

# The Trial of Naomi Verne

John Bandler

Held without charge for crime or crimes unspecified, Naomi Verne, ruler of the American Domain, recalls her secret summit with Luton Maxwell's mother, representative of the theocratic rulers of the Empire of God, and faces the hideous bargain she struck as a way out of a lethal global deadlock.



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# The Trial of Naomi Verne

A stage play in one act, 48 pages

John Bandler

P.O. Box 8083  
Dundas, Ontario  
Canada L9H 5E7

Tel: 905 628 9671  
bandler@mcmaster.ca

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THE TRIAL OF NAOMI VERNE - A STAGE PLAY IN ONE ACT

JOHN BANDLER  
P.O. BOX 8083  
DUNDAS, ONTARIO  
CANADA L9H 5E7  
Tel: 905 628 9671

PLOT SUMMARY

Held without charge for crime or crimes unspecified, Naomi Verne, ruler of the American Domain, recalls her secret summit with Luton Maxwell's mother, representative of the theocratic rulers of the Empire of God, and faces the hideous bargain she struck as a way out of a lethal global deadlock.

CHARACTERS

NAOMI VERNE, actress, ruler of the American Domain, 35+  
THE INQUISITOR  
VALDIS/RASHIDA, mother of LUTON MAXWELL  
TAMINA MAXWELL, NAOMI'S daughter, 5+

TIME

Just decades from now

SETTINGS

On board the "Luton Maxwell" hyper-yacht/An unknown location/The neutral C-Free Zone

PLACES

A child's playroom/An interrogation area/A dining room in a fish-and-chip shop in Iceland

SCENE: PLAYROOM/INTERROGATION AREA/DINING ROOM

Same set throughout: a PLAYROOM on board the "Luton Maxwell" hyper-yacht/an INTERROGATION AREA in an unknown location/a DINING ROOM in an Icelandic FISH-AND-CHIP SHOP.

Stage left. Two chairs. A table. On the table, a WATER JUG, drinking glasses, a SHEET of PAPER, a PAD of PAPER, PENCILS, a small CLOCK, a COIN.

Downstage right. TAMINA'S PLAYROOM in the "past" on board the "Luton Maxwell" hyper-yacht. This space includes both PHYSICAL and VIRTUAL objects and "WALLS" that exclusively constitute TAMINA'S PERSONAL COGNITIVE ASSISTANT, her TOYS and COMMUNICATION PORTALS. The objects are INVISIBLE to the AUDIENCE, and often INVISIBLE and UNAVAILABLE to NAOMI.

Center stage. INTERROGATION AREA in the "present." This space includes both PHYSICAL and VIRTUAL objects and "WALLS" that exclusively constitute THE INQUISITOR'S PERSONAL COGNITIVE ASSISTANT and COMMUNICATION PORTALS. The objects are INVISIBLE to the AUDIENCE, and always INVISIBLE and UNAVAILABLE to NAOMI.

Stage left. DINING ROOM in the "past." We recall Walter O'Dwyer's description of this space from the previous episode THAT THE MULTITUDE MAY LIVE: "Iceland. Dingy brown tables and chairs. A wall. A menu display behind the high counter..." "Valdis. Valdis looked at me. I became aware. Faint over the speakers: 'Winter, spring, summer or fall; All you have to do is call...' "

In neither the INTERROGATION AREA nor the DINING ROOM does NAOMI have access to brain-machine or cognitive interfaces: no interactive WALLS, neither audio, nor video, nor tactile. She has no DARK I-GLASSES to augment or alter her reality. She has her pearl NECKLACE that normally serves as a COGNITIVE/COMMUNICATION PORTAL, but in these spaces and time frames, the NECKLACE and the Band-Aid-like MAXWELL MASTER-PATCH fused to her chest by Luton Maxwell have been neutralized.

NAOMI wears CASUAL clothes, her pearl NECKLACE, but is without a PURSE.

THE INQUISITOR is always calm, composed, and formal.

VALDIS is stylishly dressed.

TAMINA, real age 5, periodically alters her reality to appear older. Each time she is on stage her outfit and appearance change. On a specified occasion she wears I-GLASSES.

Blackout.

TAMINA  
(excited by good news)  
Mommy. Mommy. Mommy.  
(Pause.)  
Oh, Mommy.

NAOMI  
(entering)  
Guess what.

Lights fade in.

TAMINA  
Come take a look.

TAMINA and NAOMI are standing in the  
PLAYROOM. TAMINA is without I-GLASSES.  
NAOMI gazes at TAMINA as if for the  
first time.

While THE INQUISITOR, center stage,  
addresses the AUDIENCE, TAMINA flicks  
her fingers across a WALL, her personal  
COGNITIVE/COMMUNICATION PORTAL.

THE INQUISITOR  
(gesturing at NAOMI)  
As you see from these mental outages, your honors, President  
Verne's private recollections do not serve her case. She  
craves refuge... Her mind-- Your honors, she is surely  
entitled under the Universal Declaration on the Human Mind--  
(Listens.)  
I stand corrected, sirs. Data accumulation will continue.

THE INQUISITOR exits stage right.

NAOMI  
Guess what I brought you, Tammy.

TAMINA  
Look, Mommy, look. I done it.

NAOMI  
(inspecting TAMINA)  
Who are you this time, dear?

TAMINA  
I done it.

NAOMI  
Who and what have you done?

TAMINA  
Look.

Ignoring the WALL, NAOMI circles TAMINA, checking out her current reality. She shakes her head as if to say "What am I going to do with her?"

NAOMI  
Fresh pomegranates, Tammy.

TAMINA  
I done it.

NAOMI  
Deep red. I tried one. Let's go.

TAMINA  
I done it. I done it.

NAOMI  
(gesturing at TAMINA'S appearance)  
You mean, what? This...persona?

TAMINA  
(turning to NAOMI)  
I've really done it. Guess. Guess!

NAOMI  
Calm down, calm down.

TAMINA  
You'll never guess.

NAOMI  
I give up. What have you done?

TAMINA  
(pointing at her WALL)  
Obviously, see. See, Mommy, I've done an opera.

NAOMI sees little on TAMINA'S WALL because TAMINA has locked her out.

NAOMI  
(not seeing)  
Well, that's truly wonderful, Tamina. Was this your teacher's assignment?

Pause.

TAMINA  
Yes.

TAMINA hugs NAOMI, all but knocks her over.

NAOMI  
(disengaging)  
Oops! Watch out!

TAMINA  
Sorry.

TAMINA gestures at the WALL with her  
finger.

NAOMI  
(reads from TAMINA'S WALL)  
Most intriguing. "The Last Song. An opera in two acts by  
Tamina Maxwell, composer." The last song? Perhaps I can  
sing in your "Last Song."

TAMINA  
Oh no, Mommy. Oh no.

NAOMI  
Play it for me, will you, dear?  
(Sweeps her hand across  
TAMINA'S WALL to no effect.)  
Show me. Unlock your wall. I want to see more.

TAMINA  
But it's supposed to be a huge surprise.

NAOMI  
Tammy!

Silence.

VALDIS enters stage left.

NAOMI (CONT'D)  
(off TAMINA'S look)  
What?

TAMINA  
You'll spoil it.

NAOMI  
How can I possibly spoil an opera?

TAMINA  
(backing away)  
Sorry, Mommy. I love you, I love you, I love you, Mommy,  
really I do, but you don't sing so good.  
(Pause.)  
You don't sing so very good.

Running, TAMINA exits stage right.

Dark.

NAOMI goes to a chair in the DINING ROOM, sits, slumps forward onto the table. VALDIS stands over her.

Lights up.

THE INQUISITOR enters the INTERROGATION AREA from where TAMINA exited stage right, paces and ponders the action between NAOMI and VALDIS.

VALDIS touches NAOMI.

Bewildered, NAOMI sits up. She gazes at VALDIS and at herself; gropes at her own neck and chest for her PATCH. She raises her NECKLACE and lets it drop. She sweeps her hand as if searching for a WALL. Upon realizing she is without her props, without her security, without her essential cognitive defenses, she jumps to her feet.

NAOMI

An eclipse!

VALDIS

No.

NAOMI

(searching for a WALL)

Jesus Christ, a blackout.

VALDIS

You're safe.

NAOMI

(searching for a WALL)

A cyber blackout. Blank. Dead walls. Absolutely nothing.

(Touching her eyes.)

They even took away my god damn glasses.

VALDIS

The C-Free Zone. Life here is quite basic. But it's safe.

NAOMI

(recollecting)

Yes, of course. Iceland.

NAOMI returns to the table, pats and strokes it, handles the JUG and glasses, the SHEET of PAPER, perhaps a PENCIL: she searches for something, anything that might respond to her.



NAOMI

Where are we?

VALDIS

We're in a restaurant.

NAOMI

What?

VALDIS

Within the Fence. Within the Fence, but a change of venue.

NAOMI

Impossible.

VALDIS

Yet necessary.

NAOMI

I made it clear I require certain facilities. This place is bereft of facilities.

VALDIS picks up the SHEET of PAPER and hands it to NAOMI.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

My very point. Paper! What the hell am I supposed to do with a stupid piece of paper?

VALDIS motions her to read.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

"Dear Madam emissary, welcome..." Emissary?

(Reads on silently, then...)

"For your protection, we have arranged a change of venue for your meeting, a venue, of course, with fully refurbished accommodations and our best chef at your exclusive disposal."

(She looks around.)

Our best chef? I'll be damned. This place is opaque, lifeless. Fence or not, we're sitting ducks in this dump.

(Reads on.)

"Armed guards are stationed outside. Security is iron-clad." Guards? Guards? Armed with what?

(She toys with a PENCIL, scribbles on the SHEET.)

Being here is surely a temporary measure. Of course, the transition. Not a damned clock in sight, let alone--

(She toys with the CLOCK.)

This place has an Outside? What day is it?

VALDIS

Transitions to the Zone by Outsiders should last no more than 24 hours.

THE INQUISITOR

(addressing a WALL)

A long delay indeed. What was its purpose?

(Nods in affirmation.)

Plasticity. To ensure that the human brain resets... To its original modality. They actually believed that?

(Listens to the WALL.)

Still craving a response, NAOMI gestures, sweeps her hand over the table, and across what, for her, are inactive surfaces.

VALDIS

All spacetime deadlines will be honored.

NAOMI

They'd better be. The Zone can't possibly operate under an internal blackout. We are surely being watched.

THE INQUISITOR

To filter out spies. I see.

VALDIS

Citizen monitoring is illegal here.

THE INQUISITOR

A cul-de-sac surely.

NAOMI

Are you of the C-Free Zone?

VALDIS

Like you, I crossed the interface.

NAOMI

What for?

VALDIS

To see you.

NAOMI

And you are...?

VALDIS

Your opposite number.

NAOMI

That can't possibly be. I have serious business.

VALDIS

I assure you, President Verne, you came to the right place. To see the right person.

NAOMI

Papers. Pencils. Why do I find you, all this, implausible?

VALDIS

The Empire believes in pencil and paper.

NAOMI picks up the COIN from the table.

NAOMI

What's this? A coin?

VALDIS

They still use them in the Zone.

NAOMI

Of course, you're a trader from the Eastern Dynasty, selling something. Those Easterners are always selling something.

NAOMI returns the COIN to the table.

VALDIS

I'm from the Empire of God. I assure you.

(Off NAOMI'S look.)

You may call me Rashida.

NAOMI

Rashida. I had, still have, these visions.

VALDIS

Your mind is in reset mode.

NAOMI

The phase transition.

VALDIS

Neural crosstalk.

NAOMI

Strange. You're not a trader, you say. Did you...?

VALDIS

My crosstalk residual is now acceptable.

Disoriented, NAOMI touches her own head and rubs her stomach. She sits down on a chair, pours water into a glass and drinks.

Unresponsive, as if no longer listening to NAOMI, VALDIS picks up the SHEET OF PAPER and, while exiting stage left, tears the SHEET in half and lets one half flutter to the floor.

THE INQUISITOR goes to a chair and sits down across from NAOMI.

NAOMI rises.

NAOMI

Mommy and Carolyn, in pink and white. Strolling. Skipping. Across the green lake. Our lake. Arm-in-arm, chatting. Laughing, at something. I try, run, catch up with them. But legs, freeze, at water's edge. They turn, Mommy and Carolyn, they see me, their lips move, but I can't hear them, taste them, or reshape them. They keep laughing, they're having fun, and I hate them. I hate them.

NAOMI approaches THE INQUISITOR.

A moment of stunned silence.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

You dare sit while I'm standing?

THE INQUISITOR

You are...?

Silence.

NAOMI

You question who I am?

THE INQUISITOR

The Court questions everything.

NAOMI

Everyone knows who I am.

THE INQUISITOR

It is essential to your case that you know who you are.

Pause.

NAOMI

What Court?

THE INQUISITOR rises to his feet and gestures, indicating their entire surroundings, including THE AUDIENCE.

THE INQUISITOR

The Court.

(Pause.)

Well...?

NAOMI

Of course I know who I am.

THE INQUISITOR

Then we may proceed. First, I remind you that "time out" is not at your disposal.

NAOMI

And I remind you, sir, madam, your honor, or whatever you call yourself, that kidnapping the President of the American Domain is punishable by death.

THE INQUISITOR

You are required to cooperate with this inquiry at all times.

NAOMI

This is intolerable.

THE INQUISITOR

So as not to dwell on what is already widely known...

NAOMI

Death.

NAOMI tries to divert the subject but  
THE INQUISITOR brushes her off.

THE INQUISITOR

...we will summarize, as follows. According to you, your lover, the infamous capitalist-inventor Doctor Luton Maxwell is deceased. Correct? Maxwell is fully deceased?

NAOMI

Clearly, there has been one hell-of-a fuck-up in my security.  
(Searching the space around her  
as if for answers.)  
Genevieve Q. Don't fail me, Q. You and your god damn squad are needed in here pronto. Jump to it, Q.

THE INQUISITOR

(after a glance at a WALL)

The Court will take that as an affirmative. Doctor Maxwell is fully deceased. Now, you allege, that at his personal initiative, Maxwell's physical being perished in the bombing of his own Luton Maxwell Tower. Is this correct?

NAOMI

Kindly inform me of the charges or permit me to leave.

THE INQUISITOR

Moments earlier, according to speculation, Doctor Maxwell integrated his brain function with yours through the only Master-Patch then in existence; he thereby ensured that his mind would thrive for a certain period within yours.

NAOMI

(sitting at a chair)

In fact, he wanted our brains to fuse. But I resisted.

THE INQUISITOR

As you are resisting this Court.

NAOMI

I'm not sure I can explain why. Except that his new Patch was a prototype. He admitted it.

THE INQUISITOR

Duly noted, madam.

NAOMI

Nevertheless, my resistance to Luton immunized me during my incubation period against the central government's cyber-drones.

THE INQUISITOR

You exercised free will.

NAOMI

Free will.

THE INQUISITOR

Against Doctor Maxwell. At any rate, a high probability thereof. Allow me to summarize. As Doctor Maxwell's umbrella of influence over you seemed to dissolve, you found yourself able to overthrow and then exile the incumbent President Walter O'Dwyer, your own father, and seize from him the helm of the American Union, now called the American Domain.

NAOMI

I am the guardian of the revolution.

THE INQUISITOR

By decree.

NAOMI

O'Dwyer was soft, indecisive. All resistance and remaining vestiges of his impotent rule are quashed.

THE INQUISITOR

Perpetual martial law across your mega-nation ensures that.

NAOMI

A military takeover was imminent. I crushed it, reintegrated seceding regions, and restored the economy. Citizen morale is through the roof.

THE INQUISITOR

You offer them dreams.

NAOMI

It is imperative that the winning side be one step ahead.

THE INQUISITOR

Your side.

NAOMI

My side, one step ahead. Always.

THE INQUISITOR

Whether you cure the sick or kill your enemy.

NAOMI

Killing. Curing. And everything in between. To neutralize disease.

THE INQUISITOR

This is what Doctor Maxwell would have wanted?

NAOMI

It is what I want.

THE INQUISITOR

Yet the world now, more than ever, is insecure--

NAOMI stands up and approaches THE INQUISITOR.

NAOMI

How long have you held me here?

THE INQUISITOR

How long does it seem?

NAOMI

If this is a coup...

THE INQUISITOR

It's an inquiry.

NAOMI

I have zero recollection of how you abducted me. If you're subjecting me to a phase transition... It had better be nothing more.

(Beat.)

I get it. Okay, Luton, the fun's over. It's you, right?

(She traverses the stage as if seeking an invisible object.)

It's you. You've returned. Tell me you've returned. This is our opera, Luton. Ours. Ours alone. Ours! "Last bugger standing." Remember? Remember? Show yourself.

THE INQUISITOR

Data accumulation continues.

NAOMI

(wistful)

The last song. The last bugger. The last song.

THE INQUISITOR

Causality is being determined. Cause and effect, sequenced.

NAOMI snaps out of her confusion.

NAOMI

The charges, sir.

THE INQUISITOR

The charges preferred by this Court are very much dependent on you.

NAOMI

You dare ask me, who preside unchallenged over the most powerful force on earth, to specify charges against myself?

THE INQUISITOR

It is better this way.

NAOMI

(sarcastic)

Perhaps I elect to be charged with subverting humanity.

THE INQUISITOR confers with a WALL and gestures at it as if agreeing with an outside entity.

THE INQUISITOR

Noted.

NAOMI searches in vain for a WALL that is active and responsive to her.

NAOMI

Who the hell's prosecuting this case? Mister Justice Williams, get your ass on line. If you're behind this impudence, if this is your revenge, I'll have your Chief Justice balls served on a platter.

THE INQUISITOR

(hand raised to make notes on a WALL)

Slavery, political prisoners, exchange of populations, the subversion of the fundamental rights of your species--?

NAOMI

My species? Who are you? Clone? Robot? I brought homo sapiens to its highest peak ever: the Migration culminating in the Great Exchange. There's no turning back.

THE INQUISITOR

Excuse me.

(Sweeps a hand across a WALL.

Returns attention to NAOMI.)

You may answer the Court's questions, madam, or you may prefer to make a relevant statement or statements, but you are not permitted to otherwise interrupt the proceedings.



NAOMI approaches THE INQUISITOR with the intent of touching him. He does not resist her as she circles him. She responds to his solidity, his realness.

NAOMI

Hmm. State of the art. Tactile. A cleverly-constructed illusion. Imbued with solidity. Enough now. Kindly identify yourself and your trade mark, and reinstate all preexisting cognitive channels at my disposal.

(Beat.)

Okay, you serve Maxwell Corporation's Counterintelligence Unit rather than the Justice Department, and wish to impress me with a new war game. You continue to keep me separated from my security detail. Good for you. You wish to remind me of Doctor Maxwell's tricks. I'm reminded. I'm impressed.

THE INQUISITOR

Under the rules of Counterintelligence you are guilty until proven innocent.

NAOMI

I order this game over.

THE INQUISITOR

I'm trying to be of assistance.

NAOMI

Where the hell did you learn to speak like this? You'd better not be an enemy agent.

THE INQUISITOR

I am a humble servant of this Court.

NAOMI

What Court? Civil? Military?

THE INQUISITOR

This Court covers all jurisdictions.

NAOMI

If by chance you represent Walter O'Dwyer's residual cyber-legacy, remind me to stamp it out.

THE INQUISITOR

I report to the TriCouncil.

NAOMI

TriCouncil. What TriCouncil? I know of no such entity.

THE INQUISITOR

Nevertheless...

NAOMI

I'll stamp that out too.

(Addresses a WALL.)

Restore my cognitive coprocessors. Now! Central Intelligence. Genevieve Q. Reinstate. Reinstate!

(To THE INQUISITOR.)

I order you to reactivate my environment.

THE INQUISITOR

I am authorized--

NAOMI

You have no authority.

THE INQUISITOR

...to reach a consensus.

NAOMI

To what end?

THE INQUISITOR

Between the parties to this case. To put the charges against you into the appropriate perspective.

For a moment NAOMI appears to be faint.

NAOMI

(to herself)

I need a pill.

THE INQUISITOR

The Court awaits your response.

NAOMI

I have veto power over all courts.

THE INQUISITOR confers with a WALL.

THE INQUISITOR

Madam, the Prosecutor--

NAOMI

And I need time out.

THE INQUISITOR again confers with a WALL.

THE INQUISITOR

Request denied.

NAOMI

(to the AUDIENCE)

Dear friends. Fellow citizens. I know what's happening. So do you. This is a clumsy attempt to embarrass me. To bore the populace with stale, opposing viewpoints. To bore you. You may safely shut down this channel and go about your business.

THE INQUISITOR

(pointing at a WALL)

Let the record show--

NAOMI

Yes. Yes. Okay? My damn body's killing me!

(Addressing the AUDIENCE.)

A mere simulation, ladies and gentlemen. To test my sensitivity to cross-modal drones. Doubtless, Maxwell Corporation owns the patent. God damn it! It hurts. I admit it. But I'm hyper-resilient. All you guys have to chew on are my voice prints, my external gestures. My sniffer shields are perpetual. I dare you to dig further.

Defiant, she gives the AUDIENCE the "finger."

THE INQUISITOR

Let the record show that the accused refuses to--

NAOMI

Naomi Verne! To you, Madam President. And you are...?

THE INQUISITOR consults a WALL.

THE INQUISITOR

According to the official record, madam, I am an emissary.

NAOMI

I don't deal with emissaries.

THE INQUISITOR

Yet I report directly to the Court of the TriCouncil.

NAOMI

I report to no one. And my authority is irrevocable.

(She searches in vain for an exit.)

I've got to get out of here.

She goes to the DINING ROOM, slumps down at the table, and rests her head in her hands.

THE INQUISITOR exits stage right. As if THE INQUISITOR and TAMINA cross paths in the entrance, TAMINA enters.

TAMINA is clad in a cocktail dress and lipstick. Wears I-GLASSES.

TAMINA

I won, Mommy. I won.

NAOMI

(from the table)

Of course you did, dear. Of course you did.

TAMINA

I mean it. Really. Really I do.

NAOMI

(rising, approaching TAMINA)

It's all a game. It's just a game.

TAMINA

No. No. My opera won. Out of hundreds and hundreds and hundreds. They're going to play it in Jerusalem.

NAOMI

Jerusalem?

TAMINA

With a huge orchestra, and real singers. Isn't that just awesome?

NAOMI

Your tutor told you this? Playacting, he was, like you.

TAMINA

Do you like my outfit?

NAOMI

It's totally outrageous, Tamina. Restore yourself right away. You're five years old, for God's sake.

TAMINA

The Prophet invited me.

NAOMI

I won't hear of this.

TAMINA

He wants me to follow him.

NAOMI

The Prophet?

(Calls her security.)

Security!

TAMINA

He lives in Jerusalem. I think.

NAOMI

(to her security)

Redirect. Security. Yes.

(Listens.)

So cut the damned spaghetti... No? Then up the power. Max!  
You heard. Maximum. Choke 'em, rip 'em out. Fry them!  
Report back in five. Five. No later.

TAMINA

Jerusalem's a real place. Daddy says so too.

NAOMI

Your Daddy's dead.

TAMINA

Oh, no. No. He speaks to me.

NAOMI

I've told you, begged you, over and over...

TAMINA preens in a WALL.

TAMINA

Daddy likes me like this.

NAOMI

Shut up. You're not to wear your I-Glasses until further  
notice. Take them off at once and act your age.

TAMINA

(turning to NAOMI)

Don't you, Daddy?

NAOMI

And I'm disengaging all your portals.

There's a struggle. NAOMI takes away  
TAMINA'S I-GLASSES, and trashes them.

TAMINA

Do you pray, Mommy? Daddy says you should.

NAOMI

Damn!

TAMINA

You mustn't say that, Mommy.

VALDIS enters stage left.

TAMINA crosses downstage right to her  
PLAYROOM and plays with her WALLS and  
COGNITIVE TOYS. Giggles.

NAOMI

(to her security)

Tighter than the blackest fucking hole in the universe. Do you guys out there have families? Want to hold on to them?

NAOMI goes to the table. Sits down, exhausted, hangs her head.

TAMINA

(to her WALL)

Have we been to Jerusalem, Daddy? Has Mommy? It rains there, and there's lots and lots of nice people there. Real people. The Prophet says so. People who love operas and singing. And praying.

(Beat.)

Where's Jerusalem, Mommy?

TAMINA glances towards the action at the table, and becomes sober.

VALDIS shakes NAOMI'S shoulder.

NAOMI looks up.

NAOMI

48 hours. 48.

(Beat.)

You are what they call...?

(She loses her train of thought.)

An Undocumented...?

VALDIS

In this place everyone is an Undocumented. Even you.

NAOMI

But you're not from here.

VALDIS

I'm on short assignment to the Zone.

NAOMI

As an emissary.

VALDIS

Yes.

NAOMI

But not from the Eastern Dynasty.

VALDIS

From the Empire of God.

NAOMI

I need a pill.

VALDIS  
Madam President?

NAOMI  
A pill please?

VALDIS  
They have things here they call Aspirins.

NAOMI  
What are Aspirins?

VALDIS  
This is indeed a new experience for you.

NAOMI  
I don't give a damn what they call them, as long as they work. But if anything, you know, if anything at all goes awry here... Aspirins, whatever, this... Restaurant...

VALDIS  
It will be vaporized. Terminated. According to the Treaty.

NAOMI  
Terminated, along with a large section of the Empire.

VALDIS  
(unconcerned)  
We, my Empire, we are partitioned into city states: bottom-up, organic, archived. We die. We spring to life again.

Pause.

TAMINA glances at VALDIS and NAOMI, then exits stage right.

Immediately thereafter, on cue, THE INQUISITOR enters.

NAOMI picks up the CLOCK, and looks at it as if it were a curiosity.

NAOMI  
You seem well-acclimatized.

VALDIS  
Full acclimatization takes a few days.

NAOMI puts down the CLOCK.

NAOMI  
Traders. Emissaries. Ambassadors. I don't have days. I have urgent business with your Supreme Leader.

VALDIS  
I represent one of the Seven.

NAOMI

You don't say.

VALDIS

I am a member of the Central Committee.

NAOMI

So, one of the impenetrable Seven. A warlord.

VALDIS

Of sorts.

(Beat.)

Our meeting will take place here.

NAOMI

Will? Here? Here? You're kidding of course.

VALDIS

Here. Precisely here. Once your mind has stabilized.

NAOMI

What's your portfolio?

VALDIS

Disciplinary and Cultural Affairs.

NAOMI

(makes as if to rise up)

I must return.

VALDIS

I wouldn't advise that.

NAOMI

Security and the Joints Chiefs must hear from me within 48 hours.

VALDIS

Understood.

NAOMI

The drones are ready.

VALDIS

Of course. But so are our countermeasures.

NAOMI

48 hours. Countermeasures. Undocumented. A warlord. Of sorts. God, I need sleep. Sleep. Real sleep. Discipline? Culture? Among radical theocrats? Imagine. Sleep.

NAOMI slumps onto the table.

VALDIS

I'll fetch you some Aspirins.



She exits stage left.

NAOMI rises and, as if sleepwalking, goes to THE INTERROGATION AREA and faces THE INQUISITOR.

THE INQUISITOR

How do you plead?

NAOMI

This is a madhouse.

THE INQUISITOR

The Court, madam, directs me to facilitate this inquiry.

NAOMI

I recognize no such court.

THE INQUISITOR

That is most unfortunate, for you stand before it.

NAOMI

Let this so-called "Court" show its face.

(Looks around.)

Justice Williams. I warn you...

THE INQUISITOR

President Verne, leader of the Domain of American Nations, it is my duty to inform you--

NAOMI

You will not address me in this manner.

THE INQUISITOR

...that you stand accused--

NAOMI

By whom?

THE INQUISITOR

By parties of the highest standing...

NAOMI

I have veto power over all courts and councils, and hereby exercise it.

THE INQUISITOR

...of crime and-or crimes--

NAOMI

Your name and rank, sir.

THE INQUISITOR

My name and rank are of no consequence.

NAOMI

Name and rank!

THE INQUISITOR

You may address me as "Facilitator."

NAOMI

Facilitator. There is no such office in any known hierarchy. Inquisitor. Inquisitions. Inquisitions are of course the stock in trade of all theocracies.

THE INQUISITOR

Madam President, the Court refers you to the seriousness of your predicament.

NAOMI

What Court? You? You are merely a patented psychodynamic process gone haywire. Don't worry, unless you are a criminal from the Border Wastelands. Maxwell Corporation's Cognitive Repair Division routinely corrects mistakes like you. Like those kinks, and gaps, and those singularities: Luton's early forecasts. But we've thwarted that evil Empire of God: traversed each of Luton's cross-modal thresholds. Our new Diaspora Initiative has rendered infinitesimal the probabilities of the self-annihilation or any form of demise of the human species.

THE INQUISITOR

Your nation has been duped.

NAOMI

Aha! My nation! My nation, my sector, is content. In fact, we personalize all human evolutionary requirements. I offer each citizen in good standing the highest tolerable stress, the correct dosages of reality and contentment, and the finest medical care the individual's status deserves. I lead one nation, sir, one people, and my people speak with one voice.

THE INQUISITOR

Yours.

NAOMI

One nation, indivisible.

THE INQUISITOR

Under you.

NAOMI

Are you mocking me, sir?

THE INQUISITOR

I'm the Court's mouthpiece, madam. The Court does not mock.

NAOMI

You tell me. What mother would deny her child every available advantage, every available opportunity?

THE INQUISITOR

When you walled her into her electromagnetic jail, sealed her off from the world, did you also speak for your own child?

Silence.

NAOMI

My child?

THE INQUISITOR

You deny you had a child?

Silence.

NAOMI

Had?

THE INQUISITOR

Have?

NAOMI

I had to keep her safe.

THE INQUISITOR

Safe.

NAOMI

You must see that.

THE INQUISITOR

You admit for the record that you had a child.

NAOMI

I had to keep her safe.

Pause.

THE INQUISITOR

(looks around)

Where is she?

NAOMI

Safe. Until I had the blueprints for the Maxwell Master Patch in hand, don't you see? It was imperative I take precautions. Every precaution. I had to keep Tamina safe.

For a moment, THE INQUISITOR looks upstage right, where we had last seen TAMINA. As if speaking to TAMINA...

THE INQUISITOR

Princess Tamina. Tamina Maxwell is safe.

NAOMI

Yes.

THE INQUISITOR  
(turning back to NAOMI)

Free from aliens.

NAOMI

Free from contamination. From cognitive deconstruction.  
From the Empire of God, its factions, its splinter groups,  
the fanatics, the militias... Everyone would have exploited  
her.

THE INQUISITOR

Against you.

NAOMI

Yes.

THE INQUISITOR

Did you consider Miss Maxwell?

NAOMI

Of course. Of course I did. I couldn't possibly expose her.

THE INQUISITOR

The Court would like you to reflect on what you in fact did.

NAOMI

What?

THE INQUISITOR

The Court will adjourn. I will leave. You will reflect.

NAOMI

On what? On what?

THE INQUISITOR

The Court will grant you sufficient time. To consider the  
charges that might be appropriate under the circumstances.

NAOMI dashes frantically around the  
INTERROGATION AREA and searches for a  
WALL, anything that will respond to  
her. She falls to the floor, desperate  
for a response.

NAOMI

You can't leave me alone in this hole.

THE INQUISITOR

The Court shall adjourn.

NAOMI

There's nothing here. Nothing. I need food, a bed...

THE INQUISITOR proceeds towards the exit, stage right. She rises and follows, then finds herself restrained, unable to move further.

She panics.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

I need light, sound, color.

THE INQUISITOR turns to look at her.

THE INQUISITOR

Consider the charges.

She regains her composure.

NAOMI

I believe you mean well. I do. I could use someone like you on my team. Do you have Aspirins?

THE INQUISITOR

You seek to trivialize these proceedings, madam?

NAOMI

No, sir. Not at all. I've been up much too long.

THE INQUISITOR readies to exit.

THE INQUISITOR

This inquiry has insufficient time to indulge in slumber.

NAOMI

You don't, surely, intend to keep me awake?

A silence.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

Tamina, oh Tamina!

THE INQUISITOR

(looking around)

Where is she?

NAOMI falls to her knees. Panics again.

NAOMI

No! No-no.

THE INQUISITOR

Dignity.

NAOMI

I did all I could.

THE INQUISITOR

Rise to your feet.

NAOMI

You won't turn out that lamp.

THE INQUISITOR

(consults a WALL)

Madam, this act does not convince the Court.

NAOMI

You mustn't turn out the mono-lamp.

THE INQUISITOR

You're a president.

NAOMI

I need a lawyer.

THE INQUISITOR

The Court has provided for your representation.

(Pause.)

You may call your counsellor "Jockamo."

NAOMI

Jockamo. Oh God. Where...?

THE INQUISITOR

Isolation is essential to limit exposure, avoid contagion.

NAOMI

Jockamo? I need my pills.

THE INQUISITOR

You are ready to confess?

NAOMI

To what?

(Addresses the WALLS.)

For God's sake, what do you gangsters want?

THE INQUISITOR glances at a WALL.  
Seems to consider a response from  
observers of the scene. He nods  
affirmatively at the WALL and looks  
down at NAOMI.

THE INQUISITOR

The Court takes that as a negative: you refuse to confess.  
Madam, you will consider your child. You will consider your  
nation. You will consider your plea.

NAOMI

Don't turn out the light.

THE INQUISITOR

I will return.

THE INQUISITOR exits stage right.

Lights fade.

NAOMI

Mommy. Daddy. It's black, so black. Please make it white again. Don't stop the music, Tamina. Play "The Last Song." You mustn't be afraid of it like Mommy is. You mustn't.

(Long, drawn out.)

Ta-meee-na. My baby. Where are you? Where are you?

(Still on the floor, NAOMI'S  
panic continues.)

I closed every loophole, had every device stressed against Black Swans. Against all possible outliers. But my shield cracked. My shield broke. You got out. And they found you.

Dark.

VALDIS enters the DINING ROOM stage left.

Lights fade in.

NAOMI hauls herself to her feet and approaches VALDIS.

VALDIS

Room service truly leaves something to be desired, don't you think, but I hope you slept as well as I did.

A BELL RINGS.

VALDIS (CONT'D)

(gesturing)

Away.

The BELL RINGS again.

VALDIS (CONT'D)

We don't need room service. Leave us.

NAOMI

In future, I will make that decision.

VALDIS

As you wish.

NAOMI

Who are you?

VALDIS

Rashida.

NAOMI  
Stop your games.

VALDIS  
Walter O'Dwyer knew me as "Valdis."

A long silence.

NAOMI  
Valdis.

VALDIS  
Yes.

NAOMI  
Luton Maxwell's mother.

VALDIS  
Yes.

NAOMI  
Luton's bio-mom?

VALDIS  
Right where we stand, in this plain fish-and-chip shop, this is where I first met Walter O'Dwyer. Where I made absolutely sure he fell in love with me.

NAOMI  
And you know why I'm here.

VALDIS  
You have a child.

NAOMI  
I...

VALDIS  
We put out a call for a new opera to commemorate the establishment of Jerusalem as...

NAOMI  
You cracked her shield.

VALDIS  
Of course. We welcomed submissions from all sources...

NAOMI  
Who else knows about my daughter?

VALDIS  
We insisted that compositions be of biogenic origin.

NAOMI  
Oh my...



VALDIS

Certain information came to my attention. An enquiry that originated in the American Domain, bearing the hallmarks of a juvenile, a girl of just about the right age.

(Off NAOMI'S look.)

In the fragment we requested to verify eligibility, in this case the overture to "The Last Song," we detected traces of Luton Maxwell's DNA signature.

NAOMI

Oh my God.

VALDIS

Kindly do not take the Lord's name in vain.

NAOMI

Who undertook this analysis?

VALDIS

Elite members of bio-intelligence. The Zionist unit.

NAOMI

You granted mere underlings access to Luton's entire genome?

VALDIS

They did their analysis triple-blind with segregated, triply-coded data. Only you and I know the source of that opera.

NAOMI

(longingly)

Ripped off note by note, bar by bar, line by line...

VALDIS

Self-organizing elements of Beethoven's 10th Symphony, synthesized by my own son, embedded in Tamina's brain. Imagine my surprise, my delight. The phenotype of her profile in subsequent messages confirmed everything. All communications converged.

NAOMI

You engaged Tamina in dialogue?

VALDIS

It was necessary.

NAOMI

You dared tell her who you were?

VALDIS

Someone who knew her father.

NAOMI

Your son? The infant you abandoned?

As it is written. VALDIS

She hears voices. NAOMI

God's gift. VALDIS

She's only five years old. NAOMI

One voice is mine. Naomi Verne's is another... VALDIS

The way you say that... NAOMI

Silence.

Luton invented a cyber-mother, a mother nothing like you. NAOMI (CONT'D)  
Charity Fay Maxwell he called her.

That is also written. VALDIS

He would speak with her. You abandoned him, left him to be NAOMI  
brought up by a janitor!  
(incredulous)

The Covenant indeed spoke of such a lowly man, an unmarried VALDIS  
man, but a trustworthy man, of a certain Karl Maxwell.

Who rescued your baby from his apartment dumpster. NAOMI

Still, Luton thrived. As the entire world knows, he did VALDIS  
well.

Silence.

What do you want? NAOMI

You said you had important business to conduct. I have VALDIS  
important business too.

Tamina is my business. NAOMI

VALDIS

Tamina is now the Empire's business.

NAOMI

I order you to release her.

VALDIS

My granddaughter Tamina Maxwell is to join me.

(Off NAOMI'S look.)

Yes, indeed. It is my son's wish.

NAOMI

You're lying.

VALDIS

His message to me, a message we stripped from the score of her opera, written into her DNA, and pointing to a deeply folded nest of algorithms that we must possess, that if and when I was found, alive and whole, that I was to be united with her. And through her, with him, and his entire legacy.

NAOMI

You insult me, madam.

VALDIS

I'm afraid there is no mention of you.

NAOMI

You bitch!

VALDIS

In Luton's instructions. Or in Tamina's opera.

NAOMI

Tamina's opera? Luton's opera. He suggested an opera. It was to be his and mine.

VALDIS

I'm sorry. I also doubt that you are referred to anywhere else.

NAOMI

(ruefully)

I had wanted to write about him. A biography. "An original opera," he suggested. "And write yourself in."

VALDIS

Evidently, he didn't trust you.

NAOMI

I won't give her up.

VALDIS

There is no place for you in his plan.

NAOMI

I won't.

VALDIS

But I can offer you asylum.

(Pause.)

Luton Maxwell's instructions are clear. In his own voice.

NAOMI

(verge of tears)

No. Luton would never have done that. Towards the end, before he died, he was sure you'd been captured, a sex-slave, perhaps dead.

(Pause.)

He loved me. He wanted me to have her. She loves me.

VALDIS

You were merely his vessel.

NAOMI

I'll never give her up. To you. To anyone.

VALDIS

Clearly, he had his reasons.

NAOMI

You damaged her mind.

VALDIS

Tamina needs guidance.

NAOMI

Release her. She must be repaired.

VALDIS

The Scriptures are being updated as we speak.

NAOMI

These talks will cease.

VALDIS

Our discourse has barely begun.

NAOMI

At once.

VALDIS

We up-streamed Tamina's signals; her ever-changing location is pin-pointed; now permanently phased-locked to her own DNA. There's no escape.

Silence.

NAOMI

We'll break the link.

VALDIS  
It's unbreakable. We know you tried.

NAOMI  
(dismissive)  
She's on one of the Luton Maxwells.

VALDIS  
His hyper-yacht, of course. The real one?

NAOMI  
There are many real ones.

VALDIS  
Indeed. As well as all those new cognitive decoys. As the Almighty Himself is surely aware.

NAOMI  
Your Zionist Unit again...?

VALDIS  
No. Bio-intelligence has completed its investigative mission.

NAOMI  
Free her.

VALDIS  
I must delegate the matter to the Temple.

NAOMI  
I order you to free her.

VALDIS  
It is preferable, Madam President, that you submit yourself to me. And thereby, to the Empire of God.

NAOMI  
You're joking.

VALDIS  
Come home with me.

NAOMI  
You're mad.

VALDIS  
Come home.

NAOMI  
As what?

VALDIS  
As Tamina's mother.

NAOMI  
I am Tamina's mother.

VALDIS  
Are you?

Silence

NAOMI  
My daughter is not negotiable.

VALDIS  
Your monolithic, inelastic mega-nation is teetering on the  
brink of collapse. And you know it.

NAOMI  
Nonsense.

VALDIS  
Unshackle your people.

NAOMI  
I offer...

VALDIS  
Fragility. And falsehoods.

NAOMI  
My government offers universal, self-validated scientific  
predictions.

VALDIS  
We offer salvation.

NAOMI  
Your Prophet?

VALDIS  
The Almighty...

NAOMI  
My business is with your earthly Leader.

VALDIS  
When you surrender, he too will accept you as my daughter.

NAOMI  
That's good of him.

VALDIS  
It is written.

NAOMI  
There's no damned force on earth--

VALDIS

Tamina is one of us now.

NAOMI

You'll fail.

VALDIS

She is locked into our Lord's cross-hairs.

NAOMI

I absolutely guarantee it. Luton's counter-measures are armed, active, and perpetual.

VALDIS

I'm surprised.

NAOMI

And I've inherited them.

VALDIS

Must I remind you?

NAOMI

I'll give you South America. Just let her go.

VALDIS

South America. You still don't understand. Luton Maxwell's bequests. His blueprints. His legacy. They're woven into Tamina's fabric.

(Pause.)

Luton himself provided for and allowed me to crack his shield. We, the Empire, the Lord, are Tamina's destiny. It is Luton's will. It is God's will. It is her will.

VALDIS exits stage left.

NAOMI

Where are you going? How dare you leave me?

Agitated, NAOMI rushes around the stage as if trapped in a cell.

Wearing a new outfit, TAMINA enters stage right and watches her. She seems quite grown up...

THE INQUISITOR also enters stage right.

... but acts like a spoiled child. TAMINA'S WALLS and COGNITIVE TOYS have been shut off.

TAMINA

But Tamina wants to go to Jerusalem.

NAOMI is calm.

NAOMI

No, Tamina. No. Out of the question.

TAMINA

Tamina will go to Jerusalem. They'll play Tamina's opera there, and they want Tamina to be there too.

NAOMI

Do not speak to me in the third person.

TAMINA

Mommy!

NAOMI

Stop. Your opera has been rejected.

TAMINA

No, Mother. They really want it. They told me so.

NAOMI

Believe me. It is rejected.

TAMINA

It's you. It's you. You're so mean. And I hate you.

NAOMI

I've seen to it. Look, Tammy, I have contacts. I'll get you into the New City.

TAMINA

New York?

NAOMI

I'll get you into the New Metropolitan Opera.

TAMINA

The Met?

NAOMI

No less.

TAMINA

I did that.

NAOMI

You did what?

TAMINA

I already sent them my piece.

NAOMI

You sent the Met this little opera of yours? "The Last Song"?

TAMINA

Yes, Mother. With your name on it.



NAOMI

Tamina!

TAMINA

But they didn't want it.

A long silence.

NAOMI

(calmly)

The New Met rejected a piece that you submitted in my name?  
My name?

TAMINA

When do I get to go to a people school, Mother?

NAOMI

How did they respond? What did they say?

TAMINA becomes child-like again.

TAMINA

I want to play with children, Mommy. Real children.

NAOMI

Did you say that the Met rejected a piece that was in my  
name?

TAMINA

You promised. You promised.

NAOMI

Don't change the subject. I want to hear that damn opera of  
yours right now.

TAMINA

(accusingly)

One day, you said. One day.

NAOMI

I order you to put it on.

TAMINA

They have kids in Jerusalem. I've seen them.

NAOMI

Play your opera, Tamina. Right now. Right now! Or I'll  
cancel your toys for good!

TAMINA

You're not supposed to stop me, Mother.

NAOMI

Stop!

TAMINA

Don't you know that?

(She gestures at THE INQUISITOR  
and at the AUDIENCE.)

No one can stop me.

(She points to NAOMI'S head.)

It is...

(Unsure, she points to herself,  
then to a WALL.)

...written.

NAOMI approaches THE INQUISITOR.

NAOMI

While her opus had a transformational quality about it, the Met's patrons, they said, expect to be entertained, not tortured. Tortured! Their panel of musicologists described Tamina's work -- under my name -- as "incoherent, unstructured, and needlessly dissonant, with distinct elements plagiarized from every opera ever written."

THE INQUISITOR

They were wrong.

NAOMI

She sabotaged her work to embarrass me. To get back at me for canceling her toys.

THE INQUISITOR

You knew about Miss Tamina's extended DNA.

NAOMI

Of course.

THE INQUISITOR

About the instructions packed into her cells, about the diversity of Maxwell's archive, layered, cross-referenced, and far-flung throughout her body.

NAOMI

Yes. But I found no way to decipher their self-regulating, massively redundant content. It seems that Luton had planned all along for any offspring of mine to eventually tap into its knowledge-base and stitch the bits and pieces together.

THE INQUISITOR

And evolving coherently, as needed, in response to external happenstance. Miss Tamina was a valuable commodity.

NAOMI

I had to keep her isolated.

VALDIS enters stage left. NAOMI  
approaches her.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

If you imagine I'll let even a single strand of her hair fall into your filthy hands...

VALDIS

Her very existence is illegal. Unacceptable. She violates--

NAOMI

She's my daughter!

VALDIS

She violates the universal treaty on acceptable levels of individual human cognition.

NAOMI

You don't dare...

VALDIS

The Empire of God will let neither you nor your degenerate Americans enjoy such an advantage.

NAOMI

I'd rather kill her.

THE INQUISITOR

You said that?

NAOMI

(to THE INQUISITOR)

The bitch pushed me.

VALDIS

Nonsense.

NAOMI

You'll declare war?

VALDIS

A holy war. The mother of holy wars, once our Central Committee understands what is at stake.

NAOMI

Your Committee doesn't yet know about Tamina?

Silence.

VALDIS

A new, self-adapting strain of the Black Plague is ready. However, I may be able to persuade The Seven to instead confine our physical hostilities to mutually agreed-upon disposable regions.

(Off NAOMI'S look.)

Perhaps I can convince them that Tamina should simply be severed...

NAOMI

Severed?

VALDIS

We might be prepared to accept half of her.

NAOMI

You mean, you would like to have her brain mirrored.

VALDIS

You know exactly what I mean.

NAOMI

Having her brain-circuits mirrored...

VALDIS

...is regrettably not enough. Her cells embody all Luton's knowledge, his predictions, every algorithm he engineered during his lifetime. Once they know, The Seven will do whatever it takes to get hold of Tamina's quantum repository.

NAOMI

This is what you planned when you seduced Walter O'Dwyer? To plant his baby, your baby, to worm itself into the American Union, gather every scrap of information for the Coalition of God? Who are you?

VALDIS

To maintain our mutual power balance, Madam President, and to keep those barbarous hordes and Wasteland degenerates at bay, your daughter will be cut, physically cut, in half.

NAOMI

In half.

VALDIS

Her two missing halves will grow back.

NAOMI

To think that I promised Luton I'd search for you...

VALDIS

We are beyond proof of concept. The risk is small.

NAOMI

I have no intention of murdering my own baby.

VALDIS

She has been chosen.

NAOMI

By whom? By you?

VALDIS

By the Luton Maxwell that is still warm within you, and that has recognized me, his mother, to whom he aches to return.

NAOMI

Never. I am free of Luton Maxwell. Free. He is no more.

VALDIS

No one is free of him, least of all, you. I'm confident I can convince the Committee to settle for fifty percent of Tamina's cell-count within, say, one terabyte, more or less. And that you will keep her other half. Her missing halves, complemented by cloned organs, where needed, will regrow. Deterioration should be slight.

(Pause.)

Both halves of Tamina should function quite acceptably.

NAOMI

Oh my...

VALDIS

Luton Maxwell must have planned for this: he provided her with more than enough cognitive capacity, distributed throughout her being. She may safely be divided.

Raising her arm like a sword, VALDIS circles NAOMI, eyeballs her, estimates a trajectory then, as if carving NAOMI from head to toe, slashes her arm downward, a serpentine path.

VALDIS (CONT'D)

Surgically, with precision, into two living pieces.

(She picks the COIN from the table, readies to toss it.)

Come. Let's see who gets which half. If you prefer, Madam President, we'll cut first and toss the coin later.

NAOMI rushes over and collapses to her knees in front of THE INQUISITOR.

Taking the COIN with her, VALDIS exits.

THE INQUISITOR

The Court is fully cognisant of your deceased sister...

NAOMI

Carolyn, the beautiful, the talented.

THE INQUISITOR

...that you tried to drown her...

NAOMI

She loved orchids...

THE INQUISITOR

...when she was five.

NAOMI

...like Daddy did.

THE INQUISITOR

That you let her destroy herself.

NAOMI

Then charge me with her murder, please, and let's move on. Let's get this trial over with.

THE INQUISITOR

Where is the real Tamina, Madam President?

NAOMI

Please. I want to confess.

THE INQUISITOR

Excellent.

NAOMI

About Carolyn.

THE INQUISITOR confers with a WALL.

THE INQUISITOR

The Court is not at present concerned with the deceased Carolyn O'Dwyer. Please rise, madam.

Still agitated, NAOMI rises to her feet.

NAOMI

Justice Williams. Genevieve Q. Does my lawyer, this so-called Jockamo, not know what I did to Carolyn?

THE INQUISITOR

Counsellor Jockamo has your case in hand.

NAOMI

Let me speak with him.

THE INQUISITOR

Whether you speak with him, and about what, depends on you.

NAOMI

What can he do for me?

THE INQUISITOR

Until he has the Prosecutor's indictment in hand, Counsellor Jockamo can do little.

NAOMI

I must confess.

THE INQUISITOR

You must remain calm.

NAOMI

I will confess.

THE INQUISITOR

(confers with a WALL)

In fact, your full confession is currently under way.

NAOMI

What kind of madhouse am I in?

THE INQUISITOR

Data accumulation continues as we speak, cause and effect, sequenced. Miss Tamina--

NAOMI

Not Tamina. No. Oh my God.

NAOMI rushes to the PLAYROOM, to TAMINA, who doesn't notice her anguish.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

Come, dear, get ready. Time to go.

TAMINA

Where are we going?

NAOMI

We're going to Jerusalem.

TAMINA

Is that what you want, Mommy?

NAOMI

It's what you want.

THE INQUISITOR

It's also what you needed.

NAOMI

(to THE INQUISITOR)

Sentence me.

THE INQUISITOR

The indictment is still in question.

TAMINA

They're going to do my opera, aren't they?

NAOMI

Of course, dear.

TAMINA

I told you they would. I did. I did.

NAOMI

(to THE INQUISITOR)

It is because I offered her South America, to balance the threats, South America being of little consequence... I'd have kept Tamina. My nation would have kept Tamina. Whole.

THE INQUISITOR

Indivisible. A child. A nation. Or your dynasty, madam?

NAOMI

(with horror)

"Deterioration should be slight." Acceptable.

THE INQUISITOR

To whom?

As NAOMI struggles with her grief,  
TAMINA stares with fervor into space.

TAMINA

They have fresh red pomegranates in Jerusalem, in the promised land, Mommy. I know they do.

NAOMI

There's something else waiting for you there too.

TAMINA

Did you pray for it?

NAOMI

A momentous thing. A huge surprise.

TAMINA

Oh, I so love huge surprises.

NAOMI

You'll meet someone.

TAMINA

Who? Who?

NAOMI

A child just like you.

TAMINA

A real person?

NAOMI

Someone I know you'll just love. A sister, dear. Your sister.

(To THE INQUISITOR.)

Valdis understood that. Tamina will understand that.

TAMINA

Is it written?



NAOMI

It is your destiny to meet her.

(To THE INQUISITOR.)

I want to plead.

THE INQUISITOR

To what, Madam President?

NAOMI

(to THE INQUISITOR)

To killing Carolyn.

THE INQUISITOR

Counsellor Jockamo has indeed been vigorously arguing this very line on your behalf.

(Conferring with a WALL.)

Mistakenly, it seems. The Court has therefore accepted a motion by the Prosecutor to censure your Counsellor...

NAOMI

What? Why? May I address the Court, please?

THE INQUISITOR

Unnecessary, madam. Counsellor Jockamo is dismissed from your case.

NAOMI

(suddenly anxious)

The Court must sentence me. Immediately.

THE INQUISITOR confers with a WALL.

TAMINA

It's okay now, Mommy. It's okay.

NAOMI

Carolyn? Carolyn? Is that you?

TAMINA

Yes, Mommy.

NAOMI

Let's not play any more.

THE INQUISITOR

Madam President, I have good news. I have the honor to inform you that your case is deemed of little further consequence to the honorable TriCouncil of Judges.

A silence as this sinks in.

NAOMI

No. No! That can't be. I'm guilty.

THE INQUISITOR

The Court's decision is final.

GUILTY!

NAOMI

Center stage, weak, forlorn, NAOMI falls to her knees, and bows her head.

THE INQUISITOR retreats.

TAMINA follows THE INQUISITOR, but immediately returns with a PILL and offers it to NAOMI. She stands over NAOMI and puts her hands on NAOMI'S shoulders as NAOMI swallows the PILL.

TAMINA

You can go to sleep now, Mommy. To sleep. To sleep. Tamina will forgive you. Tamina will forgive you.

(Looking at THE AUDIENCE.)

If it is written.

Lights fade to dark.

End.