

EPISCUS AND EDENDUS: A MUSICAL FABLE

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SETTING

PLACE Rome
 TIME Ancient

CHARACTERS

EDENDUS Christian

EPISCUS Lion

The CHORUS consists of PRIMA, SECUNDA, and TERTIA. These three women play a panoply of roles including the Judge, Lionkeeper, Messenger, Mercury, Burning Bush, Godly Figure, Egyptians, and Quebecois.

MUSICAL NUMBERS

Prologue.....Chorus
 "Another Day in Rome".....Edendus, Episcus, Chorus
 "A Father's Dream".....Edendus, Episcus
 "God Told You To".....Chorus
 Finale.....Edendus, Episcus, Chorus

"Aut viam inveniam aut faciam." (Hannibal)
 (I will either find a way, or I will make one.)

"Timeo Portuguesos et dona ferentis." (Vergil)
 (I fear the Portuguese, even bearing gifts.)

"Aieeeeeee!" (Saint Ignatius of Antioch)
 (Aieeeeeee!)

An empty stage. PRIMA, SECUNDA,
and TERTIA enter. THEY address the
heavens.

PRIMA, SECUNDA, TERTIA
SING IN US, O MUSE,
THAT WE MAY TELL OUR TALE OF SORROW.
SING--

TERTIA
CLIO, MUSE OF REVISIONIST HISTORY--

SECUNDA
POLYHYMNIA, MUSE OF HYMNS AND POLYGONS--

PRIMA
CALLIOPE, MUSE OF EPIC POETRY WHOSE EPICNESS DOES
NOT EXCEED TEN MINUTES IN DURATION--

PRIMA, SECUNDA, TERTIA
SING IN US.
(Possessed by the Muses)
OH--

(Rome. The city bustles with life
proportionate to the cast size.)

PRIMA, SECUNDA, TERTIA (CONT'D)
IT'S ANOTHER DAY IN ROME,
AND THE ROMANS HAVE FREE REIN.
PATRONS, CLIENTS ALL DISPORT,
AND VESTAL VIRGINS ALL ABSTAIN.
CENTURIONS RIDE IN CHARIOTS,
THE SIRENS JOIN IN SONG,
BUT SOMEWHERE NEAR THE PALATINE,
SOMETHING IS WRONG.

(The Curia. EDENDUS stands before a
JUDGE, played by PRIMA.)

PRIMA
Edendus, you are brought before this court on the charges
of Christianity, Monotheism in the third degree, and
Transubstantiation. How do you plead?

EDENDUS
Guilty.

PRIMA

Then you leave me no choice. I sentence you to be eaten by
a lion until you are dead.

PRIMA, SECUNDA, TERTIA

IT'S ANOTHER DAY IN ROME,
AND, UPON OUR FRIENDLY SHORES,
THERE'S NO PROBLEM YOU CAN'T SOLVE
BY FEEDING IT TO CARNIVORES.

BUT WHAT ABOUT THE LIONS
WHO KEEP HOOLIGANS IN LINE?
SURELY, THEY HAVE FEELINGS, TOO,
ALBEIT LEONINE?

(The Stables. The LIONKEEPER, played by
SECUNDA, addresses a bored EPISCUS.)

SECUNDA

(Consulting a stone tablet)

Today, you have a ten o'clock mauling, an evisceration at
noon, and clawings from four to six.

(EPISCUS yawns. A MESSENGER, played by
TERTIA, enters with a scroll.)

TERTIA

Message for you, sir.

(The LIONKEEPER reviews the scroll.)

A Christian. Freshly condemned.

SECUNDA

Oh gods, another one? Episcus, can you handle a devourment
at nine?

(EPISCUS growls indifferently.)

Great, I'll chisel him in.

PRIMA, SECUNDA, TERTIA

IF YOU'VE GOT A STOLA, STROLL ALONG THE TIBER.
DOFF YOUR TUNIC IN THE PUNIC BATHS' WARM GLOW.
IF YOU'VE GOT SANDALS, YOU'LL BE GLAD YOU WORE 'EM
IN THE FORUM.
BUT, IF YOU'VE GOT CHRISTIANS, THERE'S JUST ONE
PLACE TO GO--

(The Coliseum. EDENDUS and EPISCUS
enter at opposite sides.)

ALL
 THE COLISEUM!

PRIMA, SECUNDA, TERTIA
 WHERE THUGS GO TO THE GRAVE.

ALL
 THE COLISEUM!

PRIMA, SECUNDA, TERTIA
 BRING THE CHILDREN. BRING THE SLAVE.

ALL
 OH, IT'S ANOTHER DAY IN ROME--

EDENDUS
 AND, AT LAST, MY END'S IN VIEW.

PRIMA, SECUNDA, TERTIA
 SO BLUE!

EDENDUS, EPISCUS
 JUST ANOTHER HUMDRUM DAY--

EPISCUS
 ANOTHER GENTILE TO CHEW.

PRIMA, SECUNDA, TERTIA
 BOO HOO!

EPISCUS
 WON'T SOMETHING BREAK THE BOREDOM?

EDENDUS
 WON'T MY MAKER TAKE ME HOME?

PRIMA, SECUNDA, TERTIA
 PLEASE DO!

EDENDUS, EPISCUS
 I NEED SOMETHING MORE THAN
 ANOTHER DAY--

PRIMA, SECUNDA, TERTIA
 SING IN US, O MUSE!

EDENDUS, EPISCUS
JUST ANOTHER DAY--

PRIMA, SECUNDA, TERTIA
PICK UP YOUR MUSELY CUES.

EDENDUS, EPISCUS
NOT ANOTHER DAY--

(EDENDUS and EPISCUS are face-to-face.)

EDENDUS
Hello.

EPISCUS
Grr.

EDENDUS
Ahhh!

ALL
IN ROME!

(The CHORUS exits. EPISCUS approaches
EDENDUS.)

EDENDUS
BEFORE YOU BARE ONE FANG,
LIFT ONE PAW, OR LOOSE ONE ROAR,
THERE'S SOMETHING YOU MUST HEAR
WHICH YOU HAVEN'T HEARD BEFORE.

Eat me.

EPISCUS
Grr?

EDENDUS
Eat me!

I'LL BE GRATIFIED.
I'LL BE BEATIFIED.
THEY'LL WRITE ME ODES HAGIOGRAPHIC!
AND IN METER! (MAYBE SAPPIC.)

SOON THEY'LL CALL A DAY
"EDENDUS HOLIDAY."

EDENDUS (CONT'D)

JUST THINK OF HOW THEY'LL PLUME US,
THOUGH THE PLUMING IS POSTHUMOUS.

THEY'LL GIVE MY FAMILY A NEW HOUSE,
NO MORE CHILDREN DOUBLE-BUNKED.
THEY'LL GIVE SUCH GLORIES TO MY SPOUSE,
ONCE I AM DEFUNCT.

And, best of all, they'll give my family a complimentary
fruit basket. Oh, it doesn't sound like much. But my
daughter, she has scurvy.

SO FOR MY WIFE AND SON AND DAUGHTER,
END MY LIFE: HAVE FUN AND SLAUGHTER.
IT'S MY FAREWELL VALENTINE.
YES, IT'S A FATHER'S DREAM.
IT'S MINE.

(Offers his neck)

Okay, sever on three. One, two--

EPISCUS

BEFORE YOU COUNT YOUR FRUIT,
OR BOOK THE DEATHDAY BAND,
THERE'S SOMETHING YOU MUST HEAR,
AND I HOPE YOU UNDERSTAND.

I can't eat you.

EDENDUS

I beg your pardon?

EPISCUS

MY FATHER MADE ME TAKE THIS JOB,
FOR IT'S THE FAMILY CALLING.
BUT, ME, I WANT A LIFE THAT'S MORE
THAN MUNDANITY AND MAULING.

I don't even like how Christians taste. Though, time to
time, I do fancy a spot of Jew.

NO, I DREAM OF A LIFE WHERE I CAN RUN FREE,
SO I'VE FIGURED OUT THE PLACE I WANT TO BE.

EDENDUS

Yes?

EPISCUS

PORTUGAL,
 I DREAM OF PORTUGAL.
 COULD ANY LAND BE MORE DIVINE?
 WHERE THE SEA BREEZE HITS YOUR MANE,
 WHERE THEY LOVE EVERYONE BUT SPAIN,
 WHERE GLOBAL CIRCUMNAVIGATION FLOWS LIKE WINE.
 PORTUGAL, ONCE I'M IN PORTUGAL,
 MY DREAMS AND MY LIFE WILL INTERTWINE.
 THINK HIGH ADVENTURE ON THE SEAS,
 THE DULCET TONES OF PORTUGUESE,
 I DREAM OF PORTUGAL.
 YES! THAT'S MY LIFE'S DESIGN.

YET HERE, IT SEEMS A TAD DOWNHEARTED
 LIVING DREAMS MY DAD IMPARTED,
 THOUGH, FOR DAD, THOSE DREAMS ARE FINE,
 BUT IT'S A FATHER'S DREAM,
 NOT MINE.

EDENDUS

(Offers his arm)

Just one bite? I'm high in Vitamin Jesus.

EPISCUS

MY FATHER'S DREAM.
 A FATHER'S DREAM.
 NOT--

EDENDUS

WON'T YOU GRANT THIS FATHER'S DREAM?
 IT'S--

EDENDUS, EPISCUS

MINE.

EDENDUS

Why can't you be like other lions?

EPISCUS

Why can't you be like other Christians?

(THEY shout over each other--)

EDENDUS

I do not like you Episcus, nor am I able to say why. I can
 say only this: I do not like you.

EPISCUS

(Simultaneously)

O, Christian, delight of other lions, whom they are accustomed to eat, why are you so difficult?

EDENDUS, EPISCUS

But--! You--! Oh, god!

(A thunderclap. MERCURY enters, played by PRIMA.)

PRIMA

Foolish mortals--

(EDENDUS indicates EPISCUS.)

Mammals. The mighty Jupiter condescends to resolve your dilemma.

EDENDUS, EPISCUS

Jupiter?!

PRIMA

Nope, I'm Mercury. But Jupiter gave me his ruling to pass along:

WHEN JOVE'S UPON OLYMPUS,
OFT HAS HIS PASSION RAGÈD,
SO HE BECOMES A LION
AND STALKS THE UNDERAGÈD.
YES, JOVE'S ENJOYED THE LION'S SHARE
OF ROLLICKS, NONE STRAITLACED,
BUT, WHEN IT COMES CHRISTIANS,
HE, TOO, ABHORS THE TASTE.
JOVE SIDES WITH YOU, EPISCUS.
CONTINUE TO ESCHEW,
AND SHOULD ANYONE COMPLAIN,
LET THIS BE YOUR REFRAIN:
GOD TOLD YOU TO.

Episcus and Edendus, surely you accept the judgment of mighty Jove?

EDENDUS

I'm terribly sorry, but he's not my god. Hence my being fed to a lion.

PRIMA

So who is your god?

(A thunderclap. A BURNING BUSH enters,
played by SECUNDA.)

SECUNDA

Foolish creatures!

EDENDUS

God?!

SECUNDA

Sorry, I'm just a burning bush. But God gave me his ruling
to pass along.

GOD DOESN'T CARE FOR BUDDHISTS.
THE ISHMAELITES, HE'S VAGUE ON.
HE DOESN'T LIKE EGYPTIANS.
THAT'S WHY HE GOT HIS PLAGUE ON.
HE OUTRIGHT HATES CANADIANS,
AND SO HE MADE THEM FRENCH,
BUT, WHEN IT COMES TO CHRISTIANS,
GOD ALWAYS IS A MENSCH.
GOD SIDES WITH YOU, EDENDUS,
SO EAT HIM LION, DO,
AND LEST YOU DOTH PROTEST,
IT'S AT THE LORD'S BEHEST:
GOD TOLD YOU TO.

Surely you accept the judgment of almighty God?

EPISCUS

I'm terribly sorry, but God's not my god.

SECUNDA

Then who is?

(Thunderclap. A GODLY FIGURE enters,
played by TERTIA.)

TERTIA

Foolish creatures!

EPISCUS

No one. Cats are atheists.

(TERTIA exits.)

PRIMA, SECUNDA, TERTIA
 YOU MUST OBEY GOD'S VERDICT,
 OR CHAOS WILL ENSUE. (IT'S TRUE.)
 SO--

PRIMA
 EAT HIM DON'T.

SECUNDA
 EAT HIM DO.

TERTIA
 EAT HI--

I have no opinion.

PRIMA, SECUNDA, TERTIA
 REMEMBER:
 GOD TOLD YOU TO.

Gotta fly!

(The CHORUS exits.)

EDENDUS
 Wait! Come back! You didn't solve our problem!
 (To EPISCUS)
 What's the point of gods if they don't decide things for
 you?

EPISCUS
 Maybe we have to decide them for ourselves.

EDENDUS
 What?

EPISCUS
 IS A CHRISTIAN'S ONLY CHOICE TO BE EATEN?

EDENDUS
 Yes?

EPISCUS
 IS A LION'S ONLY CHOICE TO EAT?

EDENDUS
 Well, it should be.

EPISCUS
 MUST TAR BE FOUND IN TAR PITS?
 MUST POLAR BEARS BE CARPETS?
 AND MUST OUR RIVAL COUNTRIES USE KILOMETERS, NOT
 FEET?

No! Don't you see, Edendus?! We get to choose!

AND I CHOOSE--

(TERTIA clears her throat and points to
 her watch.)

EPISCUS (CONT'D)
 And I choose life! So climb on my back, and we'll gallop
 our way to freedom!

(A GUARD, played by PRIMA, blocks the
 Coliseum exit.)

PRIMA
 Halt! You shall not pass!

EPISCUS
 Roar.

PRIMA
 Pass.

(THEY do. The GUARD exits.)

EPISCUS
 Can you smell that? It's freedom.

EDENDUS
 And we've galloped our way to it. What, though, of my
 family? There's no future for them in Rome.

EPISCUS
 Then we must bring them to the land of opportunity.

EDENDUS
 You mean--?

EPISCUS
 Yes!

EDENDUS, EPISCUS
 PORTUGAL,
 WE'LL GO TO PORTUGAL,
 WHERE GLORY IS YOURS IF YOU TRY.

EPISCUS
 IT'S A LAND WHICH YOU CAN DWELL IN--

EDENDUS
 WHERE EVERY MAN IS NAMED MAGELLAN--

EDENDUS, EPISCUS
 WHERE THE TREES ARE FILLED WITH FRUIT, AND THE
 SEAS WITH OCTOPI.

(TERTIA enters.)

TERTIA
 Edendus gathered his family, and, together with Episcus,
 they began their long journey--

EDENDUS, EPISCUS
 TO PORTUGAL!

TERTIA
 They crossed the deserts of Egypt--

(TWO EGYPTIANS enter, played by PRIMA
 and SECUNDA.)

PRIMA
 Oh, no! Bloody rivers, frogs, lice, flies, dead cows,
 boils, locusts, fiery hail, and three days of darkness.

SECUNDA
 Looks like it's safe. Bring out the first-borns!

(The EGYPTIANS exit.)

EDENDUS, EPISCUS
 TO PORTUGAL!

TERTIA
 They braved the generic flats of Canada--

(TWO QUEBECOIS enter, played by PRIMA
 and SECUNDA.)

PRIMA

(Accented)

Why don't we pronounce it new-finned-lind to confuse everyone!

SECUNDA

Oui, oui!

PRIMA

Fromage!

(The QUEBECOIS exit.)

TERTIA

Until finally--

EDENDUS, EPISCUS

TO PORTU--

Woah.

TERTIA

They arrived.

(Portugal.)

EDENDUS, EPISCUS

O, LAND OF CHARMS AND GRACE AND BEAUTY!
WE LIFT OUR ARMS, EMBRACE OUR DUTY.
WE'LL BEGIN OUR LIVES ANEW.

EDENDUS

YES, IT'S A FATHER'S DREAM--

EPISCUS

IT'S MY DREAM--

EDENDUS, EPISCUS

COME TRUE.

EPISCUS

Edendus, I want to give you something to thank you. For helping me realize me dreams. It's not much, but I hope you like it.

(EPISCUS gives EDENDUS a fruit basket.)

EDENDUS

A fruit basket?

EPISCUS

For your scurvy-riddled daughter.

EDENDUS

Oh, Episcus! The world will know of your kindness! I will start a new sect of Christianity. We shall call ourselves Episcopalianians.

EPISCUS

And, to honor this brotherhood, the lions of Portugal shall eat Christians no longer! We will instead target only homosexuals. And the tasty, tasty Jews.

ALL

Hooray!

EPISCUS

I'VE FOUND THE LIFE I'VE DREAMED OF.

PRIMA, SECUNDA, TERTIA

DREAMED OF--

EDENDUS

I'VE FINALLY FOUND MY HOME.

PRIMA, SECUNDA, TERTIA

HE'S HOME--

EDENDUS, EPISCUS

IT'S A NEW DAY--

PRIMA, SECUNDA, TERTIA

O MUSE, WHO FILLS OUR CUP--

EDENDUS, EPISCUS

NOT JUST ANOTHER DAY--

PRIMA, SECUNDA, TERTIA

IT'S TIME TO WRAP THINGS UP.

ALL

IT'S A LIFE AWAY
FROM ROME!
IN PORTUGAL.