

THE TRUTH HURTS

Written By

Quæszyssti Venqísston De Sscipio

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

THERRIYAN - A former town crier
with Town Criers R Us
Therriyan Preton

PATRICIA - Colleague of
Therriyan
Guide

RUPERT VULPINE - Owner of
Vulpine News, a rival town crier
guild
Drop-in-the-Pond

XEMCEL ASHANN - Heir to House
Ashann
Quæszyssti Venqísston De Sscipio

HERALD - Storyteller and Greek
Chorus
Erusynn Galdur

VULPINE NEWS CRIER #1
Quæszyssti Venqísston De Sscipio

VULPINE NEWS CRIER #2
Drop-in-the-Pond

VULPINE NEWS CRIER #3
Guide

HOODED FIGURE (non-speaking)
Erusynn Galdur

COMRADE
Erusynn Galdur

GUARD
Guide

ASHANN ASSOCIATE (non-speaking)
Drop-in-the-Pond

RECEPTIONIST (non-speaking)
Quæszyssti Venqísston De Sscipio

OREO THE CAT (non-speaking)
Oreo

STAGE CREW

Adhlea Lavell

A bunch of people hired by House
Geras (except we're not telling
anyone they're hired by House
Geras)

PROLOGUE

INT. THEATRE STAGE - DAY. HERALD enters stage right.

HERALD

(sings)

Come and hear my tale of despair!
Of a town crier whose truths weren't all there
While based in truth, he stretched the tales,
And taller they grew, for lies made sales,
Soon the other guilds caught on,
And started to sing less truthful songs,
The trend spread on like wildfire,
The situation was getting dire.
He came home to a world ablaze;
Rumours and falsehoods were the new craze.
One guild stood above them all;
The rest in ashes, they would fall.

Exit HERALD.

ACT I, SCENE 1

EXT. ARGENTORATUM, DOMUM DISTRICT - DAY.

A modest building is ablaze. The building bears the sign "TOWN CRIERS R US." As the audience watches, the sign splits in two and falls apart. Both halves of the sign are now on fire. The half of the sign on the ground explodes, adding to the already enormous blaze that is the building.

The silhouette of PATRICIA is visible through the ground floor window of the building. PATRICIA moves around inside.

PATRICIA

Help! Someone, please help me!

Our building's on fire and it's impossible to flee!

There is so much smoke, and I cannot breathe!

I don't want to die, I have to... believe...

(she faints)

Yeet THERRIYAN, down the centre aisle, onto the stage and into the building.

THERRIYAN

PATRICIA! Patricia, oh no!

I will save you! It's not your time to go!

THERRIYAN leaps dramatically over a flaming beam of wood. They spot Patricia in the middle of the room. THERRIYAN kneels down and picks up PATRICIA, feeling for a pulse. He breathes a sigh of relief when he feels a pulse.

THERRIYAN (CONT'D, to PATRICIA)

Haha! Flames and smoke can't kill your vibe nor mine;

The people who did this, they've really crossed a line

Sweet Patricia, my mentor, my friend,

My comrades and I swear that this isn't the end!

THERRIYAN turns to the audience, BREAKING THE FOURTH WALL, as though the flames around them were not about to consume them.

THERRIYAN (CONT'D)

"The end of what?" I can almost hear you say,

Good thing you're here, cuz that's the plot of this play!

THERRIYAN winks at the audience before leaping over the same beam, even though it's almost a pile of ash at this point.

Yeet THERRIYAN, carrying PATRICIA, back up the centre aisle.

ACT I, SCENE 2

EXT. ARGENTORATUM - DAY. THERRIYAN is outside a building bearing the sign "TOWN CRIERS R US" that is very much not on fire. He wears a different outfit to the previous scene. THERRIYAN holds a bell and is wearing a large hat with a feather on it as he rings the bell.

THERRIYAN

About five years ago, I worked as a crier,
Our journalistic standards never were higher,
Town Criers R Us, we were the best in the city,
And Vulpine News was so itty itty bitty,
But you know, some days are just slower than others,
And I didn't want the boredom to smother,
So I started to spice up my stories,
Adding in some details and a dash of glory...

Enter VULPINE NEWS CRIER #1, slyly, stage left.

THERRIYAN (CONT'D)

Hear ye, hear ye! Watch out on the streets,
Wheels of brie have been known to yeet!

VULPINE NEWS CRIER #1 sneaks up behind THERRIYAN, pulls out a sheet of parchment and begins taking notes.

THERRIYAN (CONT'D)

Hear ye, hear ye! Have you had too many flagons?
Studies say you could turn into a dragon!

VULPINE NEWS CRIER #1 continues to write.

THERRIYAN (CONT'D)

Hear ye, hear ye! Lady Mai Bhalsych of Korse
Has prevented a war, by offering her horse!

VULPINE NEWS CRIER #1

Is this their secret? Is this it?
The reason why us Vulpines can never get a hit?
If you want to play at this game,
Well, Town Criers R Us, we shall do the same!

Exit VULPINE NEWS CRIER #1

ACT I, SCENE 3

EXT. ARGENTORATUM - DAY. THERRIYAN is on a busy-ish street, ringing his bell and shouting the latest news.

THERRIYAN

Hear ye, hear ye! Thieves caught breaking into bakery!

They were caught when one choked loudly on a pastry!

Enter VULPINE NEWS CRIER #1, VULPINE NEWS CRIER #2, and VULPINE NEWS CRIER #3. All three VULPINE NEWS CRIERS listen intently and start scribbling away on their sheets of parchment.

VULPINE NEWS CRIER #2

Good work, number one, it's just as you said,

We'll try out this technique, let's get this bread!

VULPINE NEWS CRIER #3

Well-said, number two, let's get started,

Our success will leave them empty-hearted!

Muahahahahahahaha!

Hahahahaha ha ha!

All three VULPINE NEWS CRIERS giggle, sinisterly.

Exeunt VULPINE NEWS CRIER #1, VULPINE NEWS CRIER #2, and VULPINE NEWS CRIER #3.

ACT II, SCENE 1

INT. THEATRE STAGE - DAY.

Enter HERALD, stage right.

HERALD

While Therriyan enjoyed their time at the guild,
There came a point where they'd had their fill,
He decided to move on, to see the world,
Left Argentoratum, not knowing what would unfurl.
Their adventures elsewhere are quite the tale,
But lest we get sidetracked, we'll stay on trail.

Exit HERALD.

ACT II, SCENE 2

INT. VULPINE NEWS HEADQUARTERS, RUPERT VULPINE'S OFFICE - DAY. RUPERT VULPINE sits at a desk. He looks worried.

RUPERT VULPINE

What fresh hell will befall me today?
Why am I so nervous? I can hardly keep it at bay,
I can't help but feel that things have changed,
When you nearly go bankrupt, it's just not the same,
No matter; all I can do is to try my best,
That's what my mom said, that I can pass any test.
I wish I knew a little more about the news,
Ever since the takeover, I've been confused.

Enter HOODED FIGURE, stage left, through a panel representing the back of the building. It is hard to make out their face. They make a mysterious hand motion. RUPERT VULPINE looks terrified. The HOODED FIGURE glares at him and RUPERT VULPINE nods.

Exit HOODED FIGURE.

RUPERT VULPINE breathes a sigh of relief.

Enter VULPINE NEWS CRIER #1.

VULPINE NEWS CRIER #1

Hello! I have a few questions about my work, Sir Vulpine,
May I ask them of you, if you have the time?

RUPERT VULPINE

Uhhh, sure, of course you can, thank you,

It's always important to confirm the news!

VULPINE NEWS CRIER #1

I've been looking into the Bohemia scandal,
I need a source that has perhaps a better handle?
Is there anyone you would recommend?
Someone who knows more and has time to spend?

RUPERT VULPINE

The Bohemia Scandal? I've never heard of this,
Are you sure that's the headline? It must be hard to miss.

VULPINE NEWS CRIER #1

I'm sure, sir, I've been following it all week,
It's really quite thrilling but I need someone to speak,
On the record, I've followed the string,
But with no good source, we have nothing.

RUPERT VULPINE

I'm afraid I can't help, I'm sorry number one,
I wish I knew a source but I'm afraid I have none.

VULPINE NEWS CRIER #1 bows their head.

Exit VULPINE NEWS CRIER #1

RUPERT VULPINE sighs and puts his head in his hands.

ACT II, SCENE 3

EXT. SOLORIS HARBOUR - DAY. THERRIYAN stands on the harbour, wearing a new outfit. OREO THE CAT sits on their shoulder.

THERRIYAN

After I helped save the world from the god-killer,

I sailed back to Patricia, because I found I missed her.

THERRIYAN steps onto a boat as the sun sets. The boat is a cardboard cutout and it moves across the stage. Slowly.

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Exit THERRIYAN.

INTERVAL

ACT II, SCENE 4

EXT. ARGENTORATUM - DAY. PATRICIA sits outside the Town Criers R Us Building. She looks dejected.

Enter THERRIYAN, stage right.

THERRIYAN

Hey, hey Patricia! What's up, my pal?

What's happened in my absence? How's morale?

PATRICIA

Oh, Therriyan! Thank goodness you're here,

It's Vulpine News, they've given us much to fear,

Remember how you just wanted to give people a vibe?

Now they just lie in every story they describe!!

They're out here all day and all night,

Spouting nothing but lies, and it's impossible to fight!

This might be the end of Town Criers R Us,

It was great working with you, sorry it's been a bust.

THERRIYAN

Patricia, don't say that! I'll make this right,

I know I can fix this, with all my might.

I'll get to the bottom of it, I promise!

By the time I'm done, nothing will be amiss!!!!

THERRIYAN poses heroically. They hold the pose for several seconds.

THERRIYAN (CONT'D)

I just have to deliver this letter,
Then I'll be right on it, and things'll be better!

PATRICIA

All right, Therriyan, thank you my dear,
If you need anything, I'll be right here,
Just be careful, because I have heard
Of criers' offices burning, so stay alert.
I never knew this would be such a dangerous profession,
Who thought that we'd attract such aggression?!

THERRIYAN

No worries, friend, I'll stay safe,
It'll be ok, Patricia, please have faith.

Yeet THERRIYAN.

PATRICIA (aside)

I'm trying not to expect the worst,
But I feel like this is some kind of curse.

Exit PATRICIA.

ACT III, SCENE 1

EXT. ARGENTORATUM - DAY.

THERRIYAN walks across the stage, as various VULPINE NEWS CRIERS pop up behind them.

VULPINE NEWS CRIER #1

Hear ye, hear ye, could House Geras be eating gold?
They must be so callous, so very bold!

VULPINE NEWS CRIER #2

Hear ye, hear ye, could House Challane
Really, in fact be House FRAMED?
Who really burned the handsome Xemcel?
Who most certainly is not an incel?

VULPINE NEWS CRIER #3

Hear ye, hear ye, House Macedon dumped acid in the sea!
Not so upstanding now! Oh, how could this be?

THERRIYAN keeps walking. The scenery changes around them as they walk to the Impetus District.

THERRIYAN

What strange headlines! How many are true?
If these are all lies, there's more than a few.

VULPINE NEWS CRIER #1

Hear ye, hear ye, House Reese knows what's up!

Releases Ultimate Peanut Butter Lover Cups™

VULPINE NEWS CRIER #2

Hear ye, hear ye, House Ashann's bathroom is gold!
Tales of their wealth sure never get old!

VULPINE NEWS CRIER #3

Hear ye, hear ye! House Geras sucks ass,
Destroying relations with dwarves, how very crass!

THERRIYAN

Yeah, I'm gonna have to do something about that,
Apart from the Reese's piece, those were devoid of fact.

Exit THERRIYAN.

ACT III, SCENE 2

EXT. ASHANN ESTATE - DAY. THERRIYAN is wearing the hat with the feather in it again. He goes up to the gate, where the GUARD is standing.

Enter THERRIYAN.

GUARD

Halt! Who goes there!

You wanna break in? You wouldn't dare!

THERRIYAN

Relax, my guy, no need for threats, I got this,

I'm here on official town crier business,

I got this badge and it's a mark of my honour,

I've got no problem with you, I don't wanna be a goner.

I just need to deliver a message, then I'll be on my way,

If you could find this woman, it would make my day.

THERRIYAN shows his crier guild badge. The GUARD takes it and after squinting at it, nods and hands it back.

GUARD

This checks out, I'll see what I can do.

Let me go find her, now don't you move.

Exit GUARD.

Enter GUARD, XEMCEL ASHANN, ASHANN ASSOCIATE. XEMCEL ASHANN has a burned face and looks angry.

XEMCEL ASHANN

Well, well, well, what do we have here?
A plucky town crier, who just happened to appear?
I heard you have a message for my colleague,
I decided to come, since I was intrigued.

THERRIYAN grins. It looks quite painful.

THERRIYAN

Yes, sir, I did, it's a simple order:
"The enchiladas are tastiest on the northwest corner."

ASHANN ASSOCIATE blinks twice and looks confused.

XEMCEL ASHANN

Ho, ho, ho, what a strange little message,
That honestly sounded like a pile of garbage,
Some advice for you, little town crier,
If I were you, I'd be wary of fire.
There've been quite a few criers who stepped out of line,
I haven't seen them recently, not a good sign,
Just keep to yourself and don't come snooping around,
Or else you might find yourself six feet underground.

THERRIYAN (still grimacing)

Yes, sir, of course, thanks for the warning,

You won't see me around here, I think I'll get going!

Exeunt XEMCEL ASHANN, ASHANN ASSOCIATE, GUARD

TERRIYAN (aside)

I think he just threatened me! What the fuck, dude?

Why on earth are people so rude?

Those were some seriously, really bad vibes,

I think I need backup; I'll see who I can find..

Yeet TERRIYAN.

ACT IV, SCENE 1

EXT. MISSIVES, STORIES, NEWS, BULLETINS & COMMUNICATIONS (MSNBC) BUILDING, OR WHAT REMAINS OF IT - DAY. There really is no building. It's a pile of ashes and collapsed furniture.

Enter THERRIYAN and COMRADE.

THERRIYAN

(mid-sentence)

--And then he fucking threatened me! Imagine the nerve!
But I won't let it get to me, it's the truth I serve!

COMRADE

What a damn bastard! I fear for your fate.
But here at this building, we'll investigate.
This place is burned out but there's a bookcase right here,
If I lift it up, there's kind of a smear,
No wait, it's a footprint, and it's rather large
It looks like a dragonborn's, I'd charge.

THERRIYAN

(looking around)

Oh, thanks buddy! That's a good find,
Would you come over here? I'm in a bit of a bind
See these markings? They don't look like fire,
I'm not good with chemistry, I'm just a town crier.

COMRADE

Hm yeah, these look kinda odd,

Certainly not an act of god.

Not to point fingers, but I have a sneaking suspicion
That it was acid breath that started the ignition.

THERRIYAN crosses the room and finds a desk. He opens the drawer.

THERRIYAN

This is where I'd keep all my secrets I didn't want found,
But I can't get this drawer open, is it spellbound?

COMRADE

We can jimmy it open with a little finesse,
Let's use thieves' tools, that'll give us success.

The hidden compartment pops open.

COMRADE (CONT'D)

Oh, look, a letter. No, a draft—
A story about how Vulpine News nearly got the shaft,
Looks like they ran out of money,
But then found a backer. Hm, that's funny...

THERRIYAN

Does it say who the backer was? They're all the rage now,
With all their lies and money, I'm sure that's how.

COMRADE

No, it doesn't, this was a developing story,
And seemingly the end was quite gory.

THERRIYAN

Yikes. I like the sound of this less and less every second,
We should go to the source, Vulpine News HQ, I reckon.

Yeetunt THERRIYAN and COMRADE.

ACT IV, SCENE 2

INT. VULPINE NEWS HEADQUARTERS - DAY. THERRIYAN and COMRADE are at the reception desk.

Enter THERRIYAN, COMRADE, and RECEPTIONIST.

COMRADE

Greetings, receptionist, I hope you're having a nice day,
I have a small request I'd like to throw your way,
Could you tell us what you know about Vulpine News?
We've observed some developments and we're quite bemused
We're working on a story, you see,
And we'd like to get the facts correct, so hear our plea,
I suggest you tell us what you know and do it fast,
We're on a deadline here, so please do as we've asked.

COMRADE waves their hand. RECEPTIONIST blinks a couple of times and hands them a sheet of parchment. It is the actual original copy of the parchment that is being used as evidence.

THERRIYAN and COMRADE scurry out of the building and read the sheet of paper in a sketchy-looking alleyway.

THERRIYAN

Holy shit, it worked! That was a handy mind-trick,
I didn't think we'd get what we needed so quick!
Anyway, it says here that Rupert Vulpine
Has been meeting with sketchy people in hoods all the time,
He's nervous in private and doesn't know his stuff,
It seems like someone else is menacing enough,

Town criers who object to the lies have gone missing,
And rival guilds have found their headquarters burning,
This person encountered a friend who disappeared,
They said they never worked there, that's cause to leer.
In other words, all the events from earlier in this play!
What a coincidence, things worked out that way!
We'd better hurry back to Town Criers R Us,
We should tell Patricia cuz this shit is hella sus.

Yeetunt THERRIYAN and COMRADE.

ACT V, SCENE 1

EXT. ARGENTORATUM, DOMUM DISTRICT - DAY. The Town Criers R Us building is no longer on fire; rather, it is smouldering.

Enter HERALD.

HERALD

Therriyan and Comrade raced back to HQ,
Only to find it bidding them a toasty adieu,
Here we are, beloved viewers, present day, present time,
Let's check in on poor Patricia, all told in rhyme,
She's injured, but alive, which is a relief,
The other option would have caused a lot of grief.

Montage of THERRIYAN waiting in the hospital waiting room. He assumes a variety of poses on his chair to convey his boredom at the slow passage of time. This continues while the HERALD is talking.

HERALD (CONT'D)

Therriyan rushed Patricia to hospital while Comrade stayed.
Quite a crowd had gathered after Therriyan's escapade,
Including agents from House Quivornoi,
Whom we accidentally annoyed,
We offered them a deal where we'd share what we find
And to nobody's surprise, the house of spies declined,
Which is too bad for them because we're done,
We've come to a conclusion that is really quite fun.

THERRIYAN jumps up from their seat and moves to centre stage. PATRICIA is wheeled across the stage in a hospital bed in the background.

THERRIYAN

We've looked at this mess and, what, for shame!
We're formally declaring that House Ashann is to blame!
We've connected the dots and found lots of evidence,
Here it all is, if you're still on the fence,
Look at this story draft, that was all real,
And this memo from Vulpine News HQ, now how do you feel?
And who can explain House Ashann's jump in the ratings?
I promise you, this is more than some petty hating,
We also learned that the fire was magic,
If we weren't so competent, it would be tragic.

PATRICIA

(from her bed, waving the plank of wood)

See this plank of wood, from the remains of ANN,
Or how about when Xemcel threatened our friend?
Can you explain the footprint that we found at MSNBC?
Or the acid-not-fire, tell us how that came to be!
The criers' guilds have fallen and only Vulpine News stands
The Ashanns have innocent blood on their hands!
So now you know the truth, it's time to rise up,
Time to show them that you've had enough,
Of their lies and deception, you're better than that,
You honest, common folk deserve more than their crap!

[Hopefully the audience cheers and then riots.]