

Item#: SCP-701

Clearance Level 2:

Restricted

Author:

tinwatchman

Containment Class:

Euclid

Disruption Class:

3/Keneq

Secondary Class:

None

Risk Class:

3/Warning



Special Containment Procedures: All materials relating to SCP-701 are to be kept in a triple-locked archive at Storage Site-█. These items currently consist of: the two (2) currently extant copies of the 1640 quarto; twenty-seven (27) copies of the 1965 trade paperback edition; ten (10) copies of a 1971 hardcover printing; twenty-one (21) floppy diskettes, consisting of data seized from raids on [EXPUNGED]; one (1) S-VHS video cassette tape (designated SCP-701-19█-A); and one (1) steel knife of unknown origin (designated SCP-701-19█-B). At no time are any of these items to be removed from the room. Access to the area is to be heavily monitored; absolutely no personnel whatsoever is to be granted access to the archive without the express, in-person permission of Drs. L█, R█ and J█.

Description: SCP-701, *The Hanged King's Tragedy*, is a Caroline-era revenge tragedy in five acts. Performances of the play are associated with sudden psychotic and suicidal behavior among both observers and participants, as well as the manifestation of a mysterious figure, classified as SCP-701-1. Historical estimates place the number of lives claimed by the play at between █ and █ over the past three hundred years.

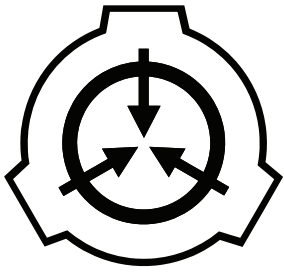
Performances of *The Hanged King's Tragedy* do not always end with an outbreak. Of the █ recorded performances, only █ (36.78%) have ended in SCP-701 events. According to historical records and investigations, these outbreaks generally follow the same pattern:

- *1 to 2 weeks (7 to 14 days) prior to Event:* During the dress rehearsal period, cast members will begin to spontaneously deviate from the published text of the play. Rather than improvisation or gaffs associated with going 'off script,' said deviations will be both orderly and consistent, as if the actors were working off a new version of the script. The cast and production crew will seem unaware of any change, and - if it is brought to their attention - will state that the play has run that way from the beginning.
- *2 to 3 hours prior to Event:* The outbreak generally occurs during Opening Night, or else at the production with the greatest planned attendance (generally falling within the first week after the play's opening).
- *1 to 2 hours before Event:* SCP-701-1 begins to appear on stage in the final scene of Act I, generally in the background or to the side of the main action. It may seem to enter or exit the stage area, but does not appear to ever enter the backstage or off-stage area; it simply disappears when not on stage. The cast does not appear to notice or comment on SCP-701-1, at least at first.
- *The Event:* SCP-701-1 appears fully on stage during the banquet scene in Act V. Here, it will be incorporated into the action of the play as '*the Hanged King*.' The cast will either murder each other or commit suicide, sometimes using items that seem to appear spontaneously on stage. Rioting breaks out in the audience, with viewers randomly attacking anyone in front of them, regardless of prior relationship.
- *Following the Event:* If any of the audience members survive the initial outbreak, they may exit the performance space, in which case they will continue to engage in random or opportunistic violence. Victims will generally require sedation or restraint in this scenario; normal personality will begin to return roughly 24 hours after the event. Surviving victims will generally exhibit signs consistent with a traumatic experience; some will have no recollection of the event. Others may be rendered permanently comatose or psychotic.

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For a typical case study of an outbreak, see [Incident Report SCP-701-19███-1](#), an analysis of the events leading up to the last uncontained SCP-701 event in 19███, during a high school drama performance in ██████████, ██████. For more information on the play's published text, see [Document SCP-701-1640-B-1](#).

In short, SCP-701 is a self-evolving memetic virus, transmitted through unknown means through the text of the play. Dr. L█████ has theorized that SCP-701 events may involve [EXPUNGED]. This hypothesis is consistent with a spike in ██████████ levels detected via satellite in the vicinity of the 19███ incident, indicating [EXPUNGED].

Foundation agents are under standing orders to suppress any performance or publication of SCP-701 whenever found or detected. Despite our best efforts to the contrary, however, the play remains freely available online, sometimes under different titles. All attempts to detect or isolate the origin of these copies have failed. Suppression of the play's publication has generally been successful, with most copies of a 1971 scholarly edition destroyed before distribution. Nonetheless, copies of the 1965 trade paperback turn up with some regularity in both college and high school libraries. Agents are to obtain or otherwise destroy these items whenever possible.

History: The first known publication of *The Hanged King's Tragedy* was as a quarto dated 1640. The play's author is not listed. The publisher, one William Cooke, disappeared from the historical record soon thereafter. Strangely, the text does not appear in the Stationers' Register.

The first known SCP-701 event on record occurred in 18███ during a performance of the play in ████████, ██████, USA. Other significant incidents include the 19███ performance at a small theater in ████████, ██████, ██████; the 1964 performance at the University of ██████████, ██████████, ████████; the 19███ performance at ██████████ University, the first SCP-701 event successfully suppressed by the Foundation; the 19███ performance by a student group in ████████, CA; the 19███ television adaptation by the ██████████ Broadcasting Corporation (production successfully shut down by the Foundation before broadcast); and the 19███ incident in ██████████, OH, USA, designated [SCP-701-19███-1](#).

Publication History:

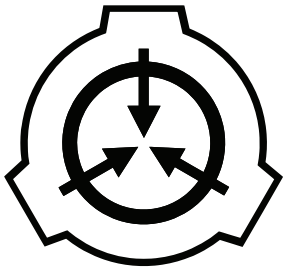
- Original 1640 quarto (all known copies in Foundation custody)
- 1733 folio edition (republished 1790)
- 1813 Cambridge University Press edition
- 1965 trade paperback edition
- 1971 hardcover edition

Agents should note that copies of the play have often been misfiled under different titles or spellings of the title. Furthermore, photocopies of the 1965 text have been found in circulation throughout college theater departments in the continental United States and in the United Kingdom.

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Additional:

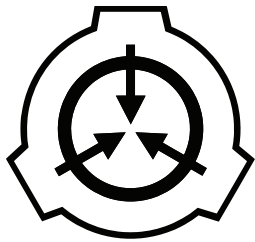
• Given the high probability of [EXPUNGED] in my mind, I again recommend that SCP-701 be upgraded to Keter-class. The SCP-701 memetic virus may very well be the forefront of an invasion scenario. Furthermore, [EXPUNGED]. - Dr. L■■■■, 1237116060.

• Denied. None of the current information we have on SCP-701 indicates a XK-class scenario. Until we have additional data, classification will remain at Euclid. - Face facts, Doctor. The cat's been long out of the bag on this one. And in this line of business, we consider ourselves lucky if we only lose a hundred or so people every ten years. - 05-■■, 1237197060.

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Document Name:

Incident Report SCP-701-19██-1



SCP Involved: SCP-701

Date: ██████ ██, 19██

Location: [EXPUNGED]

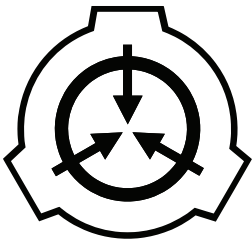
Report prepared by Drs. R█████ and J█████ on the content of SCP-701-19██-A. SCP-701-19██-A is a 187mm x 103mm x 25mm S-VHS video cassette tape recovered by investigators from the scene of the incident, a performance of SCP-701 at ██████████ High School in ██████████, ██████. Tape was found in a destroyed consumer-grade camcorder, which was apparently recording the performance from a vantage point within the audience. It is the only surviving record of the event. Please see the SCP-701 archives for the full transcript of the recording. In order to compare the identified deviations during a SCP-701 event with the actual plot of the published text, see Document SCP-701-1640-B-1.

- 0:00:00 - Tape begins.
- 0:03:10 - House lights go down.
- 0:05:12 - Curtain rises. The play begins as published with Gonzalo's coronation speech.
- 0:10:21 - A possible sighting of SCP-701-1 during Isabella's ravings - an anomalous shadow not belonging to one of the cast members shows up along the back wall of the set.
- 0:10:24 - Shadow disappears.
- 0:23:15 - First deviation from the text. Rather than the dialogue between Francisco and the courtesan, the curtain drops and comes back up on a bare stage. Antonio enters from stage right.
- 0:23:24 - First indirect sighting of SCP-701-1. The shadow of a figure seems to appear on the back wall, from stage right. Antonio stops in place and acts surprised. The shadow disappears. Antonio begins a long soliloquy, confirming that he now believes Isabella's story. Dr. J█████ notes that while this soliloquy is in the style of the rest of the play and seems to be accurate Caroline-era dialogue, Antonio's speech in this scene **does not** exist in the original text.
- 0:24:12 - Curtain drops.
- 0:24:51 - Curtain rises on Francisco and the courtesan. Antonio returns; the play continues as scripted.
- 0:31:14 - First direct sighting of SCP-701-1. It enters and stands at the edge of stage left towards the end of Act II, Scene 1.
- 0:32:17 - Gonzalo's dialogue concludes (as scripted) with the mention of an appointment with the ambassador from Alagadda. He exits, stage left; SCP-701-1 seems to turn and follow him as the lights go down.
- 0:38:13 - Second sighting of SCP-701-1 during Act III, Scene 1. It appears on the edge of stage right as Gonzalo and Petruccio murder Sortino. The scene concludes with Gonzalo ordering his cooks to prepare the corpse as a stew; scripts recovered from the scene indicate that this section had been cut in rehearsal.
- 0:51:11 - Third sighting of SCP-701-1; appears close to stage left as Antonio kills Isabella.

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• 1:09:12 - Fourth sighting: SCP-701-1 enters with Gonzalo at the beginning of Act IV, Scene 1, and follows him throughout the scene. The scene also contains two key moments: first, Gonzalo seems to nod to SCP-701-1 when he mentions the ambassador of Alagadda. This is the first time a cast member has seemed to indicate SCP-701-1's presence. Second, the scene ends with a deviation from the text: whereas the scripted speech at the end of Act IV, Scene 1 ends with Gonzalo considering his own moral inequity, Gonzalo here seems to be more concerned that his 'tribute' will be sufficient for the ambassador. The lights go down.

• 1:21:15 - Fifth sighting: SCP-701-1 enters stage left at the end of Act IV, Scene 2 as Antonio leaves to secure a blade for his coup. Rather than exiting, Antonio stops in front of SCP-701-1, who hands him a long dagger. (*This is believed to be the first appearance of the item classified SCP-701-19█-B; note that there is no mention of the item in the prop list or the other records maintained by the production.*) SCP-701-1 and Antonio depart the stage together.

• 1:32:41 - Sixth sighting: SCP-701-1 appears on stage left as Cornari and Lodovico exit.

• 1:35:10 - The lights come up. Act V, Scene 1 - the Banquet scene - begins as scripted.

• 1:40:52 - Antonio enters, bearing a piece of parchment. Here the textual deviations begin in earnest: rather than the parchment being Petrucchio's confession as scripted, Antonio instead describes it as an invoice from the ambassador of Alagadda, proving that Gonzalo owes more tribute than he intends to pay.

• 1:41:42 - SCP-701-1 enters at this point from stage right. The entire cast seems to perceive it. Gonzalo stands up, curses as an aside to the audience, and runs for stage left. The rest of the cast - including Alinda and Francisco, who enter from stage left - physically restrain Gonzalo and drag him back onto the stage. SCP-701-1 meanwhile moves to the center of the stage, where it stands in front of Gonzalo's throne.

• 1:43:08 - A noose is dropped onto the stage from above. The cast force Gonzalo into the noose, as he begins to curse in Italian (*and in one place, possibly Latin?*). The noose is drawn taut, and the cast drops Gonzalo; he begins to asphyxiate.

• 1:43:32 - Antonio speaks: "*With this, the tribute, in full it is paid.*" The actor takes SCP-701-19█-B (the dagger) and draws it across Gonzalo's stomach, spilling his intestines across the stage.

• 1:44:04 - Alinda takes the dagger from Antonio. She speaks: "*With this, fool's blood, it is the Hanged King's.*" She cuts Antonio's throat.

• 1:45:31 - Ropes drop from the roof of the stage, a noose for each cast member. The cast assembles underneath them. Alinda takes position next to SCP-701-1.

• 1:46:12 - Alinda: "*With this, our blood, it is the Hanged King's.*" The cast hang themselves.

• 1:47:33 - SCP-701-1 moves through the hanging corpses and to front-center stage.

• 1:47:41 - The stage lights cut out.

• 1:47:46 - Sounds of screaming and physical violence around the camera.

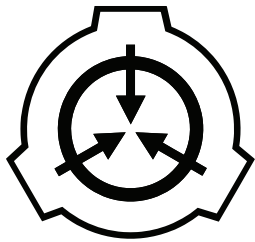
• 1:48:22 - Loud sound, most likely the camera being knocked over.

• 1:49:01 - The camera is destroyed. Tape ends.

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Document SCP-701-1640-B-1



The following is a summary of the published text of *The Hanged King's Tragedy*, classified SCP-701, prepared by Dr. J [REDACTED] from a copy of the 1640 quarto in Foundation custody.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE:

- GONZALO, King of Trinculo
- ISABELLA, Queen of Trinculo; formerly the wife of Sforza, the murdered king, now married to Gonzalo
- ANTONIO, a minor noble
- FRANCISCO, Antonio's servant
- The DUKE OF SORTINO
- ALINDA, daughter of the Duke
- PETRUCCIO, a noble lord allied with Gonzalo
- LODOVICO, a servant of Gonzalo
- CORNARI, a priest
- BEATRICE, a servant of the Queen
- A COURTESAN
- A PALACE GUARDSMAN
- The AMBASSADOR OF MILAN
- The AMBASSADOR OF FLORENCE
- The AMBASSADOR OF ALAGADDA

SETTING:

The play is set in the Kingdom of Trinculo (probably a misspelling of Trinacria, another name for Sicily), in the capital city of Serko (another name for the city of Syracuse). As the play opens, Sforza, the king of Trinculo, has died, supposedly from natural causes while on retreat from the court. The nobility of Trinculo gathers in the capital for the coronation of the new king, Sforza's younger brother, Gonzalo, who has also married Sforza's queen, Isabella.

Despite the text's references to contemporary Italian city-states, such as Florence and Milan, much of the play's setting is obviously pure fantasy. There were never any kings of Sicily comparable to Gonzalo and Sforza, and the capital of the historical Kingdom of Sicily was Palermo, not Syracuse. (The author may have chosen to move the play's events to Syracuse, due to that city's historical association with tyranny). There is also no record of any country or place known by the name *Alagadda*, a mysterious but apparently powerful state that plays a significant role in the plot. It may be intended as a reference to one of the Muslim states or cities on the Mediterranean coast, such as Tunis or Algiers.

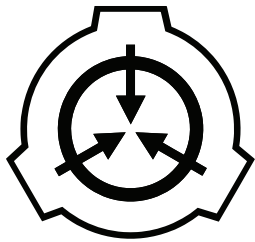
PLOT SUMMARY:

The plot of *The Hanged King's Tragedy* bears a marked resemblance to many earlier plays of the same genre, including Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *Titus Andronicus*. In fact, past investigations into SCP-701 events have noted that *The Hanged King's Tragedy* was often chosen for production as a less-violent alternative to the two plays mentioned. The two murders in the SCP-701 text can be construed as occurring off-stage, and the implication of cannibalism in Act III can be easily cut from the script.

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ACT I:

The play opens during Gonzalo's coronation. Gonzalo opens with a toast to the assembled nobility, then departs the stage. Drunk on the wine, Isabella confesses to some of the courtiers left on stage that Sforza did not die in his sleep as reported. Instead, while on retreat in the countryside, Sforza was fed a sleeping potion by Isabella, then murdered by Gonzalo and his supporters. As a final show of disrespect, the conspirators hanged the King like a common criminal from a tree. Isabella goes on to proclaim that Antonio, a minor noble visiting the King's court for the first time, is actually her and Sforza's son and the rightful heir to the throne. Isabella collapses and is taken offstage by her servants.

Francisco asks Antonio if he believes the Queen's story. Antonio makes light of the situation, and they exit. Back in Antonio's rented lodgings, Francisco attempts to barter with a Courtesan. Antonio enters the stage, clearly in shock. He reports that, while off-stage, he saw the Ghost of Sforza, who confirmed Antonio's parentage and the Queen's description of his death.

ACT II:

Gonzalo, having learned of Isabella's confession, consults with his fellow conspirators. Lodovico confirms that at least three people witnessed the Queen's breakdown - the Duke of Sortino, his daughter Alinda, and a priest named Cornari. Gonzalo immediately begins to plan the murder or capture of the three in order to cover up the truth. He orders Isabella to be locked up in a convent, with the story put out that the Queen is mad. Isabella, uncharacteristically, meekly accepts Gonzalo's judgment. The usurper then exits, having an appointment with the ambassador from Alagadda.

Back in their lodgings in the city, Francisco brings Antonio news of the Queen's imprisonment. Together, they begin to plan their revenge.

ACT III:

Petruccio and Gonzalo invite Sortino to dinner. They kill him and order the palace cooks to prepare the corpse as a stew. Gonzalo orders Alinda, who witnessed the murder, to be locked up in the convent.

Antonio fakes insanity in order to gain admittance to the convent. Warned of Antonio's coming, Isabella and her loyal servant, Beatrice, prepare to murder him using a draught of poison. Antonio sees through their plan and forces Isabella to drink the poison, killing her. Meanwhile, Francisco gets lost within the convent and winds up freeing Alinda from her cell by accident.

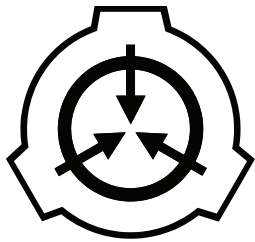
ACT IV:

In the palace, Gonzalo reports to Lodovico that he has, in exchange for an unstated 'tribute,' obtained a powerful and tasteless poison from the ambassador of Alagadda. Gonzalo plans to poison the stew made from the Duke of Sortino's corpse and feed it to the court, thus ensuring the suppression of the truth. Lodovico leaves the stage to carry out the usurper's plan. Gonzalo then has a brief moment of conscience: in a soliloquy, he describes the regret he carries for his sins, but is nonetheless unable to deviate from the path he has set.

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Meanwhile, Francisco introduces Alinda to Antonio, all three having escaped the convent. Alinda describes her father's murder in grisly terms; Antonio promises to marry her and make her his queen, as soon as his revenge is complete. He then leaves to obtain a blade, with which he plans to kill Gonzalo.

There is a comedic interlude between a Palace Guard and Cornari, a buffoonish priest. At the end of the scene, Lodovico enters and bids Cornari to follow him. The priest is not seen on stage again.

ACT V:

The guests arrive at Gonzalo's banquet. Gonzalo once again offers a toast, this time to the ambassadors of the foreign nations who are present. The meal is served; however, before it can begin, Antonio enters, bearing a signed confession he obtained from Petruccio off-stage, which includes the details of Sforza's murder and proof of Antonio's lineage. Gonzalo is deposed by the outraged courtiers; rather than murder him, however, Antonio instead decides to spare the usurper and let him accept exile to a monastery. He then orders Francisco to start making plans for his marriage to Alinda. The play ends with a dance staged by the courtiers.

SCP-701 EVENTS

The produced form of the play that occurs during SCP-701 events contains several deviations from the text as published. For a typical example of these deviations, see Incident Report SCP-701-19█-1.

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