARDEN:**

Nothing more? Hah, I have read them all, there are over 30 accusations of illness and death against her. If she is innocent, why did she run away to Austria after being charged by the Constable? Ask her that.

**KATHARINA:**

I was advised to seek safety away from the likes of you until my sons and counsel could put together my defence. I returned to clear my name didn't I?

**PRISONER:**

Over 30 charges? That is an impressive record, you must have a lot of enemies.

**KATHARINA:**

I have heard gossip that some neighbors didn't like me but I had no enemies. These people came to me when they were ill, I was respected for my healing potions. But now, they are like wolves that catch the scent of blood.

**WARDEN:**

I would be very ungrateful if I were poisoned. I notice you forgot to mention the barber and schoolmaster who became ill after drinking your potions.

**KATHARINA:**

You still assume I am guilty. Have you no compassion for prisoners falsely charged?

**WARDEN:**

Innocent people are not arrested.

**KATHARINA:**

[screech] Hah!

**PRISONER:**

My dear lady, do not expect any prison warden to believe in your innocence. That would be too risky. One twinkling of sympathy could move them to allow a prisoner to escape.

**KATHARINA:**

Well, he could at least be civil and keep his revolting opinions to himself.

**PRISONER:**

Truly, and I have been victim to those myself for a while now. But to continue your story, how would I explain the deaths the Warden mentioned to my friend, if he asked, that is? I am sure he would do so.

**KATHARINA:**

Do you think that your friend can really help me?

**PRISONER:**

He, like your son, is in a high position and can influence the courts if you are innocent. Maybe even if you are guilty. It wouldn't hurt to have two famous men pleading your case would it? So please continue, how did these other customers of yours die?

**KATHARINA:**

I do admit, that in time, I realized that some villagers were becoming ill after drinking from one of my favourite goblets. It was a gift for my 60<sup>th</sup> birthday, you know. Anyway, I started suspecting it was from the goblet itself. It was a pity and I wasn't really sure but decided to quit using it just in case. It was such a beautifully ornate cup and added something special to the healing ceremony.

**PRISONER:**

What made you think it was the cup and not your potion?

**KATHARINA:**

It had to be the cup since I gave the same potion to others. It was obvious over time that only the people who drank the potion from this cup became ill.

**WARDEN:**

Or died! And lest you forget, that your son Christoph is the only pewter maker in town.

**KATHARINA:**

May God rest their blessed souls, if they became ill from one of Christoph's cups. Obviously someone has not only bewitched my favourite goblet but placed a curse on our whole family.

**WARDEN:**

You are insane.

**KATHARINA:**

You are the one who believes in witches. If I say a witch cast a spell on me, then I am insane!

**WARDEN:**

Listen, your own son, Heinrich, says you are crazy. You rode a calf to its death once and then roasted it for his dinner.

**KATHARINA:**

My daughter testified that it was Heinrich himself that killed the calf. He was desperate to have meat with his meals. When it was discovered, I agreed to let him blame me so he wouldn't be arrested.

**WARDEN:**

Well, um. Then was it not crazy when you asked that grave digger to give you the skull of your father. He said you wanted to have your son cover it in silver and use it as a drinking cup. As if you didn't do enough harm with your pewter goblet.

**KATHARINA:**

That was to be a gift to my son, Johannes. I saw many such cups used, both in Prague and in his university in Tübingen. If you call this act of reverence for my beloved father insane then you would be blaspheming the Catholic Church because they give out the bones of their saints as holy relics.

**WARDEN:**

We are not Catholic here.

**KATHARINA:**

All right, then, the Duke's own mother, Sibylle, used small pieces of skull and even of human hearts in potions sold in her pharmacy.

**WARDEN:**

We are not royalty here either, despite what you think of yourself. If your son, Heinrich, was so fond of you then why was he himself the first to call you a witch. He died a year later didn't he? How suspicious is that?

**KATHARINA:**

Heinrich didn't mean it. He spent his life as a soldier where he was always surrounded by rowdy and vulgar companions. He was simply angry that I criticized him for converting to Catholicism.

**WARDEN:**

I think the vulgar companion was you, I have never seen a woman with such a wicked tongue.

**KATHARINA:**

Humph, My family supports me, they will prove I am innocent.

**WARDEN:**

Well they didn't succeed in getting you released, did they Witch?

**PRISONER:**

[Throws up his hands in frustration]

**WARDEN:**

If you are innocent, then why did you try to bribe Constable Einhorn with a silver cup to not report all your witchy misdeeds to the Chancellery?

**KATHARINA:**

I will give you several reasons, I trust God must have given you some small ability to reason for yourself. You pick the one you like. One, the Constable would happily have taken the bribe but was afraid he would be discovered. Two, he wants to make a name for himself as having prosecuted the highest number of witches in the country, and I might add, his most famous to date. Or I'll throw in another reason, maybe he is one of Ursula's admirers.

**WARDEN:**

Or four, maybe he is simply a noble and honourable man!

**KATHARINA:**

Oh, you mean like the last constable who, when he died, left a chest full of silver and gold treasures.

**PRISONER:**

[Clears throat and motions for Guard to keep quiet]

Madam, I admire your courage in fighting to vindicate yourself against these incredulous charges. You have to ignore our jailer friend, remember we pay our taxes for him to make our incarceration miserable. I am puzzled though, how does it happen that you were so suddenly jailed tonight?

**KATHARINA:**

Unfortunately, tonight, I was tricked and intimidated into making a healing potion for Ursula. These drunken guards broke into the house; waking and terrorizing me with swords. They claimed I had given an evil potion to my neighbour Ursula, and demanded I confess to being a witch. I knew to deny it. I saw this tactic used on my aunt and once you confess your fate is sealed.

**PRISONER:**

Your aunt was a witch? You didn't mention that earlier.

**KATHARINA:**

Yes, No. I meant to say my aunt was accused. She raised me and was a saint, not a witch.

**PRISONER:**

How did it come to happen that your aunt was charged as a witch?

**KATHARINA:**

She was an herbalist, a good one. I was 12 when she was arrested. In the end, they tortured her into confessing to every death, failed crop or illness for the last 50 years in the village. They said she even admitted to spending her nights robbing graves. Or flying through the air to attend Sabbaths where she danced with other witches and spirits in the forest. She even admitted to having sex with the Devil. They didn't care that I testified that she was in bed next to me all night, every night.

**PRISONER:**

Your aunt confessed to having sex with the Devil? Pardon me for asking, and it is only with academic curiosity, but you say you slept next to her?

**KATHARINA:**

Yes, every night, all night.

**PRISONER:**

Did you ever wake to discover the Devil in your bed? So sorry for asking but I have often heard stories of this in my esteemed circle of friends.

**KATHARINA:**

It was not true.

**WARDEN:**

You say she confessed. So it must be true. You are just protecting her. You had to have heard strange sounds or a slight movement.

**KATHARINA:**

We slept with a bolster down the middle of the bed. My aunt said she would not even let a husband so close. This is probably what saved me from the inquisitors because, like you both, they assumed the Devil had joined us in bed.

**PRISONER:**

They found you innocent?

**KATHARINA:**

Yes, but it was after a long discussion about how many people could fit in the bed. They decided that there was not space for four of us at the same time so I could not have also had a devil lover.

**WARDEN:**

Their reasoning was very fortunate for you. A more intelligent inquisitor might have questioned whether the devil could have taken one lover at a time or maybe both together. Are you sure you never heard strange sounds from her side of the bed, she did confess?

**KATHARINA:**

[Angry and under breath.]

You're disgusting. [Louder in answering.] I can't say, but I am sure it was much less movement and noise than what comes from underneath your covers. The Devil beds men as well you know.

**WARDEN:**

[Shock and disgust]

**PRISONER:**

[Short laugh.]

I apologize for our Warden's lack of respect. I will change the subject. I am quite curious about how witches are able to fly and what happens when they arrive in the forest. What did you hear of these?

**KATHARINA:**

I admit that at that age the ability to fly was more interesting to me. My aunt didn't have any details. But I heard tell from the writings of a famous inquisitor. He said these women would dig up bodies of infants and boil up a brew from pulverized bones and fat. Next, they rubbed the fat onto their brooms. Then they flew on these to witch gatherings in the forest. He said witches who were too poor to afford animal fat had to walk.

**PRISONER:**

That is really being poor. No wonder they would be tempted by promises from the Devil. But go on, what did they do there in the forest?

**KATHARINA:**

There the young women danced in a circle with demons and other fairies. Then they ate black bread and presented the Devil with the hearts of unbaptised children. Then the witches, instead of the kiss of peace in the Mass, had to kiss the Devil's ass. After that they engaged in all types of sex while the old women held lit candles.

**WARDEN:**

Tell Herr MULLER where the old hag witches held their candles. I'll give you a hint, they had to stand bent over. That would be you, Madam.

**KATHARINA:**

You are truly vile, I swear you must have testicles for brains.

**PRISONER:**

[Laughter]

My dear lady, I agree with you there. But, ignore him, please continue. Tell me more about these spirits and demons.

**KATHARINA:**

While I was working for that Jewish family after my aunt died. Anyway, it was there I once heard a rabbi say that God made all the strange spirits, nymphs and fairies toward the end of 6<sup>th</sup> day of creation. But before he could finish, he had to stop for the Sabbath. So now they hide in the woods coming out to cause trouble and molest people.

**WARDEN:**

And to attend these orgies with the Devil and, shall we say, his mistresses.

**PRISONER:**

Ignore the Warden. Please continue, I do want to know what happened to your aunt.

**KATHARINA:**

The poor dear, barely alive after her torture, she was burned at the stake.

**PRISONER:**

I am curious, if she was innocent, how did they manage to **prove** she was a witch?

**KATHARINA:**

They couldn't **prove** it. Witchcraft is impossible to prove because they do everything in secret, without witnesses. That is why they have to use deceit or torture to get people to confess and to name other fellow witches.

**PRISONER:**

Then she confessed?

**KATHARINA:**

Yes. They tricked her into first confessing to be a witch and then tortured her until she admitted all the other crimes.

**PRISONER:**

Really? [cough] How did they trick her into confessing?

**KATHARINA:**

She was locked up in an old castle outside of town. Then one day the warden pretended to leave on a trip. He had a friend of my aunt visit her, promising to break her out of prison. The only condition was that first she had to confess to him. I don't know why she wasn't suspicious. Maybe it was because she was so desperate and thought he could be trusted. So to escape before the warden returned, she confessed to him. Then he betrayed her, for what reason I never knew, probably money.

**PRISONER:**

So she confessed even though she was innocent. What a despicable trick orchestrated by despicable wardens.

**WARDEN:**

Humph!

**KATHARINA:**

Truly, betrayal and torture was her reward for trusting a friend and for healing our ungrateful villagers.

**PRISONER:**

Well, if you didn't confess, how were they able to arrest you tonight?



**KATHARINA:**

They lied to me, these same men I see at church every week and who profess to be Christian. They told me if I mixed a remedy to counteract the first potion that made Ursula ill, the matter would be forgotten. So, hoping they were only trying to pacify her, I consented to mix a healing potion. I calculated that I might win either way. If she was healed she would have no claim against me. If the potion didn't work, then she could not claim I had the power to make her ill.

**PRISONER:**

What happened? Did she drink?

**KATHARINA:**

Yes, and to my shock she claimed to be instantly and miraculously healed. I knew my herbs never worked that quickly and that this gang's middle of the night intrusion was not going to end well for me.

**PRISONER:**

And?

**KATHARINA:**

And, I was then told that only a witch could cast a counter-spell. That by healing her, it proved that I had harmed her with my first potion. Then these brave honest Christian men, with swords drawn, crammed me into that box and brought me to this shit hole to await my inquisition.

**PRISONER:**

Hah, you describe our lavish accommodations perfectly. I have to wonder though. If neither your son nor my friend is successful in getting you released, would you be able to survive torture without confessing?

**KATHARINA:**

Survival is not important to me, only that I am able to die without confessing.

**PRISONER:**

Torture doesn't worry you? I have heard that almost everyone confesses under torture. They all prefer to confess so they can die and stop the pain. I have grown fond of you and only ask because of my genuine concern for your wellbeing.

**KATHARINA:**

I will never confess. A confession would bring dishonour and even suspicion of witchcraft onto my family. Johannes would lose his position as the Chief Mathematician, Christoph would lose his customers, and it could ruin my daughter's marriage since her husband is a respected Pastor. The stigma would even effect my grandchildren's future.

**PRISONER:**

I sincerely admire your devotion and courage. I have seen woodprints of some of the types of torture used and have to say I might confess to whatever they ask if one or two of these were used on me.

**KATHARINA:**

I have to have faith that it won't come to that.

**PRISONER:**

I hear the interrogation and torture can take months. The interrogator and executioner have a fairly set regimen if the prisoner doesn't confess. Warden, what happens first, you would know.

**WARDEN:**

Well, I have heard of some of the formalities. First, the woman is taken before the Interrogator. This man determines the type of the torture used by the executioner. Then the executioner strips her completely naked, and I mean completely. They say many of the old women confess right then.

**PRISONER:**

Naked? Why?

**WARDEN:**

They say that witches all have a sign of the Devil on them. It might look like a small mole or freckle and be difficult to find.

**KATHARINA:**

That is foolish, everyone has a mole or freckle.

**WARDEN:**

Well, it is certain that all witches have them. Can I assume that you, Frau Kepler, have such a mark?

**KATHARINA:**

[Silent, shakes and lowers head into hands]

**WARDEN:**

Does the cat have your tongue? Well, your executioner will soon find the answer.

**PRISONER:**

Stop, we will never get her to confess by being so cruel.

**KATHARINA:**

What? You too Herr MULLER. You are in cahoots with the Warden? [Jumps up and goes to front bars of cell.] I thought you were a friend. I am such an idiot!

**WARDEN:**

I have had enough. You have failed miserably to get this witch to confess.

[Opens prisoner's door, unchains prisoner]

You, Herr MULLER, can forget the promise of a reprieve.

[Brings **PRISONER** out to show Katharina]

Look here witch, this is your honourable new friend, a drunken bench-whistler. Maybe you can watch from a window when we parade him around the Marktplatz on the back of an ass.

[Return **PRISONER** to his cell and start dimming lights.]

**KATHARINA:**

Scoundrels, rats, pigs! No. You are both the bastard offspring of a rat and a pig.

**WARDEN:**

You, madam, are the most wretched and foul-mouthed prisoner I have ever seen. You are most certainly the Devil's favourite mistress.

**KATHARINA:**

If I were the Devil's mistress I would cast a spell to turn you both into the shit of a bastard pig-rat. You will both burn in hell for this.

**WARDEN:**

You will burn first, but before that I will get to delight in watching the executioner loosen your irreverent tongue. I would have him cut it out now but you will need it to confess; sleep well.

**PRISONER:**

[Head down, hands holding onto bars.]

God Almighty, please forgive me.

**END OF ACT I...**

**ACT II – KEPLER, BODIN AND DUKE - Thursday, Sept 10, 1620**

[AT RISE:] Johannes **KEPLER**, and the **DUKE** of Wurttemberg meet in a reception room at the Prague Castle, Jean **BODIN** joins them a few minutes later.)

**KEPLER:**

[Bow]

Your Grace, I am humbled and grateful to have an audience before you.

**DUKE:**

Herr Kepler. How often are two people from Leonberg in Prague at the same time? I prefer to meet you here because in Leonberg protocol dictates that all our communication is done in writing. I would like to have a more open dialogue with you about more sensitive issues.

**KEPLER:**

What would that be, Your Grace?

**DUKE:**

I will get to it. But first let's discuss the letters I received regarding the trial for your mother. I know you have a familial obligation but might I ask why you are so devoted to this cause? Your brother and sister have all but washed their hands of her. I hear the case against her is overwhelming and defending her may be futile and undoubtedly expensive.

**KEPLER:**

My mother has assets, though not inexhaustible. As for our family, they are supportive but hindered by other factors. My sister's husband accepted a pastor position in a town too far away to care for her. My brother, quite frankly, has a weak constitution and worries his business and family will suffer if he is seen aiding her.

**DUKE:**

Are you aware that Constable Einhorn has now petitioned me to seize and disburse her assets to Ursula Reinbold. Without this she would be unable to pay the expenses of her incarceration. These expenses would then fall upon you. Are you prepared to risk your reputation and livelihood defending her?

**KEPLER:**

[Pause]

Doing the honourable thing shouldn't depend on cost, or reputation for the victim of an injustice. And although our family doesn't typically show affection, I have a very strong attachment to her.

**DUKE:**

I understand, us Germans are generally more stoic. At least in expressing love.

**KEPLER:**

So true. I know others criticize her sharp tongue and propensity to meddle, but I also learned of the many sacrifices she has made for others while putting together her defence and speaking to her neighbors. She is most pious and attends church regularly and sincerely believes mixing herbal teas and potions are part of her Christian duty to cure the sick.

**DUKE:**

Frau Reinbold seems to have more influence with the Constable.

**KEPLER:**

God only knows why. She is guilty of breaking every one of His commandments. The cause of which, I might add, led to all her professed ailments.

**DUKE:**

If this is your decision I will continue to support you as best I can.

**KEPLER:**

Your Grace, if you permit me to add, this Constable Einhorn has now ignored three of your orders to proceed with my mother's charge of slander against the Reinbolds. He is not only in connivance with them but brags that if forced to obey your order to hold the trial, he will petition the Royal Court. It appears they have now delayed long enough that my mother will be tried as a witch before having the opportunity to clear her name in the slander trial.

**DUKE:**

This is disturbing news for us both. Unfortunately, her case has proceeded too far now for me to stop it. I will deny the Constable's request to seize and disperse her assets to the injured parties. However, her assets will have to have restrictions placed on them until after her trial.

**KEPLER:**

We are in utmost gratitude to you, and God willing, she will live to exonerate her good name. Nothing else matters at the moment.

**DUKE:**

May God grant her continued health and endurance until then? I asked you here for another reason as well.

**KEPLER:**

Yes.

**DUKE:**

I have for my counsel many wise and educated advisors. However, due to their deference and subservience I suspect they do not always speak in a forthright manner. I hear, Herr Kepler that lack of candour and humility are two of your virtues.

**KEPLER:**

[Surprise]

True, but none have expressed it as eloquently as you.

**DUKE:**

[Chuckle]

Then I will continue. As everyone under my reign knows, I pride myself on being a fair servant of God. My invitation is specifically related to your renowned skill as an astronomer. As a commander of troops, I am interested in knowing if you are truly able to predict outcomes of battles, or to recommend military strategies.

**KEPLER:**

This is not my expertise.

**DUKE:**

I believe it is. You are renowned for accurately predicting the 1610 peasant revolt and I know you were engaged for this type of service for Count von Wallenstein.

**KEPLER:**

I was not aware that the Count was my anonymous patron until just now.

**DUKE:**

Consider this confidence as a token of my trust in our future collaborations. Now, not to offend you, but I must ask, how is it that your predictions are so superior to your colleagues? Is it by some degree of sorcery?

**KEPLER:**

Are you now accusing me of witchcraft?

**DUKE:**

Don't act shocked, you must know that without the protection of the king you could be facing the same charges as your mother. I am not attempting to trick you into a confession.

[Quietly and leaning toward Kepler.]

I am quite frankly seeking a little collaboration.

**KEPLER:**

What is it you desire?

**DUKE:**

I want to know the secret or science, if you will, behind your military predictions. Many demonologists are now becoming suspect of astrologers, and would have them burned as well. I should be safe from such accusations, but it may be risky for you if it were discovered.

**KEPLER:**

As you wish then. You have done much for my family. First, understand that I do not believe astrologers are gifted with knowledge of the future. This power belongs only to our omniscient God. This is, I believe, the primary reason demonologists are now suspect of it as a form of sorcery. Interpreting the significance of the position of planets requires religious and mathematical training such as I had at seminary.

**DUKE:**

Still, you are said to have a special gift for reading the stars.

**KEPLER:**

So it is said, and I do use math formulas in preparing charts. Unlike others, I combine this ability with observation of human nature and current affairs to validate those predictions.

**DUKE:**

I hear you advised King Rudolf to take political action against the dissidents before Matthias deposed him.

**KEPLER:**

True. The king knew he should take action but ignored my prediction of an eminent takeover by his brother. Instead he insisted on waiting for the stars to align themselves perfectly to guarantee his victory.

**DUKE:**

How unfortunate. I am sure Rudolf would have overseen a more peaceful transition and collaboration between Catholics and Protestants.

**KEPLER:**

[Quietly and leaning forward.]

I agree. The castle is not the same without him.

[Sit back up.]

But, yes, these predictions are both examples of deductive reasoning and observation. It is here that I listen to nobles voicing concerns over various political issues and since I frequently travel between Austria and Germany I also hear complaints from villagers along the way.

**DUKE:**

You didn't see this predicted in the position of the planets?

**KEPLER:**

You put me at great risk in answering that question. [Pause.] It would be blasphemy to say that God has not hidden his secrets in the stars.

**DUKE:**

Herr Kepler, you are either a great diplomat or a weasel. Tell me, then, do you know enough from castle gossip to draft a chart predicting outcomes of my future battles?

**KEPLER:**

If that is your wish.

**DUKE:**

Very well, that is settled. Aside from your expertise in astrology, I want to understand the scientific basis for sorcery itself, a subject that is of interest to us both at the moment. I am confident that you have done much research on this subject. Having lived with one accused of sorcery, you should prove knowledgeable, although I expect biased to a degree.

**KEPLER:**

Sire, I must reiterate, my mother is not a sorcerer!

**DUKE:**

Herr Kepler, I cannot proclaim your mother's innocence or guilt; but I am not trying to trick you into a statement that could be used for her prosecution.

**KEPLER:**

I appreciate you clarifying that.

**DUKE:**

My lands are under attack, and not only by foreign armies. They are being torn apart by dissension between Catholics, Lutherans, and Calvinists. Every village has people hysterically blaming crop failure or calamity upon a spell cast by a demon possessed neighbour. My religious councillors simply condemn witchcraft or tell me to read The Witch Hammer and my legal counsel quotes me judicial law. Both seem to lack the courage, or perhaps education, in which to discuss the subject rationally. I want the truth.

**KEPLER:**

Lately, courage has been pressed upon me like a branding iron. I am honoured if my torment might in some way serve a higher purpose.

**DUKE:**

You may have that courage tested now. Because to be fair, I have also invited the renowned philosopher and demonologist, Jean Bodin, to join us.

**KEPLER:**

I am aware of Bodin. He served at one time as King Charles IX's counsel, and is a Professor of Law at Toulouse. He is also responsible for the increased use of torture for any and all accused of witchcraft.

**DUKE:**

I assumed you would know of him, aside from your conflicting views on sorcery, you have much in common.

[Ring bell]:

Stefan [butler], please ask Professor Bodin to join us.

[Optional actor, the audience does not see the butler unless director wants to add additional actor.]

**BODIN:**

[Enters, with or without the butler and bows]

Your Grace.

**DUKE:**

Monsieur Jean Bodin, might I present to you Professor Johannes Kepler, our King's Chief Mathematician.

**BODIN:**

To be sure, I know of you, I believe we share a fascination of religious philosophy and physics.

**DUKE:**

Please sit down.

**BODIN:**

I notice there are two new imposing statues at the castle entry since my last visit, when did those appear?

**KEPLER:**

Right after Rudolf II's brother, King Matthias, overthrew him.

**BODIN:**

They are quite malevolent and certainly don't make a visitor feel welcome.

**DUKE:**

Not all visitors are equally welcome. Right now, I dare say you as a Catholic are more welcome than me.

**BODIN:**

True. And with God's good grace I will be welcomed everywhere one day!

**DUKE:**

I would be satisfied if all forms of Christianity would capture the hearts of the world and live in peace.

**BODIN:**

That would be a fine start. Getting on then. I must say I was curious to finally meet you. You have my condolences on the passing of your father.

**DUKE:**

Thank you, it is kind of you to say.

**BODIN:**

I almost met him once. It was at Queen Elizabeth's Court when he was to be conferred into the order of the "Knights of the Garter". Shakespeare created a play in his honour. It was quite an amusing tale about a couple of wives from Windsor.

**DUKE:**

It is a pity he wasn't able to attend the affair.

**BODIN:**

The story is that your father's horse was stolen along the way.

**DUKE:**

I see that joke is still circulating around England. My father was good humoured about it. He said it was more likely the horse carrying Her Majesty's emissary with his invitation that was stolen.

**BODIN:**

[Laugh.]

A hearty laugh does me good right now.

**DUKE:**

Yes, I imagine you don't experience much of it in your campaign against witchcraft.

**BODIN:**

No, there is not. I suppose we must focus on my purpose here. As unpleasant as it is.

**KEPLER:**

[Looks at Bodin suspiciously]

**BODIN:**

Professor Kepler, your academic and religious credentials are impressive. I must say I find some of your writings most interesting. Like your theory that our sun rotates on its axis. I assume you are aware you could be charged with heresy for some of these beliefs. Your support of Copernicus' laws of the universe broach upon heresy.

**KEPLER:**

[Surprise.]

Are you here to interrogate me about this?

**BODIN:**

No, this is of no concern to me at the moment.

**KEPLER:**

Then, may I ask why you are here?

**BODIN:**

I assume rather, I am here to investigate your intimate connection to sorcery.

**KEPLER:**

[Sits forward, shocked.]

**DUKE:**

I must correct any misunderstanding you may have, Monsieur Bodin. Herr Kepler is not on trial here.

**BODIN:**

I beg your pardon. I mistakenly assumed that since most of those serving during the previous court were suspect of sorcery, that he would have been charged.

**KEPLER:**

And what do you profess to know of this?

**BODIN:**

I know your King Rudolf, known abroad as the Mad Alchemist, ceremoniously drew a circle around himself with the horn of a unicorn for protection. This sorcery cost him his throne.

**KEPLER:**

At the risk of offending the validity of your information, King Rudolf lost his throne due to religious tolerance. He was a great king that endured more than most. He reigned through the great plague, the Vienna earthquake, and the Turkish invasion. Anyone would go a little mad. He was not a devil worshipper.

**BODIN:**

Humph! You do know that a king can never be brought to trial for sorcery, he is only deposed. Obviously that is what the Vatican supported his brother Matthias in doing.

**KEPLER:**

I disagree; the Vatican was more concerned with Rudolf's tolerance of Protestants which came to outnumber Catholics 10 to 1 here.

**BODIN:**

Rudolf was a weak king and let other religions spread too far before ending it. My strategy, and that of other political and religious elites, is to peacefully bring all religions into one accord under one sovereign ruler.

**KEPLER:**

King Rudolf kept peace in the land despite Catholics being a minority. He was an opponent of violence, he saw too much of it in his Uncle Philip's court and with the Turks. Are you instead advocating that he should have started a civil war in an otherwise peaceful empire?

**BODIN:**

If unification cannot be done peacefully, then so be it. Your beloved Rudolf was obviously incapable of that unification.

**KEPLER:**

The King was capable, he just waited too long before acting.

**BODIN:**

Well, your King Rudolf was not so peace loving when he brought in a mercenary army at the end.

**KEPLER:**

It was too late, and it was not to war against his Protestant citizens, it was to protect himself from his brother's military coup.

**BODIN:**

Rudolf's mercenaries failed to protect him. Neither did his magical unicorn horn! And if he loved his subjects so much he would have paid his mercenaries instead of letting them stay around pilfering and creating havoc on its citizens.

**KEPLER:**

Those were horrendous times, especially for our women. Regardless, King Rudolf did care about his subjects. I suspect that was unable to pay them since King Matthias had him under house arrest.

**DUKE:**

Did the mercenaries finally leave without payment?

**KEPLER:**

No, the citizens of Prague were finally saved when the Rosenberg family used the last of their fortune to pay them the wages the King could not.

**BODIN:**

I hear the King owed you back wages as well, money you would find handy in your mother's court case. You may find yourself bankrupt just like the Rosenbergs, and for a much less noble cause.

**KEPLER:**

What do you know of my mother's case?

**BODIN:**

I was invited to be her inquisitor.

**KEPLER:**

[Stunned, looks at the Duke]

**DUKE:**

I have no authority in who is selected as inquisitor, I merely thought the two of you should have an opportunity to meet before her trial.

**KEPLER:**

And you accepted?

**BODIN:**

I think due to the celebrity of the case I should give it serious consideration.

**KEPLER:**

[Stares at Bodin in disbelief.]

**DUKE:**

Gentlemen, shall we now focus on my purpose for our meeting. Monsieur Bodin, I wish you to prove to me that witchcraft is real and propagated by the Devil. Herr Kepler, you are to dispute this.

**BODIN:**

That should be simple, shall I begin?

**DUKE:**

There are specific questions I want addressed. They are: Do witches have any real power, if so what are they? Is there a way to reduce the number of witch burnings? Or do I even want to contain these executions as many of the condemned are a burden on our society? Are we truly in the Last Days of Judgement? If so, is this the Devil's ploy to create havoc before the end?

**BODIN:**

I will gladly give you a long list of the monstrous acts perpetrated by witches.



**DUKE:**

In a minute please. As Duke of my lands, do I risk divine judgement for interfering with a holy war between God and the Devil? What divine retribution do I face for the inadvertent execution of an innocent? Is it wiser to execute innocents than to let a devil worshipper live?

**KEPLER:**

I respect and am humbled by your courage Sire. This is a dilemma. Most would prefer to remain neutral. If you permit, may I state my case first? If I can prove there is no foundation for such widespread accusations of witches causing chaos and harm to others, you would have the answer to all your questions.

**DUKE:**

Carry on then, you have me intrigued.

**BODIN:**

Humph.

**KEPLER:**

I see the catalyst for this hysteria as the result of natural disasters occurring right after our victory over the Turks. Most starving and battle worn Christians now redirect the religious hate and fear, they had against Muslims, toward each other.

**BODIN:**

This battle against infidels was the necessary start of a larger cleansing and unification.

**KEPLER:**

Monsieur, at a time when the world needs tolerance between Christians your path to unification is simply the choice of conversion, exile or death. You have unnecessarily fuelled the flame under the pot of hate and fear. This did not and will not produce universal Catholicism. It has for now only created a foolish scape goat: namely sorcerers and witches.

**BODIN:**

I think you take this too personally. If you had converted you could have remained in Graz and kept your professorship. What does all this have to do with disproving sorcery?

**KEPLER:**

Since our clerics are now unable to provide a safe haven from invading armies and starvation, they have entered a campaign to save their souls. They do this through stricter adherence to morals, church attendance, prayers and the use of  **blessings** .

**BODIN:**

I don't get your point.

**KEPLER:**

Our kingdom has had a long history of using pagan charms for protection. The belief in  **blessings**  and  **charms**  naturally comes with a belief in curses. Previously our clergy were able to claim these disasters were due to our lack of faith or church attendance. But now, because of this increased piousness of parishioners, God could no longer be blamed. It must be His enemy the Devil and his allies.

**BODIN:**

Pardon me, we Catholics do not use magical charms.

**KEPLER:**

On the contrary, you use crosses for protection, church candles and holy water; not to mention bones of saints in your worship.

**BODIN:**

Those are merely visual reminders of our God and saints. Most of our parishioners are illiterate and need these images as an aid in their worship.

**KEPLER:**

I may understand this as an educator. However, I know that when these same good intentioned worshipers steal or duplicate a holy object and use it at home for protection against evil, they are accused of sorcery.

**BODIN:**

Surely as a trained cleric you must agree that if these, what you call charms, have power they should only be entrusted to priests who use them reverently.

**KEPLER:**

As a trained politician and philosopher, you can agree it might also be a church conspiracy to keep parishioners reliant on their institutions. Why would a blessing or object be holy in one location and not the other; the worshipper being the same?

**BODIN:**

You know that long-seated traditions are difficult to change. The Catholic Church has done much to stamp out dependence on pagan superstitions. Idols and blessings are not our enemy, it is their misuse by agents of the Devil. We are unfortunately only seeing a backlash because of current world catastrophes. It is not some church conspiracy as you claim.

**KEPLER:**

I am not concerned with a church conspiracy, I am saying that if clerics put less emphasis on blaming the Devil for natural disasters, it would calm people's fears.

**BODIN:**

I can still prove that witchcraft is the real danger to us all, particularly now.

**KEPLER:**

If you please Monsieur Bodin. I still have the floor and at your pleasure shall continue my argument.

**BODIN:**

Proceed, don't let me interrupt your exhilarating monologue.

**KEPLER:**

Catholicism has had over 1500 years to eradicate these superstitions and has failed. It was finally with the passing of the "Carolina Charter" that we were able to guarantee a fair trial to those falsely accused. But you, Monsieur Bodin, with the advent of your anti-sorcery campaign and publication of "Demonomanie" have revived this hysteria. The number of innocents being tortured and executed as witches has grown exponentially. Some villages have been wiped out completely.

**BODIN:**

My book provided the tools and knowledge needed by magistrates and judges who are entrusted to keep our communities free of harmful sorcery.

**KEPLER:**

All you did was give them permission to ignore this Code of Imperial Law. Now inquisitors almost always prescribe some form of torture to force a confession.

**BODIN:**

What real difference could that possibly make in the proceedings of witch trials?

**KEPLER:**

The magistrates now accept unsubstantiated rumours by feuding neighbours. New mothers shift blame for an abortion, or miscarriage onto their midwife. People accused of murder are burned as witches while the person claimed to have been murdered is alive and well.

**BODIN:**

The Bible says that if one sins in their heart, it is as if they have sinned in the flesh. It matters not whether the person, the witch wished dead, is still alive.

**KEPLER:**

Then don't you consider it at least a little coincidental that all confessions are done after a period of horrendous torture?

**BODIN:**

You honestly believe that a witch would confess otherwise? The "true faith" must be kept pure. We are fighting a new holy crusade here. Wars are like a caring doctor who cannot heal a deep-seated disease without causing great pain or provoking much moaning from the patient. If a few innocents have to die so be it. They can take solace in knowing, that with the public display of their execution, they have discouraged others from being seduced by the Devil.

**KEPLER:**

Surely, you don't believe that God would want his innocents to suffer a more brutal death than his own son suffered for our sins? And not by the hands of Romans, pagans or Jews, but by their own fellow Christians.

**BODIN:**

God allowed innocent early Christians to be persecuted and even butchered in the Roman coliseum, those guilty will answer to God later, it is not for me to judge.

**KEPLER:**

You must jest! What if that unwitting guilty accomplice is our Duke here, or our princes or even our King. Are you personally willing to risk the damnation of their souls?

**DUKE:**

[Duke and Bodin peer at each other.]

Obviously the magistrates need more supervision. I have been distracted with my armies and have trusted them to be honourable in their duties. I fear that, until these wars end, we may **all** have to answer directly to God for any misdeeds.

**KEPLER:**

Then, religion aside, there is also a financial basis for many of these false accusations. This, you as Duke, might be able to change.

**DUKE:**

How so?

**KEPLER:**

The jailor and executioners now profit greatly. They not only charge for the rope that is used to hang the victim but the large banquet celebrating their execution. You and other nobles even provide an additional payment to those involved in the successful conviction of a witch. This financial award could simply be reduced.

**BODIN:**

We have to cover our expenses. We can't be expected to do this work free of charge!

**DUKE:**

I will discuss both your concerns with my counsel.

**KEPLER:**

The other financial basis of these charges lie with the accusers. It has become common that a farmer nowadays, without proof, can blame a neighbour for a failed crop, death of a diseased animal, or for any other misfortune. Then they demand and receive financial compensation from the estate of the accused witch.

**DUKE:**

I understand the distress of farmers when a failed crop or dead milk-cow can mean his family starves. He has a duty to seek out a cause and, if discovered, claim restitution.

**KEPLER:**

As well he should. However, causing the death of a neighbour's livestock or dealing others injury has always had its own legal punishment. Assuming the accusation is true, the guilty party instead of being brought to justice for his misdeed, is now accused of a much more sensational crime. Namely witchcraft, which mandates execution.

**BODIN:**

Absurd, my book lists specific criteria that must be met to suspect one of witchcraft. A common thief or murderer does not qualify.

**KEPLER:**

Of course not, my point exactly. But it is at this stage hysterical city elders, influenced by your writings and without legal restrictions, apply torture to force confessions. And as I pointed out, a conviction of witchcraft offers an additional bounty.

**BODIN:**

Torture has always been used to obtain the truth. Criminals don't confess on their own.

**KEPLER:**

Did we not learn this lesson from our own history. Remember that outrageous confessions were obtained this way from Gypsies and Jews in the past. Torture caused these unfortunate people to confess to crimes in areas of the country where they had never travelled. They confessed to ritual killings of children they never met, cannibalizing them and drinking their blood. I dare wonder if the reason we are turning against each other right now is because we have either massacred or expelled both those hapless groups from our cities.

**BODIN:**

Perhaps it is because these are the rituals the Devil always requires of his worshippers. This should prove, beyond doubt, they are from a satanic origin.

**KEPLER:**

You often quote Aristotle and Moses in your writings but why do you ignore Greek mythology?

**BODIN:**

What are you implying?

**KEPLER:**

It is obvious that people saw these sacrilegious rituals on our own woodcuts. Not the new ones we see of modern witches but earlier ones portraying the ancient gods of agriculture.

**BODIN:**

To which woodcuts do you refer?

**KEPLER:**

The ones showing the god Kronos as a terrifying figure who consumes his own offspring. I say that it is from **this** visual production of history that those tortured souls draw upon. If the accused fails to make this connection, then their executioner directs their confessions to what he has seen in this art. And, I must say, not only from these woodcuts but from details in your book.

**BODIN:**

Unlike you, I am not convinced of their innocence.

**KEPLER:**

Not even now, when this hysteria is so rampant that confessions of these same acts are being forced from priests and nuns. I hear even from those enlightened Jesuits who dare condemn the legal procedures used in witch trials as unjust.

**BODIN:**

Nothing is impossible and no one immune from the Devil's devices. A Jesuit is quite a trophy for the Devil. Besides, lest you forget, the very definition of a witch is someone capable of great feats that to us seem extraordinary or impossible. I can cite the many spells of witches that Homer endured and recorded in his Odyssey. Like when Circe, the sorceress, turned Homer's men into swine

**KEPLER:**

And there you have it. People quote Homer's Odyssey as though it was written by the hand of God, that every spectacular tale was factual and not embellished by an over-exuberant and superstitious pagan writer.

**BODIN:**

Homer's odyssey is a true account of his travels, everyone knows that.

**KEPLER:**

I am merely saying that, now in our modern times, most intellectuals view Circe's statement, or curse if you insist, quite differently. She only meant that the manners of Homer's sailor compared to Circe's were brutish, even resembling that of swine.

**BODIN:**

Well Monsieur, even if you could possibly discredit some of Homer's tales, you have to acknowledge that the Bible also speaks of the powers held by witches.

**KEPLER:**

I am not disputing that witches exist, rather that the numbers are exaggerated and that their rights to a fair trial are subverted. I agree with my dear departed friend Dr. Godelmann who said witches are mostly deluded and depressed women in need of medical treatment. If it is true that they enter a pact with the Devil, it was from fear and intimidation; and not as equal partners.

**BODIN:**

Was the doctor claiming that these witches are to be pardoned?

**KEPLER:**

No, he recommended that they not be subjected to punishment by a secular court. It is the responsibility of clerics to bring these bewitched souls back to God.

**BODIN:**

Catholics, unlike Protestants, have such provisions.

**KEPLER:**

True, but you yourself are not known for advocating it.

**BODIN:**

Exorcisms and prayer are not expedient enough to stop witches from infecting others with this spiritual plague. That is probably how some of our good intentioned priests got exposed to the Devil in the first place.

**KEPLER:**

I see. Your renowned attribute for compassion lies elsewhere. Then let's return to our inspection into the validity of some of the more outrageous claims against witches. The accusation of which should instantly discredit a witness using it. Let us consider **auguries**. Does the Devil really speak to witches?

**BODIN:**

This is one of the first miracles that proves proof of a witch's conversion to Devil worship since it is through animals or objects that he communicates to his victims. Homer's Odyssey confirms this and it is how the Devil first spoke to Eve.

**KEPLER:**

True, and the first time was, as you state, through the serpent to Eve, but the Devil only did so twice more, namely to Job and to Jesus. I ask you: Why do you think after only speaking to humans three times in 6,000 years the Devil suddenly appears and speaks to thousands of Christians of both Catholic and Protestant faiths."

**BODIN:**

Do you claim to know that Satan is **not** behind the recent epidemics, and wars? Do you prefer to think that normal God-fearing people are themselves responsible for all this devastation? Surely instead, we are at the brink of the prophesized last battle between good and evil, Satan and God.

**KEPLER:**

I cannot refute this prophesy. I can only argue that Christianity has not yet been offered to all the peoples of the world. This has to be done in order to allow their salvation prior to that final judgement.

**DUKE:**

Well, as disheartening as it is, Kepler has a point. I see my people are frightened and acting like caged rats that turn their murderous rage upon each other. I feel helpless in being able to stop it. The Devil has put so many obstacles in my path.

**KEPLER:**

True, we are now seeing otherwise respectable Christians wielding the sword of vengeance against their neighbours over petty arguments with a simple accusation of witchcraft.

**BODIN:**

There is an increasing number of clergy who believe astrology to be a fortune-telling augury, you could be at risk yourself.

**KEPLER:**

You compare the interpretation of the beauty and order of God's heavens with illiterate old hags that falsely claim to predict one's future? Are you deviously attempting to distract me from my line of reasoning?

**BODIN:**

I agree with you on the beauty and order of God's heavens.

**KEPLER:**

Monsieur Bodin, I concede to personally respect your reputation as a compassionate humanist. Yet, I cannot reconcile how, at the same time, you show no such compassion for people suspect of witchcraft. The victims are almost always harmless women, some say as many as 20 to 1. In our own Leonberg they were all women.

**BODIN:**

It is simple. Men can only destroy each other's physical body. A witch poisons and condemns our eternal souls to a torturous fire worse than any of these accused witches have to endure. Besides it was Eve, a woman that brought sin into the world.

**KEPLER:**

It was a man who committed the first murder, and of his own brother.

**BODIN:**

It was still a woman who was responsible. Why do you defend them? Did you not read Boothius' Consolation of Philosophy in seminary? He said: "Woman is a temple built upon a sewer." And he is not alone in his condemnation. The 10<sup>th</sup> century Odo of Cluny stated, "To embrace a woman is to embrace a sack of manure."

**DUKE:**

I would have to say you provide a good argument for supporting the celibacy of priests.

**KEPLER:**

I know you have a wife and mother. I ask you then, if one or the other was charged with witchcraft, would you defend her?

**BODIN:**

If either were guilty, I say to you that I would gladly see them suffer their fate.

**KEPLER:**

Then I say to you, if my mother doesn't survive your inquisition you may find me a formidable witness the next time you are accused of witchcraft.

**DUKE:**

Gentlemen, please. I was warned that you both possess razor sharp tongues, I had no idea you would engage in such a deadly verbal duel. Perhaps we should return to my original agenda.

**KEPLER:**

My apologies, I am known for having a quick and passionate temperament,

**BODIN:**

[Smug smile, lean back and crosses arms.]

**DUKE:**

Quite understandable, especially now, and on this subject. Please continue.

**KEPLER:**

Very well. Let's address another feat you claim to be parcel of the satanic power endowed upon witches, namely **transformations**.

**DUKE:**

Is this something like the clay creature that the Jews here in Prague believe comes to life to defend them against pogroms?

**KEPLER:**

Perhaps, but in reverse order. The Jews put their salvation into the hands of a clay figure that transforms into a living guardian called the Golem. Christians and demonologists, such as our friend here, believe that witches transform themselves into animals or other objects to harm others and that demons can transform into men. Both these misguided beliefs leads to injustices by our courts.

**DUKE:**

Have either of you ever seen witches change form? I have only heard it is possible.

**KEPLER:**

Monsieur? Do you care to respond? You are the only person here who claims to have interacted with witches, hundreds in fact.

**BODIN:**

Well, I have not seen it myself but it is a common phenomenon documented by their jailors.

**KEPLER:**

So there you have it. Without personal knowledge to prove transformation as possible, Professor Bodin appeared as an expert before Pope Leo the VII in this matter. He then somehow deceived the Pope into believing it possible.

**BODIN:**

Deceive indeed. Our esteemed Pope agreed with me and proclaimed transformation by witches as factual.

**KEPLER:**

Yes, and now it is used throughout Europe to support the excessive use of chains and bondage for the accused.

**KEPLER:**

Duke Friedrich, are you familiar with the incident Bodin presented as proof?

**DUKE:**

I am not.

**BODIN:**

I know to what you are referring.

It was every December in Livonia, that a certain captain witch gathered all the witches in the country together. Then he led many “millions” of them through a great pool of water where they instantly transformed into wolves and began attacking and devouring people. This is proof of how dangerous and quickly Devil worship can spread if not immediately and voraciously contained.

**DUKE:**

Incredible! You say “millions of witches devoured everyone in their path”?

**KEPLER:**

Or perhaps not so credible. I have researched this fantastic tale. Do you know the population of the whole Ottoman Empire then? No? It was around 11 million, and after Monsieur Bodin says many millions were killed, the census 20 years later shows a 30% increase in the population.

**BODIN:**

The Pope did not think it an exaggeration, he believed it without hesitation.

**KEPLER:**

Or research! Perhaps the Pope was a bit biased against Livonia since the region has broken from Catholic rule in favour of Lutheranism.

**BODIN:**

Humph.

**KEPLER:**

However, back to transformations. Monsieur Bodin continued this type of absurdity with the story of a Jew, who could when he wished turn himself into a wolf; and escape from a whole army of men. Don't you find this marvellous that the learned men of the Church believed this fairy-tale?

**BODIN:**

It is much more marvellous that men will not believe it. Everyone knows that it is natural for wolves to devour their prey; and so do these magical wolves. “God said to the people of Israel; if you observe not my commandments, I will send among you the beasts of the field, which shall devour both you and your cattle.” Herr Kepler, you are bordering upon blasphemy!

**KEPLER:**

Blasphemy! Would not God have avoided much confusion and misunderstanding if he had clearly said, “I will send witches in the likeness of beasts” instead of simply, “beasts of the field”.

**BODIN:**

Now you dare rewrite God's own chosen words! Believe as you wish then but the Pope agreed with me and proclaimed transformation as possible.

**DUKE:**

Remind me again, why is this such an important issue in witchcraft trials?

**KEPLER:**

Personally, it is because one of the absurd accusations against my mother claimed she had changed into a cat. That aside, this misconception is detrimental because it results in helpless old women and children being kept in chains and watched 24 hours a day in order to prevent them from transforming into mice or other such creatures and escaping.

**DUKE:**

How could shackles made for a human prevent a mouse from escaping?

**KEPLER:**

Exactly. I would expect this adherence to papal authority from Catholics but this folly has taken hold among our fellow Protestants as well. This belief is also responsible for the additional humiliation against those accused.

**BODIN:**

You are concerned about the humiliation of witches?

**DUKE:** Well, Herr Kepler this should prove interesting, please explain.

**KEPLER:**

It is the belief that the Devil can change into human form, not only to speak to his victims, but to engage in sex to consummate their union.

**BODIN:**

Sex with demons was documented in Genesis 6 that says, when angels saw that the daughters of men were fair, they took the form of men and married women. Then, as we all know, God sent a flood to destroy this evil.

**KEPLER:**

Well, this renewed accusation, true or not, has also led to, if I may speak so boldly, the examination of the accused's genitals.

**DUKE:**

What? I had no idea. Why?

**KEPLER:**

It is due to the assumption that any irregularity or chafing is indicative of sex with the Devil. As if these procedures were not humiliating enough, the executioner often ridicules and mocks his victims while shaving her privates.

**BODIN:**

A woman who engages in all sorts of perversions with a demon shouldn't complain about being merely shaven and examined. You monsieur, were not paying attention in seminary classes.

**KEPLER:**

I cannot refute scripture. But, I truly suspect that when physical evidence of sex is found on a victim in our time, you need to look no further than the jailor on duty.

**BODIN:**

You blasphemy, because you appear to not believe in demon spirits at all. Instead, you accuse our honest and God-fearing guards. They often discover these women, who are alone in their cells, engaging in rapturous sex.

**KEPLER:**

I think the operative words here are "alone in their cell". And even if truly alone in their cell, not with a jailor, perhaps the moans of tortured women are from painful wounds, cold or hunger. It is the perverted vengery of her jailor that falsely attributes these moans to a sinful origin. Or perhaps women are simply engaging in the same self-pleasure common among our male prisoners?

**DUKE:**

[Cough]

Very well then, we appear not to have a consensus on this subject. Shall we address the question of why would so many people be tempted to ally with the Devil when such ill fates await them?

**KEPLER:**

Exactly, any sensible person would say to the devil; why should I commit myself to you, when you will deceive me? Did you not promise my neighbour to save and rescue her; and yet she is burned at the stake. Do these women gain riches; no. It is therefore illogical that anyone would willingly enter such a contract with a devil.

**BODIN:**

This is only proof of the power of seduction the Devil has over these women. Despite the horrors that await them, they succumb to him and to the intoxicating power over others he promises. This is why the Lord moved me to write Demonomanie as a warning to people to help identify those already possessed.

**DUKE:**

It is certainly well distributed throughout all of Europe. You must find great satisfaction in this.

**BODIN:**

I will be satisfied when the last witch is burned and God wins this final battle.

**DUKE:**

With you as His valiant captain?

**KEPLER:**

Or mercenary!



**BODIN:**

[Speaking to the Duke.]

I see neither of you ally yourselves with my noble crusade. Don't deceive yourselves of your own invulnerability during this holy purge. I have already exposed your King Rudolf's dalliance into alchemy. I might also mention I know your father was a patron of alchemists and fortune-telling astrologers. It is also suspected that the pharmacy your mother established for the poor was a facade for alchemy.

**DUKE:**

We have no alchemists now, what is your point?

**BODIN:**

Your parents are both fortunate that they passed away before King Matthias sent all these magic practising alchemists into exile. I am, out of a liking of you both, merely pointing out possible blemishes to your otherwise pious reputations. It is only a matter of time before your new Catholic king gains complete control of his empire.

**DUKE:**

I doubt an old alchemist lab would endanger my noble standing. I am not an enemy of Catholicism. It is tolerated in my territories.

**BODIN:**

I would encourage you to make a better demonstration of your approval of our faith. It was not only alchemy that tarnishes your family, it was the outward display of hatred toward us by your Lutheran father.

**DUKE:**

To what are you referring?

**BODIN:**

It is common knowledge, even by those to whom I spoke at the Vatican, that your father commissioned a spectacular anti-Catholic firework celebration in Stuttgart. [Pause.] That is, in the likeness of Jesuits being torched at the stake.

**DUKE:**

[Subconsciously and slowly places his hand over his saber.]

Monsieur. You then, better than anyone else, can appreciate my fairness and neutrality in inviting you into my private chambers for this discussion.

**BODIN:**

[Peers at the Duke's saber and places a hand on his own dagger. Then switches his attention to Kepler.]

Monsieur Kepler, at this point I might mention my concern over your future under an inevitable Catholic rule. We all know you wrote of your mother consulting a demon to gain the secret of travel to the moon in your manuscript on interplanetary travel.

**KEPLER:**

I knew you would use this to condemn my mother, and now me?

**BODIN:**

I do only with concern for your safety.

**KEPLER:**

Yes, regrettably it was the method I used in an essay at university to explain space travel. The magical method of travel was simply an allegory to show what our solar system looked like if an astronomer viewed the earth from space. How else could I explain a person being able to stand on the moon? I regret I didn't simply have the astronomer fly to the moon on the back of an old cow.

**BODIN:**

Perhaps, but that is only one of the many accusations that could be used against you. If permitted that is.

**KEPLER:**

I would not be so hasty to condemn others. You, not me, had your home searched for evidence of witchcraft, which I suspect was found. It was your witchcraft book that was put on the Vatican's Index of Prohibited Books.

**BODIN:**

Your books are also on the list.

**KEPLER:**

Mine were banned for supporting Copernicus and his theory that the earth revolves around the sun. Your books were banned because of your extensive knowledge of sorcery. You even sanctioned the use of remedies to protect against charms and incantations, in essence you recommended sorcery to counteract sorcery.

**BODIN:**

I was not convicted.

**KEPLER:**

That only proves you had close friends in the Church and the Courts. I question why you are now in Bohemia. Is it because of the Spanish Inquisition's new leniency for those charged as witches? Are there no longer enough witches in the West to satisfy your **needs**?

**BODIN:**

I am here at the current epicentre of sorcery to lend my expertise in stamping out this demonic epidemic. The princes in Germany are most passionate about wiping out witchcraft.

**KEPLER:**

Not every passion comes from virtue, and lately this passion appears to be built on a shaky foundation of reports from self-promoting or unscrupulous judges. I hear you yourself generally earn 5 gold coins per execution.

**BODIN:**

If you want to call into question my character, I unlike you, was never excommunicated.

**KEPLER:**

You deserved it much more than I, you are a known irremissible critic of Catholicism.

**BODIN:**

Not of the true Church, only of a few of the clergy's religious practices. Unlike some, I am a true believer and have a pure spirit. Perhaps you are more disliked by your contemporaries, or simply, you chose the wrong faith. [Calms down and speaks in friendlier tone.] I admit, you are a most formidable foe. I am told that you would make a good Catholic. I know you have been approached by some very prominent clerics.

**KEPLER:**

Perhaps I am a fool not to consider conversion. I do admit I find spiritual fellowship with rational Jesuits like Frias and Spee.

**BODIN:**

Obviously, there are more moderate Catholics than myself. Those tolerant of religious dissention and devil worshippers.

**DUKE:**

I am sure that both of us support your campaign against true witches, and would find peace in the knowledge they would all be eradicated.

**KEPLER:**

[Look BODIN in the eyes.]

For now, you can rest assured that there are **no witches** in my family. Regardless, I thank you for your invitation to convert, but I was born Lutheran and, if I must, I will die as an excommunicated Lutheran.

**DUKE:**

I think you will both agree that despite our differences there is one thing on which we all agree. While all men are created in the likeness of God, unfortunately, we still have our suspicions about each other.

**KEPLER:**

With that agreement I will reluctantly, shall I say, lay down my saber.

[KEPLER to go to Center Stage and hold his saber toward floor].

[DUKE joins him and holds his saber toward floor.]

[BODIN removes his dagger and standing between the other two men points his toward floor.

Example: The Three Musketeers' pose.]

**BODIN:**

I shall do the same and graciously not ask if you do so in surrender or in victory.

[KEPLER and DUKE look at Bodin's shorter saber/dagger.]

**END OF ACT II**

**ACT III – Katharina’s Inquisition – Friday, September 28, 1620**

[At Rise:]

[BODIN and EXECUTIONER enter and stop just inside the prison door.]

**INTERROGATOR BODIN:**

So we finally meet. I hear you are notorious in getting confessions from your prisoners. If you succeed with this one we could have a most profitable future partnership.

**EXECUTIONER:**

I would be honoured and will not disappoint you. I will use one of your favourite tricks today. I will go get her now. Her name is Andrea Farber.

**BODIN:**

Very good, I understand completely. I will prepare this Kepler woman for her inquisition. [EXECUTIONER exits and BODIN enters center stage.]

**BODIN:**

Warden, I am here to interrogate your prisoner, Katharina Kepler.

**WARDEN:**

[Bow.]

Welcome Sire.

**BODIN:**

You may bring her out of her cell and put her in one of these chairs for me to question.

**WARDEN:**

My pleasure.

[WARDEN brings KATHARINA out and sits her in a chair]

**BODIN:**

Are you Katharina Kepler?

**KATHARINA:**

[Silence]

**BODIN:**

Warden, is this Katharina Kepler? Why doesn’t she answer?

**WARDEN:**

She is Sire, and I am sure she will speak up very soon. I would personally recommend that you have her tongue cut out before that, she has been casting horrid spells on me and the other prisoners.

**BODIN:**

An intriguing request and I may regret not taking your advice, but there is a legal process to which I must adhere.

**WARDEN:**

Yes Sire.

**BODIN:**

Madam, I am here with the Executioner at the order of the Stuttgart chief judge. On August 18, 1620 you, Katharina Kepler, were indicted on the charge of witchcraft: “You, the accused, will once more and in all seriousness with warning of the executioners to be examined to ‘territio verbalis’”. To save yourself this, shall we say, unpleasant experience, do you wish to confess now?

**KATHARINA:**

[Silence]

**BODIN:**

I assume you were counselled that silence qualifies as new evidence of sorcery.

**KATHARINA:**

How can that be?

**BODIN:**

The Devil is said to hold a witches tongue to prevent her from confessing. It is therefore proof of an alliance with the Devil. So if you don’t answer all my questions I can have the judge permit me to use torture. A confession now would save the court’s time.

**KATHARINA:**

I am facing an unjust and horrific death, why do I care about the Court’s time?

**BODIN:**

Simply because the court's time is expensive. You are old and will die soon regardless, do you really want to waste your remaining assets on a trial, wouldn't you prefer to leave your estate to your children?

**KATHARINA:**

I spent 76 years in service to God and community. I, without assistance, ran a family business and raised four children to be god-fearing and prominent members of society. Now, you say my only value as an old woman is in my assets. Need I say more?

**BODIN:**

Humph. Warden, has this prisoner confessed to witchcraft or magic while in your custody?

**WARDEN:**

She has not.

**BODIN:**

Madam Kepler, if you will not confess, the Court has sentenced you to "territio verbalis" It is only due to your eldest son's influence with the royal court that you do not suffer torture yourself. Do you understand this process?

**KATHARINA:**

[Silence and some relief.]

I understand.

**BODIN:**

I am ordered to read the charges against you and to have the executioner demonstrate the instruments of torture that can be used on you if I find additional cause to believe you are guilty. You will have a new prisoner in the next cell, it is a woman, a Madam Farber. She has been sentenced to torture until she confesses her crimes and names her accomplices.

**KATHARINA:**

I don't know her. What did she do?

**BODIN:**

She is a witch. You may find it interesting to know that she too has a famous relative, a husband, in fact. Bear in mind that the charges against Madam Farber are not as well documented or as severe as yours. I suggest you not feel so smug, you are still at risk of being convicted.

**KATHARINA:**

[Starts to worry again.]

**BODIN:**

The court requests that you watch as these instruments are applied to her, but since that is only a request and I am a benevolent and religious man, I will not force it on you. I have overseen hundreds of witches suffering torture and can tell you that they all confess in the end. For both our sakes, spare yourself from witnessing this sickening demonstration. One that will only lead to you confessing anyway. I would sincerely advise you to confess now.

**KATHARINA:**

[Slowly and enunciating each word.]

I will not confess.

**BODIN:**

Very well, we will proceed. Executioner. Please bring in Frau Farber and prepare her.

[EXECUTIONER enters leading PROSTITUTE and stops before entering jail cell next to Katharina to whisper to Prostitute/Lady Farber.)

**KATHARINA:**

[Silently says prayers.]

**EXECUTIONER:**

Andrea, remember to scream like you're in pain. This witch has to be so frightened that she will confess. For this, you will be paid more handsomely than when you pretend to scream with pleasure.

**PROSTITUTE:**

Don't worry. Just you remember to only pretend to torture me.

[EXECUTIONER sits PROSTITUTE in a chair inside the empty cell, keep the women's backs to each other.]

**EXECUTIONER:**

Sire Bodin, I have prepared Frau Farber for you.

**BODIN:**

Executioner, do you have your instruments? Warden, are you ready to transcribe our interview and confessions?

**WARDEN:**

Yes. I am ready Sire.

**EXECUTIONER:**

I do, Sire.

**BODIN:**

Are you aware Madam that the law states that no person shall harm another in body or health in any way, and is forbidden under pain of punishment? That it is also true that a person who inflicts pain upon another person is responsible and liable for all loss.

**KATHARINA:**

I understand too well. The court doesn't care about the greater pain inflicted on me with this false charge.

**BODIN:**

I shall continue then. The first charge against you reads: It is true that you, against the above laws not only took hold of Ursula Reinbold but also caused harm. Second, it is true that you, in 1613, invited the same woman into your home and gave her a potion. Third; that a few footsteps later, she fell ill, and to this date endures unspeakable pain.

**KATHARINA:**

I admit to having her in my home and trying to help her. I did not cause harm to her.

**BODIN:**

True that the same Ursula Reinbold has tried numerous proper remedies, at substantial cost to her, but nothing would help.

**KATHARINA:**

Then why should my remedy be expected to help?

**BODIN:**

True that you confessed to the magistrate that you gave such a poison to the accuser.

**KATHARINA:**

I admitted to giving her a potion to help with her pain, I never admitted to poisoning her. That is a lie, I never said it. How could that be in the court papers? Someone has changed the scribe's records.

**BODIN:**

[Ignore's her charge against court.]

Let's continue. True that you hit a girl when you caught her in the unjust act of giving a drink to the glazier's wife and caused extreme pain in her arm and paralysis in her finger until today.

**KATHARINA:**

I remember quite well. I did not try to hit her, I merely waved my arm to tell her to stop meddling. If she was hit it was her fault, and by the way, that is something her parents should have done long ago. If you act like a cow you get treated like one. Besides, she comes from a family of convicted thieves. They are trying to scam me or else they were paid to bring this false charge against me now.

**BODIN:**

I see getting you to admit your sins will take more persuasion. Let me introduce you to your Executioner.

**KATHARINA:**

[Sarcastically but looking down.]

I am delighted to make your acquaintance.

**EXECUTIONER:**

I will do my best not to disappoint you, my dear lady.

**BODIN:**

Executioner. You may proceed with the interrogation of Madam Farber. Show them both your first tool.

**EXECUTIONER:**

[Shows straight razor]

Ladies, you will both find this interesting. Before the physical persuasion begins, I always bath the accused to remove any dirt or smudges, then I shave off her hair in order to examine her for spots. This is how the Devil marks his mistresses. Well, honestly, I only shave the young lookers. You Madam, I would just quickly singe your hair off with my torch. Are you sure you don't want to watch? You will see I am quite talented. It is a pity you chose to miss my performance.

**BODIN:**

[Walks to front of cell with prostitute.]

Frau Farber. Are you prepared to confess now?

**PROSTITUTE:**

No sire.

**BODIN:**

Executioner, you may proceed.

**PROSTITUTE:**

[Clothes tossed out of cell where Katharina can turn her head to see them but not the Prostitute.]

No, please. What are you doing, I am a modest lady and a devout Christian.

**EXECUTIONER:**

Hold still or you risk being cut. Turn around, raise your arms.

**PROSTITUTE:**

[Begs.]

No, please don't do this.

[Quietly warns.]

Be careful with that razor.

**EXECUTIONER:**

[Quietly]

Sound more like you mean it then.

**PROSTITUTE:**

[Loudly.]

No, please, I am a married woman with children.

**BODIN:**

Have you found any marks of the Devil?

**EXECUTIONER:**

You may record that I found the first diabolic mark hidden in her arm pit. The second behind her knee.

**WARDEN:**

So recorded.

**BODIN:**

[Walks to cell door of prostitute.]

Now are you ready to confess to witchcraft Madam Farber?

**PROSTITUTE:**

For God's sake, I am innocent. Those are not marks of the Devil, they are moles, and everyone has them.

**BODIN:**

Unfortunately, you have the diabolic mark of the Devil and we must continue with your interrogation. Unless you want to confess now?

**PROSTITUTE:**

No.

**BODIN:**

[Bored.]

Please proceed with the standard test for areas of numbness.

**EXECUTIONER:**

[Faces Katharina and holds long needle for her to examine.]

I begin with this needle. You see it is long and sharp. A witch has areas of numbness on her body where the Devil protects her from suffering pain. I will now prick your body, sorry I mean her body, to see if she has any of these spots. I think I will start with her breasts.

**KATHARINA:**

[To herself.]

Disgusting degenerate.

**EXECUTIONER:**

[Returning to prostitutes' cell.]

Let me know if you feel anything here.

**PROSTITUTE:**

No, you wouldn't.

[Scream]

**EXECUTIONER:**

And here, and here...

**KATHARINA:**

For Christ's sake, how can you, a man of God, allow this poor woman to suffer like that?

**BODIN:**

I am doing God's bidding. Besides, after a while you get used to the screams.

**EXECUTIONER:**

Hmmm. Please record a possible numb spot on her buttocks.

**BODIN:**

So far, I would say this doesn't look promising for Madam Farber. First we find marks of the devil and now a numb spot. Unfortunate for her, still no confession. Executioner, what have you planned next?

**EXECUTIONER:**

[Walks out to Katharina with a rope.]

I shall continue by tying her securely to a chair with this rope to make sure she doesn't wriggle too much. But first I will stoke the fire in preparation for my next surprise.

**BODIN:**

Please proceed, that will give us time to read Mrs. Kepler more of the charges against her.

It is true that you also wanted to seduce the blacksmith's daughter to follow the trade of witchcraft, as well as having told the same young woman that there is neither hell nor heaven, but that if one dies, everything would be over, just as it is with the senseless beasts.

**EXECUTIONER:**

[Ties Prostitute to her chair.]

**KATHARINA:**

That should prove I am not a witch. Witches believe in spirits and fairies and devils, I do not. Mortal men are the only devils I have known.

**BODIN:**

It is then true that you told this girl, if anyone practices the fiend's trade, then that person would have a good life and possess many wonderful things. That witches eat the best food and drink the best drink. That you could not praise it enough.

**KATHARINA:**

These are all lies. I told her that if she learned the art of healing with plants she could earn a living, a modest one. No woman gets rich mixing and selling herbs. It is merely a more honourable profession than the other choices she had at the time.

**EXECUTIONER:**

[Pokes prostitute]

**PROSTITUTE:**

[Moans]

**BODIN:**

It is true that you gave the barber's apprentice, who had cut your hair, a potion so that he fell seriously ill at once.

**KATHARINA:**

Many people suffered his same ailment. It was not caused by my potion.

**EXECUTIONER:**

I am ready with the poker.

**BODIN:**

Very well, bring it out.

**EXECUTIONER:**

[Holding red-hot poker up to Katharina]

You recognize this object don't you? Feel the heat, and it does not even touch you, imagine what it will do when I hold it against a woman's tender skin. You see, first I prod for spots of numbness, now I have to check for places that cause the most pain.

**KATHARINA:**

[Pulls away, silence]

**EXECUTIONER:**

[Returns to prostitute]

Do you wish to confess?

**PROSTITUTE:**

Please can't anyone stop this?

**EXECUTIONER:**

It will stop once you confess.

**PROSTITUTE:**

No, never

**EXECUTIONER:**

I'll let you select where I should begin. Where did the Devil plant his first kiss on you? Your cheek? Your neck? No, I will start with the bottom of your feet, it always gets the best results. Shall I give you a moment to prepare yourself, a prayer or maybe confession?

**PROSTITUTE:**

[Screams and pretends to pass out]

**EXECUTIONER:**

Wake up. I am not done with my poker, it is still hot.

**KATHARINA:**

You must make him stop. How can the two of you get used to doing this to others, innocent or not?

**BODIN:**

Madam, you look pale. Shall I continue with the charges against you? True that you touched the two-year-old calf of the Saddler, so that it died.

**KATHARINA:**

The stupid farmer fed it a bad batch of straw, probably full of poisonous insects, he knew there was nothing I could do to save it. It should be obvious that they only testified after all these years hoping that if I were convicted they would be awarded damages.

**BODIN:**

Not necessarily so. These old accusations are required by law to show a long history of witchcraft before a person can be convicted. They seem to have proved that in your case. But if you like, let's skip all the other charges concerning livestock.

**KATHARINA:**

Anything to speed up this questioning. You make it hard to think straight.

**BODIN:**

Next, it is true that the butcher was injured by you on his foot at the Marktplatz, where he sold his meat, and that he has endured great pain for some time. And in turn you remedied his pain.

**KATHARINA:**

His own wife testified that I didn't touch him at all. Maybe he dropped something on his foot. Anyway, I graciously offered him an herbal potion to stop the swelling and he recovered. How is that a crime? He should be grateful.

**BODIN:**

True that during the time you were preparing your slander case, you injured the cobbler's girl on her arm so that the girl endured much pain.

**PROSTITUTE:**

[Screams.]



**KATHARINA:**

Oh dear God.

[Looks toward screams.]

I merely poked her on the arm with my finger. How do you expect me to think when you keep torturing that poor woman? You should stop persecuting us and instead do your job and investigate those lying poisonous tongues that falsely accused me and her and cut them out and nail them to the pillory.

**EXECUTIONER:**

I softened the lady a bit with the hot poker, shall I continue with the next stage of persuasion?

**BODIN:**

I had hoped this wouldn't be necessary, but, yes, please go ahead.

**EXECUTIONER:**

[Holding pinchers]

Now you will begin to see what makes me the most feared executioner in all of Europe. With these pinchers, I can remove your ears, nose, tongue or just pinch off small pieces of skin anywhere I choose. I can do it slowly or quickly. I can do it with or without heating the tips in the fire. It is less painful when it is quick and the ends are not red-hot, but then there is so much more blood.

**KATHARINA:**

You are only a sadistic animal, an insane one, if you think torturing innocent women is something in which to take pride.

**EXECUTIONER:**

I am a master of my trade and paid well for it. You think you are better than me? Wait until I make you beg me for mercy. Then your opinion of me will change. I will make you apologize to me a hundred times over. You can think about that while I heat the pincher.

**BODIN:**

Madam, it is recorded that your local constable advised you that he could not keep quiet about your criminal charges and was obliged under oath and office to report the same. True, that you, the accused, ardently implored the constable to spare you and not forward a report to the chancellor.

**KATHARINA:**

That is true, but anyone falsely accused would ask for mercy.

**BODIN:**

He continues to state that you promised to give him, the constable, a silver cup if he would refrain from reporting you. The constable accepted neither gift nor offering, but included these things in his report to the chancellor.

**KATHARINA:**

It was a last desperate attempt to avoid a trial that had no basis.

**BODIN:**

True that afterward you did not leave to walk home, but walked directly from the court house out of the upper town gate. True that the court ordered your arrest and to appear before the court in person and defend your misdeeds. And that by you running away gave strong evidence that you caused bodily harm to the accuser Ursula Reinbold.

**KATHARINA:**

My family advised me to flee because it was obvious that I would not be safe remaining in town with this conspiracy to convict me. Johannes used this time to put together my defence. I returned to face the charges didn't I? If I were guilty I would have remained in Graz.

**BODIN:**

True that even some of your friends consider you a witch and have knowledge of several wicked acts. True that the general consensus in Leonberg is that you injured the accuser and caused her the reported bodily injury. True that the accuser would much rather pay a thousand coins than be subjected to the unspeakable agony she endures daily.

**KATHARINA:**

Ursula, I can barely bring myself to say her name. She was my closest friend. Now, she not only betrays 30 years of friendship, but accuses me of a vile crime that would cost me my life and soil the reputations of my family for generations. Don't you listen to anything I say? Why make me talk if you don't listen?

**BODIN:**

It is impossible to reason with you. I must say that if you were so innocent you would have shown tears and repentance at your trial or at least to me, who has your life in my hands. It is natural to cry, even God uses natural disasters to make his errant children repent and cry for his mercy.

**KATHARINA:**

Tears weaken you and drain the strength I always needed to survive. I had to play the role of a man too long to act like a feeble woman now. If reason doesn't work with you, I doubt tears would either. Have you ever freed a suspected witch because she cried? I think not, you just get used to it, like with the screams! Only God's betrayal could make me suffer.

**BODIN:**

I should say you are suffering now, or maybe not enough. Executioner. You may proceed with the pincers. Perhaps at least we will extract a confession out of Madam Farber.

**EXECUTIONER:**

Now my lady, don't move. I will begin with pinching off a small piece of skin from your arm just to give you a taste of what is to come.

**PROSTITUTE:**

[Screams loudly]

Stop, I can't bear any more.

**EXECUTIONER:**

Are you ready to confess so soon, I haven't even begun to use my favourite tools yet.

**KATHARINA:**

Don't confess my Frau, you must not confess.

**EXECUTIONER:**

[Pretends to poke her with pincer.]

**PROSTITUTE:**

[Screams]

I do confess. Just let me die in peace.

**KATHARINA:**

Recant before it is too late!

**BODIN:**

Well done. But before we release the witch, I must know her accomplices. Have her name other witches with which she has conspired.

**PROSTITUTE:**

There are none.

**EXECUTIONER:**

I am sure more of the pincer will help you remember.

**PROSTITUTE:**

Screams, please stop. Okay, I will give you names. I danced in the forest with the Devil and Candice Stout was there.

**EXECUTIONER:**

Warden, take down that name. And Frau Farber, did you ever see Frau Kepler at this dance?

**PROSTITUTE:**

[Quietly to Executioner.]

Frau Kepler? You mean Katharina Kepler? Is she the prisoner?

**EXECUTIONER:**

Yes, it is her. So what?

**PROSTITUTE:**

You didn't tell me it was Frau Kepler. That woman cared for my mother when she was deathly ill. She took care of her until I could return home a week later. I cannot do this to her. Keep your money. I am leaving, untie me. You are on your own.

**EXECUTIONER:**

I don't think so, you will stay until you honour our agreement.

[Louder.]

So again, did you ever see Frau Kepler at this dance?

**PROSTITUTE:**

No I did not.

**EXECUTIONER:**

[Sticks hot pincher against her arm.]

See if this changes your mind.

**PROSTITUTE:**

[Scream]

No I did not see her.

**KATHARINA:**

Stop him. Don't you see he is trying to make her lie?

**EXECUTIONER:**

I see you hesitate to name your accomplice.

[Holds hot pincher longer and twists like he tore off some skin.]

**PROSTITUTE:**

Screams.

**EXECUTIONER:**

Did you ever see Frau Kepler at this dance?

**PROSTITUTE:**

Oooohhh, stop.

**EXECUTIONER:**

Madam Farber says yes, she saw her.

**KATHARINA:**

No, that is not what she said. I never met this woman. It is not true. The Executioner is lying?

**EXECUTIONER:**

And what was Frau Kepler doing. Was she just dancing or was she participating in an orgy, or both perhaps. You have already named her, there is no harm in telling more about what you saw now.

[More poking with the pincher.]

**PROSTITUTE:**

[Scream]

Stop, let me go.

**EXECUTIONER:**

She says both, I heard both.

**WARDEN:**

Sire, what do I record?

**BODIN:**

Record whatever the Executioner says. It is not necessary to record the witch's own comments.

**EXECUTIONER:**

And so there is no confusion, with whom was she cavorting? Was it with the Devil?

**PROSTITUTE:**

Moan.

**EXECUTIONER:**

There, you have her answer. The Kepler woman was cavorting with the Devil in the forest.

**BODIN:**

Madam Kepler, You have been named by a fellow confessed witch. This could be the final chance you have to confess and avoid torture yourself. You will die regardless, but a confession will save your eternal soul. I can recommend that you be humanely strangled or beheaded before facing the executional fire.

**KATHARINA:**

Please you must believe me, he is forcing her to lie.

**BODIN:**

You are obviously lying now. You have too many witnesses who swear you are a witch. Your life here is over. I only ask you to also provide me with names your accomplices and I can have your suffering ended. [Pause.] I hear your sons are near bankruptcy from defending your case. If you love them at all, you would confess now while there is enough of your estate left to pay off their debts.

**KATHARINA:**

[Regaining courage.]

I will gladly name my accomplices. First, Frau Reinbold, and Constable Einhorn, and then every person who accused me, even the warden here, and your executioner. I will not surrender as easily as did this poor lady.

**BODIN:**

Is that a threat?

**KATHARINA:**

[Worried.]

Go ahead then and do with me what you want. Even if you were to pull one vein after another out of my body, I have nothing to admit.

**BODIN:**

The pincher is capable of much more and you should fear it. Have you not heard of Frau Hausmann. It was only a few years ago that our same executioner here, marched her through the city stopping five times before reaching the place of execution. At the first stop, he tore off her left breast with irons, the second stop, he tore her right breast; the third, he tore open the left arm; and so forth. On the place of execution she was burned alive.

**KATHARINA:**

[Finally breaking down.]

For God's sake, have mercy on me.

[She gives in to fear and falls to her knees and begins reciting the Lord's Prayer.]

"Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever."

**BODIN:**

[Shakes his head, then showing pity stands, interrupts the prayer and puts his hand on Katharina's shoulder.]

**BODIN:**

Innocent or not there is nothing more I can say or do that will make you confess. Your armour is thicker than mine. Like your son Johannes, I will lay down my saber of justice and simply pray to God that I have not let a witch go free.

Warden. Release her chains and let her leave. Her family is waiting outside.

**The END.**