

I GOUGED MY EYE OUT

---

A Play in One Act

by

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### Cast of Characters

<u>Sister Afra:</u>	Nun in her early 20s.
<u>Róża:</u>	15 year old transgender girl.
<u>Adam:</u>	17 year old boy.
<u>Father Maciej:</u>	Priest in his late 40s.

### Scene

Church chamber in the juvenile detention centre in Tatra mountains.

### Time

The present.

## Scene 1

SETTING: Church chamber. Rows of seats face the audience. Confessional on the left. Stained glass looking like mountain landscape in the back. Snow is falling on the stage. Unlit candles.

AT RISE: SISTER AFRA stands with her back turned to the audience, conducting the CHOIR of six wooden figures -- they look primal and similar to each other. They sing with deep, masculine voices. In the middle, much shorter than the rest of them, stands RÓŻA as the lead singer with much higher voice. She holds paper with lyrics. She looks like a boy, wears oversized sweatshirt and cap backwards. Her hair is semi-long, embracing her face.

RÓŻA, CHOIR

Zdrow bądź, krolu anjelski  
K nam na świat w ciele przyszedł,  
Tyś zajiste Bog skryty,  
W święte czyste ciało wliły.

RÓŻA, CHOIR (Cont.)

Zdrow bądź, Stworzycielu  
Wszego stworzenia,  
Narodziłś się w ucirpienie  
Prze swego luda zawinienia.

Zdrow bądź, Panie, ot Panny  
Jenżś się narodził za ny.  
Zdrow bądź, Jesu Kryste, krolu,  
Racz przyjęci naszą chwałę.

Racz daci dobre skonanie  
Prze twej matki zasłużenie,  
Abychom cię wždy chwalili,  
Z tobą wiecznie krolowali.  
Amen!

(Snow stops falling when they  
finish singing. SISTER AFRA  
breathes deeply, her posture  
is tense.)

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

## Scene 2

SETTING: Church chamber. Rows of seats face the audience. Confessional on the left. There is stained glass looking like mountain landscape in the back. Unlit candles.

AT RISE: SISTER AFRA kneels in front of the audience in an uncaring way. The rosary lays next to her, on the floor.

SISTER AFRA

I gouged my eye out. You said to do it and I did - and that's the end of the parable. No blessing, no lesson, no closure. I live half-blind, tripping over on my way to nowhere. I'm not empty and not full. And there is only one eye left to sacrifice - what will happen when I do it? Will I finally stop feeling like a traitor? Will I stop being the monster of my nightmares? Will I end up fully empty or emptily full?

(The sound of opening door.

SISTER AFRA immediately corrects her pose and grabs her rosary. RÓŽA enters the stage, chewing gum. She sits in the last row of seats.)

You're afraid to come closer?

RÓŽA

I didn't want to disturb you, sis.

SISTER AFRA

No worries, Kacper. I wanted to talk with you, after all.  
I have a business to discuss with you. You like doing  
business, right?

(She does sign of cross and  
sits next to RÓŻA.)

RÓŻA

You believe the rumours, sis?

SISTER AFRA

I believe old habits die slowly. That's not what I wanted  
to talk about, though, not yet. I'm directing Christmas  
play and I want to offer you a role.

RÓŻA

Can I be baby Jesus?

SISTER AFRA

You can be Mother of God.

(RÓŻA laughs. Her laughter  
dies but SISTER AFRA doesn't  
share it.)

RÓŻA

What? You serious?

SISTER AFRA

Why wouldn't I be?

RÓŻA

Cause... But... What? Why?

SISTER AFRA

Every year we get some church girl that's offended at the whole world and scared of teen delinquents, often rightfully so. I'm tired of watching Mother of God with frightened, long face. Yours is brave and feminine enough.

RÓŽA

And... that's it?

SISTER AFRA

Yes... Should there be more?

RÓŽA

No, no... But my grades will get better, right?

SISTER AFRA

Of course. I'm surprised you agreed so easily. I had the blackmail ready and everything.

RÓŽA

What? What blackmail?

SISTER AFRA

I'm joking, kid! But now we have to rehearse!

RÓŽA

Now? But everyone left...

SISTER AFRA

I want to spare you the embarrassment of your first performance as a girl. Accept my kindness and get on the stage.

(SISTER AFRA claps and leaves the stage. RÓŻA pulls out a scarf from her large pocket and puts it on the cap on her head. She sits awkwardly in the first row. The snow begins to fall from the ceiling. She starts to sing, shy and hesitant. SISTER AFRA walks slowly from behind the audience, listening to the Christmas carol.)

RÓŻA

Gdy śliczna Panna  
Syna kołysała,  
Z wielkim weselem  
Tak Jemu śpiewała:  
Lili lili laj, moje Dzieciąteczko,  
Lili lili laj, śliczne Paniąteczko.

Wszystko stworzenie,  
Śpiewaj Panu swemu,  
Pomóż radości  
Wielkiej sercu memu.  
Lili lili laj, Wielki Królewicu,  
Lili lili laj, Niebieski Dziedzicu.

Sypcie się z nieba,  
Śliczni Aniołowie,  
Śpiewajcie Panu,  
Niebiescy duchowie.  
Lili lili laj...



(SISTER AFRA stands directly  
in front of her. RÓŽA stops  
singing and lowers her head  
like she got caught in a lie.  
Snow stops falling.)

SISTER AFRA

Who are you?

RÓŽA

My name is Róža.

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

### Scene 3

SETTING: Church chamber. Rows of seats face the audience. There is stained glass looking like mountain landscape in the back. Unlit candles.

AT RISE: SISTER AFRA lays on the floor with her hands covering her face.

SISTER AFRA

I gouged both my eyes out. I cut both my hands off. And in one moment they grew back like a lizard's tail - and I don't know if it's yours or szatan's work! Did you bet on my life like ages ago on Hiob's? I don't understand! I came to this shithole to avoid ever laying eyes on them, on these treacherous Adam's ribs. And just once a year, I have to, and they cling onto me, seeing similar figure among these alien boys - and it's a torture. I just wanted to feel relieved, is that a crime? I just wanted to avoid temptation, how can it be punished so harshly like it was a sin?! My intentions were pure when I reached out to that parody of a woman - and how it backfired!

(She kneels.)

Why, Lord? Why do you hate me so much? I don't want to look at them and think of who they are and will become. I don't want to dream of this impure sinful monster looking like me and talking like me and being me. I don't want to look at them and see myself among them.

SISTER AFRA (Cont.)

That they are just like me. That I could if I wanted to... Lord, I'm not empty or half-empty, the burning pain is filling me and I'm afraid I might have preferred the void! I just want to be rewarded with a bit of happiness. Is that really so much to ask for suffering every second of my life?

(She lays down in cross-like position.)

I will beg you to change me. I will beg you to change HIM! I will beg you for strength. I will beg you for peace. Hopefully not endlessly.

(The sound of opening doors.  
SISTER AFRA immediately sits down, startled. RÓŽA enters with snow on her boots.)

RÓŽA

Hi. You okay, sis?

SISTER AFRA

I would be if you didn't bring snow inside.

RÓŽA

Sorry. Cleanin' this right now.

(RÓŽA takes off her boots and takes the mop to clean her footsteps.)

SISTER AFRA

Aren't you a bit too early?

RÓŽA

I kinda wanted to talk with you before everyone comes.

SISTER AFRA

About what?

(RÓŽA sits in front of her,  
nervously stretching her  
toes. She has thick socks  
on.)

RÓŽA

Kinda wanted to thank you... For the chance.

SISTER AFRA

What chance?

RÓŽA

I know it's only a role, but still. Thank you.

SISTER AFRA

So... You have no doubts? It doesn't feel even a little bit  
weird...

RÓŽA

No. It feels super normal.

SISTER AFRA

Well... Okay. It's just a role, after all.

RÓŽA

(standing up)

Can we rehearse my solo, by the way?

SISTER AFRA

Wouldn't you rather do it when everyone comes?

RÓŻA

The more, the better. Move, sis!

(SISTER AFRA leaves the stage with sour expression. RÓŻA takes off her cap and takes piece of fabric from her pocket -- this time it's blue, semi-transparent, soft fabric that she puts on her head like a veil. She has soft make-up on, making her face look angelic. When she sings, snow falls on the stage. She becomes less and less shy. SISTER AFRA walks towards the stage from the audience.)

Nie było miejsca dla Ciebie  
w Betlejem w żadnej gospodzie,  
i narodziłeś się, Jezu,  
w stajni, w ubóstwie i chłodzie.

Nie było miejsca, choć szedłeś  
jako Zbawiciel na Ziemię,  
by wyrwać z czarta niewoli  
nieszczęsne Adama plemię.

Nie było miejsca, choć chciałeś  
ludzkość przytulić do łona,  
i podać z krzyża grzesznikom  
zbawcze, skrwawione ramiona.

(Snow stops falling, RÓŽA  
looks into space. Light  
shining on RÓŽA turns off  
with sharp sound.) SISTER AFRA  
lays down on the stage in  
cross-like position.

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

#### Scene 4

SETTING: Church chamber. Rows of seats face the audience. Confessional on the left. There is stained glass looking like mountain landscape in the back. Unlit candles.

AT RISE: Only confessional is in the light. Snoring can be heard. Confessional opens and FATHER MACIEJ leaves it with a sigh. He hears the snoring and lights two candles -- that's when he sees SISTER AFRA, still on the floor.

FATHER MACIEJ

Sister Afra?

(She wakes up, startled.)

SISTER AFRA

Father Maciej? I was just, just praying...

FATHER MACIEJ

Very intensely, I see.

SISTER AFRA

Yes, well...

FATHER MACIEJ

Talk with me, Sister.

(FATHER MACIEJ sits in the middle of the first row of the seats and SISTER AFRA remains on the floor. He sighs.)

Everyone is so eager to place their burdens on the arms of the priest, but where is he supposed to place them?

(He pauses.)

SISTER AFRA

I suppose... He can also confess...

FATHER MACIEJ

What about secrecy of the confessions? No, priest has to take these burdens to his grave and people don't even think about it. They are just relieved to be absolved.

SISTER AFRA

I understand, Father. You certainly have more burdens than others.

FATHER MACIEJ

Indeed, sister, indeed. And when the matter is criminal and brings eternal damnation in this life and the one after it...

SISTER AFRA

Then you are extremely lucky to work in that place, with your sensitivity, Father. These young sinful criminals are already atoning.



FATHER MACIEJ

What if they keep sinning in the same way? For disgusting reasons?

SISTER AFRA

Do you have specific situation on your mind?

(FATHER MACIEJ sighs again  
and takes bottle of pills  
from his pocket. He gives it  
to SISTER AFRA.)

FATHER MACIEJ

I found these in one of the boys' room.

SISTER AFRA

Drugs?

FATHER MACIEJ

Worse. Pills that change boys into girls.

(SISTER AFRA freezes.)

The changes are irreversible. Boys lose their fertility,  
their... everything.

SISTER AFRA

It can't be legal...

FATHER MACIEJ

Doctors prescribe these pills.

SISTER AFRA

What? How can that be?

FATHER MACIEJ

This world is twisted, corrupted place.

(He lays down in cross-like  
position.)

These pills belong to Kacper.

SISTER AFRA

Kacper? From the choir?

FATHER MACIEJ

The most beautiful voice in the choir. You said allowing  
him to play Mother of God would be innocent.

SISTER AFRA

I didn't know... I wanted it to be like Greek theathre... Oh,  
God, if I knew...

FATHER MACIEJ

Do you see why I didn't approve of this idea? Nothing is  
ever as innocent as it may seem.

(SISTER AFRA lays down next  
to him.)

FATHER MACIEJ

Did you suspect anything?

SISTER AFRA

What? No! I would never...

FATHER MACIEJ

Is this why you wanted him to play Mother of God? You  
wanted to give him a chance?

(SISTER AFRA punches her fist  
on the floor, still laying  
down.)

SISTER AFRA

What are you accusing me of, Father?! I wanted to have  
the most beautiful Christmas play, that's my only crime!

FATHER MACIEJ

Crime, yes, another matter... These pills aren't cheap. You  
heard rumours about drug dealer in the institute?

SISTER AFRA

Yes. So they are true?

FATHER MACIEJ

It seems so. Lord, we try to rehabilitate these young  
criminals and then they turn into vipers only waiting to  
bite.

SISTER AFRA

It seems like a blasphemy to say it, but perhaps not  
everyone is able to see the light and turn his life  
around.

FATHER MACIEJ

Not everyone is as holy as you, Sister, you have to face  
it. Kacper comes to the mass only when he must, he never  
confesses, and yet he sings in the choir. He was just  
waiting for an opportunity like this, to make fun of  
everything we consider holy.

(He stands up and wipes the dust off his knees. SISTER AFRA helps him and he protests with overdramatic gesture but when SISTER AFRA still cleans him, he stops and looks at her working.)

Thank you for listening to me, Sister. And for atoning for that with me.

SISTER AFRA

Of course, Father.

(He comes back into confessional. SISTER AFRA sits on the bench and looks at the jar of pills in her hand.)

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

## Scene 5

SETTING: Church chamber. Rows of seats face the audience. There is stained glass looking like mountain landscape in the back. Confessional on the left. There are also six wooden figures, all primal all and similar to each other, facing the audience. Unlit candles.

AT RISE: The figures sing with deep, low voices, conducted by SISTER AFRA's hands. It sounds more like military hymn than Christmas carol.

### CHOIR

Gdy śliczna Panna  
Syna kołysała,  
Z wielkim weselem  
Tak Jemu śpiewała:  
Lili lili laj, moje Dzieciąteczko,  
Lili lili laj, śliczne Paniąteczko.

Wszystko stworzenie,  
Śpiewaj Panu swemu,  
Pomóż radości  
Wielkiej sercu memu.  
Lili lili laj, Wielki Królewicu,  
Lili lili laj, Niebieski Dziedzicu.

Sypcie się z nieba,

Śliczni Aniołowie.

CHOIR (Cont.)

Śpiewajcie Panu,

Niebiescy duchowie.

Lili lili laj, mój wonny kwiateczku,

Lili lili laj, w ubogim żłobeczku.

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

## Scene 6

SETTING: Church chamber. Rows of seats face the audience. There is stained glass looking like mountain landscape in the back. Confessional on the left. Unlit candles. There are big, wooden sculptures on the stage where the altar should be. One figure belongs to Mary, the second one to Joseph, the third one to lamb. There is hay scattered on the floor and the baby's crib is full of it. The smell of hay is pleasant and intensive.

AT RISE: SISTER AFRA cleans figures, humming Christmas carols. From time to time she coughs when she chokes on clouds of dust.

SISTER AFRA

Przybieżeli do Betlejem pasterze,  
Grając skocznie Dzieciąteczku na lirze!  
Chwała na wysokości, chwała na wysokości, a pokój na  
Ziemi!

Oddawali swe ukłony w pokorze,  
Tobie z serca ochotnego, o Boże!  
Chwała na wysokości, chwała na...

(The sound of doors. RÓŻA enters. She takes off her shoes before sitting in the second row. She's chewing gum and has her hands in the pockets.)

Hi, Kacper. Why the long face?

RÓŻA

There was rehearsal today.

SISTER AFRA

Yes, there was.

RÓŻA

No one told me about it. Am I kicked out from the play?

SISTER AFRA

No, not kicked out, just... Father Maciej didn't approve of you playing Mother of God.

RÓŻA

So he kicked me out. Why?

SISTER AFRA

He said it would be inappropriate. You understand...

RÓŻA

No, I don't. But you, of course, defended your own idea?

SISTER AFRA

I did. Nothing worked.

RÓŻA

Then maybe I should defend it.



SISTER AFRA

No, no, he... he knows things about you.

RÓŽA

What things? You told him about me?

SISTER AFRA

I have nothing to tell anyone about you. But some people do and they share their burdens in the confessional.

RÓŽA

I don't. Someone shared my burdens? Ratted me out, you mean?

SISTER AFRA

If you didn't commit crimes, there would be nothing to rat out.

RÓŽA

They should go to the police, then, not to some fuckin'...

SISTER AFRA

Language, Ró... Kacper.

RÓŽA

(after pause, taking little  
box out of her pocket)

Whatever. I brought you Christmas present. See you next year.

SISTER AFRA

I... I can't take it.

(RÓŽA crushes it in her hand  
and puts cigarette in her  
mouth. She attempts to leave.  
Before she is able to put the  
shoes on, doors open and  
snowballs and rocks are  
thrown at her. One of them  
hits her cheek and it starts  
to bleed. Laughters of boys  
can be heard.)

ADAM

(off)

...pussy!

SISTER AFRA

HEY!

(Laughters die down.)

I heard your voice, Adam! Show yourself!

(ADAM steps inside. He takes  
off his hat.)

Clean all this rubbish, both of you. Mass is in an hour,  
have a bit of respect.

(RÓŽA looks at SISTER AFRA  
with her cheek bleeding, but  
nun avoids her gaze, cleaning  
the sculptures. Adam is first  
to take the mop and RÓŽA is  
left with cloth.)

ADAM

Done!

SISTER AFRA

(looking back to inspect)

Alright. Adam, take Kacper to the nurse.

(RÓŻA looks at her, shocked.

SISTER AFRA still doesn't  
look at her. ADAM has wide  
smile.)

RÓŻA

I prefer to stay.

SISTER AFRA

You're bleeding.

RÓŻA

It's nothing and I wish to pray...

ADAM

Don't be so stubborn, Kacper. I'll take care of you.

RÓŻA

Fuck you...

SISTER AFRA

That's enough! Leave!

RÓŻA

I must apologise to God for...

(SISTER AFRA looks directly  
at her.)

SISTER AFRA

Get. Out.

(RÓŻA's face is that of  
crushed trust. ADAM grabs her  
arm and pushes her out of the  
church, then follows.

Destroyed gift falls out of  
her pocket, next to her  
shoes. Sounds of shouting,  
hitting and laughing are  
heard.)

Anioł Pański sam ogłosił te dziwy,  
Których oni nie słyszeli, jak żywi.

Chwała na wysokościach, chwała na wysokościach, a pokój na  
ziemi,

Chwała na wysokościach, chwała na wysokościach, a pokój na  
ziemi!

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

## Scene 6

SETTING: Church chamber. Rows of seats face the audience. Confessional on the left. There is stained glass looking like mountain landscape in the back. Wooden sculptures are placed to recreate traditional depiction of Holy Family in the night of Jesus' birth, turned with their back to the audience. Lit candles.

AT RISE: RÓŽA stands in front of the sculpture of Mary. It's taller than her. Róža has her shoes on and scarf wrapped on her head like Mary's material. SISTER AFRA comes out of the confessional, kisses stole and approaches RÓŽA at a safe distance.

SISTER AFRA

Why do you have this on your head?

RÓŽA

My cap was stolen.

SISTER AFRA

You shouldn't wear it in church, anyway.

RÓŽA

Shouldn't have been beaten in church, either.

SISTER AFRA

I didn't want to talk about this. I wanted to talk about THIS.

(She throws the bottle of pills to RÓŽA but she doesn't make the attempt to catch it. The bottle shatters when it hits the floor.)

You can have your poison back.

RÓŽA

I'll take my meds, save the glass.

SISTER AFRA

You're insane. You take drugs to become a parody of a woman.

RÓŽA

Didn't want to talk about it.

SISTER AFRA

And you had audacity to want to be Mother of God!

RÓŽA

You wanted me to. I wanted to play a woman, don't care witch one.

SISTER AFRA

You're disgusting. You sell drugs to feed your perversion.

RÓŽA

I don't sell anything to get my meds.

SISTER AFRA

I have witnesses and proofs.

(RÓŽA chuckles.)

RÓŽA

So blackmail, at last? What do you want?

SISTER AFRA

To save you. It's past the point of prayers, I have to take actions. I know you're a good person, Kacper. I know you love God and God loves you. Go back on his path. Quit that nonsense. Fight it!

RÓŽA

Fight what?

SISTER AFRA

Yourself!

RÓŽA

Or else your thugs will beat myself out of me?

SISTER AFRA

Or else police will know.

RÓŽA

Wow. You're seriously messed up. Is this the damage taken from fighting with yourself?

(RÓŽA goes towards the doors.  
SISTER AFRA jumps far away  
from her when she passes by,  
like she was afraid to get  
infected with something. She  
is now close to Mary's  
sculpture.

RÓŽA

Work your magic. I'm already in juvie, sis.

SISTER AFRA

You're used to prison on earth, but what about the one in  
hell? Don't you understand what awaits you?

RÓŽA

What awaits me, sis?

SISTER AFRA

Eternal damnation!

(RÓŽA turns around, trying  
not to laugh.)

RÓŽA

See you around, then.

(RÓŽA leaves with the sound  
of slamming door. SISTER AFRA  
steps back in shock, slipping  
and collapsing Mary's figure  
on the floor.)



(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)