

BARELL OF MONKEYS

Written by

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INT. SYNAGOGUE, SCHOOL BUILDING

A fairly small, but well kept synagogue within the school houses this hearing. The president stands at the podium with the ark behind him while the rest of the school board surrounds it. Out across the small seating area in front are the parents of the students in Scope's class.

There is some chattering in the audience while they are waiting for the proceedings to begin. Butler eventually walks in and as he makes his way to the stage the room falls to silence. He takes his seat, the president clears his throat, and he begins.

PRESIDENT

Thank you everyone for gathering here today. We are congregated to uncover the plague that has been inflicted on our students. A plague that goes against everything this institution stands for. A plague delivered by the hands of Mr. Butler. Would you like to be reminded exactly why you are here today?

BUTLER

(sarcastically)
Enlighten me.

PRESIDENT

An official statement from the disciplinary committee reads: purposefully going against the educational curriculum and teaching harmful information to the students. Do you have a response to these accusations?

BUTLER

Generous of you to consider what is taught here an "educational curriculum".

PRESIDENT

I would advise you to watch your tone Mr. Butler. You are in a house of worship after all.

BUTLER

(sarcastically)
Why of course your holiness.

Angry murmurs through the hall.

PRESIDENT

Moving along. I now open the floor to any parents who would like to speak their mind on this manner.

A man from the audience walks up to the front

PARENT

May I speak?

PRESIDENT

Please.

PARENT

Thank you. Mr. Butler, teaching our children to speak falsely of God and his teachings is insulting not only to our community but to our religion, a religion that you share. We send them to this school to learn our people's knowledge, and the knowledge of our religion. Our children's education is not for you to decide.

BUTLER

As your children's future is not for you to decide.

The crowd gasps

PARENT

You could not possibly--

BUTLER

Were you're children harmed during my lessons?

PARENT

Not physically but--

BUTLER

Do your children still believe in God?

PARENT

Well of course

BUTLER

Do they pray every day? Do they go to Synagogue every Friday, every Saturday, every Hanukah, Purim, Passover?

PARENT

They do but that is besides the point--

BUTLER

No but that is exactly the point. How much do you know about the science I taught?

PARENT

I do not waste my time learning about that which denies God.

BUTLER

But what do you think of it?

PARENT

I do not think of things I do not think about.

BUTLER

Do you think about things you do think about?

PRESIDENT

That is enough. Mr. Butler, I believe I speak for the entire community when I say that above all else, I find your lack of apparent remorse disgusting. Given your inappropriate behavior today and clear violation of school rules, it is my order for you to be removed from this institution immediately.

BUTLER

I feel no remorse

PRESIDENT

I'm sorry?

BUTLER

For which part?

PRESIDENT

So you truly believe --

BUTLER

Yes.

pause of silence

PARENT

In that case--

BUTLER

Begins his rant spoken quickly and angrily. As if he is finally able to get what he wants to say off his chest

Ok fine. Look, I know what comes after this school. I know that you've got students, 17 18 years old walking out of here, knowing no more than the 12 year olds across the street. And why? Because you sit here fooling yourselves into believing that these kids are receiving an "education guided by God himself" meanwhile they can barely speak English, fail basic standardized math and reading tests, and graduate into poverty rate of 70%, a rate that is triple that of the city that its in. Now you can sit there all you want and tell yourself that you're actually educating these kids but I can't. I am an teacher and I will not sit here and be called a sinner for doing my fucking job!

A brief period of silence as the council is at a loss for words

The next section is said at a more calm and relaxed pace. Realizing he lashed out he now has more reserve and can speak more constructively

(Sigh)...an educator. That word used to mean something. It meant helping students learn how to ask question, explore new ideas, develop their own opinions. Now, now I don't know what it means. You know I went to this school.

(MORE)

BUTLER (CONT'D)

Graduated almost 20 years ago today and in that time I was able to learn, think, explore. You know what I found? I found that the world is a beautiful place. Not because it was created by an all powerful creator or because of some book, but because of people. People who walk around everyday, curious about the world around them. Eager to ask questions and create new solutions. When I came back here, that curiosity, that spark, I saw it in those kid's eyes. When I taught them evolution they weren't critical, they were inquisitive. When I taught them math they weren't cynical, they were analytical. And when I taught about the universe they weren't angry that it went against the Torah, they were fascinated. What was asked of me to teach, it would have crushed that spark inside of them, and in doing so, would have crushed me. Did my mission get out of hand? yes. You have to understand that my intention was never to have students burn their books or disrespect their religion. All knowledge is sacred and religion is a wonderful thing. But it doesn't belong as the sole material in our children's textbooks. I realize that much of what I am saying will likely be ignored. Yet, I remain hopeful. Hopeful for a future that is structured by scientific excellence and supported by the loving nature of religion. After all, why would God create such beautiful, scientific intricacies in the world if they are not meant to be studied? These students gave me that hope. So you ask me if I am remorseful Mr. President and my answer remains no, I am hopeful.

A period of silence falls over the crowd and council before the president interjects

PRESIDENT

Your statement will be taken under
consideration, Mr. Butler.

There is an awkward moment of no exchange, Butler is
awaiting further response towards his lengthy statement
previously issued

PRESIDENT (CONT'D)

You can leave now.

A look of disappointment washed over Butlers face, knowing
what he said was not heard. He exits the room.