The Chamber of Torture

or the troubadour's confusion – a medieval stage play

Paweł Biernacki, Krakow, 2026

CHARACTERS:
TRUBAUD
INQUISITOR
EXECUTIONER

Scene 1
Torture Chamber
TRUBAUD
INQUISITOR

INQUISITOR:
Let him enter. Are there many more of them there?

TRUBAUD:
Good morning! I wanted to...

INQUISITOR:
I'm here to ask questions. I'm asking if there are many still waiting in line. Customers, I mean...

TRUBAUD:
No, I'm the last one. (*bows*) Piórkowski. Troubadour.

INQUISITOR:
Ah, a troubadour. I am Sprawiedlicki. Inquisitor Sprawiedlicki. Please take a seat. I apologize, I did not immediately recognize from your refined manners and splendid attire that I was dealing with an educated man. What is your business here?

TRUBAUD:
Regarding the stake. That is, I wanted to repent. To confess to heresy. You see, Mr. Sprawiedlicki, I believe it is your duty to burn me at the stake. I should be punished for the terrible crimes I dared to commit...

INQUISITOR:
Sir... What is your name, excuse me?

TRUBAUD:
Piórkowski.

INQUISITOR:
Sir, Mr. Piórkowski, do you wish to be burned at the stake? I understand, in the Market Square, in a grand ceremony, announced by heralds, with a large crowd gathered, in the presence of the Castellan and the highest dignitaries of the Kingdom, with music, jugglers, the ringing of bells, the blowing of trumpets, the roar of drums, cotton candy, and so on...

TRUBAUD:
Yes. For heresy.

INQUISITOR:
And are you aware, sir...

TRUBAUD:
Piórkowski.

INQUISITOR:
And are you aware, Mr. Piórkowski, how much such a burning at the stake ceremony costs? The costs of paying the heralds, dignitaries, guards, the costs of fuel... Who do you think is going to pay for it? Me? Because you don't look like someone who can even afford half a cheese...

TRUBAUD:
To tell you the truth, Mr. Sprawiedlicki...

INQUISITOR: (correcting)
Mr. Inquisitor, or rather Inquisitor Sprawiedlicki...

TRUBAUD:
Yes. So, Mr. Inquisitor, I looked at it not so much from the point of view of costs, but from the point of view of duties. The kingdom has a duty to punish me for committing the heinous crime of heresy.

INQUISITOR:
At the expense of the budget, is that right, Mr. Piórkowski? Do you think the budget is elastic? That the Kingdom's treasury can withstand anything? You remember the Kingdom's obligations, but you forget your own? Didn't they teach you in school, Mr. Piórkowski, that we are a country without stakes?

TRUBAUD:
Yes, of course they did, Mr. Inquisitor. But they explained it with the tolerance for which our Kingdom is rightly famous... But I came to the conclusion that tolerance must also have its limits. So I thought that, as an exception, as a subject, I deserve the harshest treatment.

INQUISITOR:
Because you deserve it, is that right, Mr. Piórkowski? That is an entitled attitude, sir! You are surely aware that in today's world, tolerance is important, yes, but what counts above all is the economic calculation! We are a country without stakes not because we are guided by the idea that we are non-smokers. Non-smokers of stakes, that is. The point is not to have to throw away valuable funds obtained from loans secretly obtained at usurious interest rates from financial institutions on whims like yours, Mr. Piórkowski! Do you have the funds to cover at least part of the cost of burning at the stake?

TRUBAUD:
At present... I must admit, Mr. Inquisitor, that I have only four thalers at my disposal, one of which, I must confess, I owe to someone and must repay by this evening... Nevertheless, as a subject, and a troubadour at that, I believe I deserve to have the Kingdom invest in my talent. I am talented, I have excellent prospects, and undoubtedly, if I were burned at the stake, the popularity of my works would increase immeasurably. They could be profitably published, printers would have work, musicians would sing them, the masses would have access to culture, the Kingdom's tourism revenues would increase... The costs of burning me at the stake would be recouped in less than a year, if not sooner. And then - only profit, pure profit...

INQUISITOR:
Mr. Piórkowski, I understand your enthusiasm and I don't want to be rude. But wouldn't it be reasonable for you, Mr. Piórkowski, to start by repairing your own finances before you take on the Kingdom's finances? You know that every investment carries risk. The budget is not some kind of magic potion, and the Kingdom's treasury is not an inexhaustible source of gold. You would like money from the budget to be invested in you, which is actually the money of the common people, money from taxes, which the aforementioned common people conscientiously avoid paying... In addition, you want the Kingdom to invest in you from the meager income it has from plundering the masses and secretly taking out loans hidden from them. So the costs of the investment are to be covered by public money. And the profits are to go to you, Mr. Piórkowski? Public cost and private profit, is that how I should understand it?

TRUBAUD:
But I was thinking only of moral profits. In this way, I will show the whole world that even though I was burned at the stake, even though everyone condemned my vile crime, in the final analysis, I was right! According to the law, all material profits from the aforementioned investment would go to the Kingdom! They would be confiscated in advance, quite rightly so... I only want to be heard, I want to feel even a shadow of the vengeful satisfaction that every underappreciated genius feels... That I was right!

INQUISITOR:
I am not even asking where you are from... Your reasoning speaks louder than any document. Allow me, Mr. Piórkowski, to point out a weak spot in your plan. If we condemn your heresy and consider it a sufficient reason to invest in you, we cannot then publish your works! Don't you see the contradiction in that, Mr. Piórkowski?

TRUBAUD:
But no! The Inquisitor has misunderstood me. All my works are completely orthodox and contain no heretical ideas! This heresy is just a marketing ploy. The heresy will be forgotten as soon as my stake is lit. However, I am convinced that the crowd will like the message. I fought in a hopeless situation, against all odds, I was completely innocent and did not make any mistakes myself. It was pure malice, injustice, and envy on the part of those who envied my genius. The most important thing is that I ultimately got my way! I was right, even though I gained nothing from being right!

INQUISITOR:
All right. I can't promise anything. The kingdom has committed to reducing combustion products, hence the top-down restriction on the number of pyres burned. We are required to adhere to strict standards. But please try. So what is your heresy, Mr. Piórkowski?

TRUBAUD:
This heresy, Mr. Inquisitor, is based on my view that all religious beliefs permitted in our Kingdom are equally good! It follows that all religious institutions that legally profit from these beliefs are equally good. This, in turn, is offensive...

INQUISITOR:
...it does not offend anything, Mr. Piórkowski. I must disappoint you. This is the content of one of the articles of the Basic Law of our Kingdom, and not some heresy... You are not up to date with the current legal situation.

TRUBAUD:
Well, maybe this: deep down, I believe that the religious beliefs that generate the most profit, and thus the largest religious institution in our Kingdom, are the worst thing ever! These are the worst beliefs and the worst religious institution of all possible beliefs and institutions!

INQUISITOR: (*bursts out laughing*)
You hold such a belief deep in your heart? Mr. Piórkowski... It is written expressis verbis in the official documents of that religious institution. You are a hundred years too late with your heresy! Mr. Piórkowski...

TRUBAUD:
Perhaps this will convince you: For years, I have been conducting a hate campaign against you personally and against the institution that you, Inquisitor, deign to represent! I attack the Inquisition publicly, accusing it of cruelty, fanaticism, and the use of torture against innocently convicted people!

INQUISITOR:
Well, now think about what I should do. After all, if I have you burned at the stake, not only will I expose the Kingdom to reputational damage, not only will I violate the burning limits agreed in the treaties, but I will also lend you credibility at the Kingdom's expense! Don't you understand how absurd your demands are, Mr. Piórkowski? Your activities against me personally and against the Inquisition are precisely the argument for letting you go free! And torture... Torture is completely legal in the Kingdom. Have you ever seen a torture chamber without torture, Mr. Piórkowski? As for the innocence of the convicted, I have extensive documentation which clearly shows that all those convicted under torture confessed to their guilt! Do you want to question their right to confess? You have a tendency toward totalitarianism, Mr. Piórkowski!

TRUBAUD:
That's not all, Mr. Inquisitor! I intend to commit apostasy!

INQUISITOR:
Apostasy one floor up, the stamp duty is five thalers.

TRUBAUD:
Well, but I only have four thalers, and as I said, I have to give one back today. Does that mean I don't even have the right to apostasy?

INQUISITOR:
It only means that you will not renounce your faith today. Unless you manage to borrow some from someone.

TRUBAUD:
I didn't dare ask, but since you yourself are offering... If you would be so kind, Inquisitor... Just two thalers. To borrow. I'll pay you back, I swear. I've been promised a job as a scribe.

INQUISITOR:
No, that's going too far. You come to the best Torture Chamber in the whole Kingdom, which also enjoys a reputation that extends far beyond the borders of this Kingdom. You paint a picture of utopian profits for the Inquisitor, that is, me, just to get yourself burned at the stake. You falsely claim to be a heretic, but all your so-called heresies turn out to be completely legal and lawful. And you try to borrow two thalers from the Inquisitor?

TRUBAUD:
But, Mr. Inquisitor, just listen...

INQUISITOR:
No, now listen, Mr. Piórkowski. I know what you mean. You can't afford a place in the cemetery, the property tax associated with it, the burial, the burial tax, the tax on the tax, you can't afford anything at all. This means that you have no income, and therefore you are completely redundant in the market. You do not enrich the Kingdom in any way! You have figured out that you will arrange for euthanasia, cremation, burial, and, on top of that, advertising at the expense of the Kingdom's budget, burdening that budget with additional investment risk costs. And if the investment fails, what will we do then? After all, cremation is an irreversible process! How will we hold you accountable if you are no longer here? Will we sell your ashes on the open market?

TRUBAUD:
The situation is not so hopeless, Mr. Inquisitor. The ashes of heretics fetch dizzying prices on world markets. If a marketing campaign were skillfully carried out...

INQUISITOR:
But Mr. Piórkowski! Such a campaign would require further investment! To invest, we would have to take out loans. The fact that we have taken out loans must be kept as secret as possible so that the masses, who will ultimately repay these loans, find out about them as late as possible. Such loans have much higher interest rates because they carry the risk that someone will find out what is going on. You know very well that if we take out such loans to sell your ashes, claiming that they are the ashes of the most hardened heretic burned at the stake, the same institution that granted them to us will immediately invest twice as much in a campaign to prove the opposite!

TRUBAUD:
I'm sorry, Mr. Inquisitor. I'm a little confused. Why would a lending institution invest in something that could potentially make it difficult to repay the loans?

INQUISITOR:
Precisely to make it more difficult to repay them! To slap us with penalties for failing to fulfill the contract! If we run a campaign portraying you as a heretic, a fund to defend your good name will immediately appear. Well-paid specialists will prove that you were never a heretic. All this so that the market value of your ashes as a heretic will plummet. Then we will have to cover the costs of a failed investment with no hope of any return, your ashes will be bought for a pittance, and then who knows, the aforementioned fund may even lead to your canonization! Only we will not benefit from it, because by then we will have gotten rid of everything that had any value! Including your ashes!

TRUBAUD:
Yes, indeed. I'm sorry, Mr. Inquisitor, you've opened my eyes. I need to think this all through.

INQUISITOR:
Wait, sir. The executioner will be here soon; he works here full-time. I only have a contract for specific work in this Torture Chamber.

TRUBAUD:
Of course. I'll stay. I have an idea in mind...

INQUISITOR:
Let me warn you in advance. Don't offer yourself as an apprentice, Mr. Piórkowski. He's an old-school professional. I'll tell you, work is everything to him. He's a soulful man. We're on first-name terms with him, but it would be polite if you addressed him as Master, or even Master Torturer. And, as you understand, he's not familiar with the latest trends in court music.

TRUBAUD:
He has no ear for music?

INQUISITOR:
No, of course he has an ear for music. A pretty good one, in fact. I have to step out for a moment, so you gentlemen will have a chance to get to know each other better.

Scene 2
Torture Chamber
TRUBAUD
EXECUTIONER

EXECUTIONER:
Are you talking to me?

TRUBAUD:
I am Piórkowski. Troubadour.

EXECUTIONER:
Master Dobromił. It's very nice to meet you. I'm sorry I can't shake your hand, but I've just come straight from work... Did you have an appointment? I mean... Are you here as a customer...?

TRUBAUD:
No, not yet. I thought I might use your services, so I waited. There was a long line. I had a project, but Mr. Inquisitor Sprawiedlicki made me realize that it still needs some thought.

EXECUTIONER:
Look what's happening. There are barely four Torture Chambers in the whole city. There used to be sixteen. They reduced us, supposedly to maintain high quality services and the right price level. And now people are standing in line to use the services of a professional. Was that ever conceivable? My dear sir... Do you have any business with me? Stretchers? Flogging? I warn you that I have no appointments for today. At my age, one doesn't work overtime like one used to. My services must be booked a month in advance.

TRUBAUD:
No, no. I'm not going to cause any trouble today. I had something more radical in mind.

EXECUTIONER:
I thought it was about stocks or flogging. Those are the most popular services right now. Before the City Council elections, Mr. Piórkowski, every candidate wants to be put in stocks. Or flogged. Sometimes they take a package deal, it's cheaper that way. And, of course, everyone who is publicly flogged here arouses sympathy, so people count on easy promotion. A few prayers at the pillory, it doesn't cost him much, and he even bargains, wants some kind of discount or rebate. That if he gets elected to City Hall or wherever, he'll immediately promote my Chamber of Torture. That I should basically whip him for free because he knows the mayor or whoever, and that for me it's some kind of incredible promotion.

TRUBAUD:
Yes, this phenomenon also occurs in our industry. Sometimes it's unpleasant to hear, there are some horrible howls or wails coming from the Castle. The crowd panics, asking if the Castellan's wife is making the Castellan happy with another offspring, or if some misfortune has befallen someone. But it's just that the Castellan has brought in a new troubadour from overseas for a hefty sum, because someone recommended him, and now he has to listen to this howling from morning till night. He calls it patronage, caring for artists and contributing to the culture of the Kingdom. Meanwhile, a local artist doesn't have five thalers in his purse and has to resort to radical solutions. In addition, the Castellan is

too embarrassed to admit that the howler from overseas has simply ripped him off, so he pretends that the singing moves him deeply and orders all his servants and even the nobility to be moved by it as well.

EXECUTIONER:

Of course, I know what promotion is, I know that a little is necessary. But let's not exaggerate. We executioners say that there is nothing like a satisfied customer. I don't advertise through a herald, it's not in my budget. I am a simple man, I live off the work of my own hands and my knowledge of my craft. I've been swinging this axe for forty years, Mr. Piórkowski. Forty years! Sunday, Monday... Look at me – these are the hands of a hard worker. And all I do is put people in stocks, whip them, brand them, behead them, hang them... Execution is an art that requires versatility, Mr. Piórkowski.

TRUBAUD:

Do you even hang people?

EXECUTIONER:

Sir! I used to even impale people! They came from distant castles to watch. As for hanging, it's not done that way anymore. The market is changing, the demand for services is changing. It used to be said that the axe and the stump were for the nobility, and the rabble was hanged. But do the math yourself - you have to erect the gallows, then dismantle it. It won't do itself. Pay at least two servants. You have to pay the rope maker. You have to pay the clergyman. Pay the herald. Pay the gravedigger. Pay the carpenter. And what about the tribute to the mayor? To the castellan? Everyone is watching your every move. Hanging is not profitable. A stump is cheaper, although they complain that it is not right to cut down rudeness.

TRUBAUD:

An economic calculation, Master Dobromil. Who among us is not affected by it... I myself am almost a nobleman, and I have to count every thaler. A nobleman can afford anything, and you, man, shout yourself hoarse in front of a crowd that knows as much about singing as a rook knows about astrology!

EXECUTIONER:

Well, it's only right to take a little more from the nobility. A nobleman understands that sooner or later it will come out how much he gave the executioner. He is entitled to cloth, he hires musicians, he pays for the bell. But how often is a nobleman beheaded? It's the rabble that gets beheaded. And if someone is richer, they haggle so much that it's astonishing. A man would like to eat something warm after a whole day's work. He would like to bring his wife a gift...

TRUBAUD:

Please give my regards to the honorable Mrs. Executioner!

EXECUTIONER:

Let me tell you, Mr. Piórkowski, it's a diamond, not a woman. Well, just a diamond! Let me tell you a story. We're walking arm in arm, it's Saturday, you know, a man wants to relax. And someone bows to me. I don't recognize the man, I think maybe he's not bowing to me. And my wife tugs at my sleeve: "Honey! The client is bowing to you!" I try to remember, and he comes up and shakes my hand. He says, "You probably don't remember me, but I... You have a way with your hands! I still remember how you whipped me once!" And indeed! I whipped him myself, thirty years ago! A former customer! I remembered him. A reliable craftsman will always be in demand. Tears welled up in my eyes, and my

throat tightened. I didn't let it show, and said politely, "I look forward to working with you again in the future, sir!"

TRUBAUD:
May I ask... Did you meet at work?

EXECUTIONER:
At work, no... She was a visitor, and I had long since become a master. I had my own Chamber of Torture in a good location. Do you know what that meant back then? I was somebody, Mr. Piórkowski! You're too young to remember, but there used to be order, and everyone tried to do their job, if not perfectly, then at least according to plan.

TRUBAUD:
I know what you mean, Master Dobromil. I know about those times from stories. In the craft professions, there were various benefits and allowances.

EXECUTIONER:
There were guilds, Mr. Piórkowski! It's a completely different story. As a troubadour, you probably sing wherever you can, Mr. Piórkowski. There is no guild of musicians, it is a free profession, after all. And craftsmen had their importance. I'm not talking about bunglers. Here, you could get vacation time for years of service. Additional square footage. An allowance for a non-working wife. And now a man has no say in anything. Do you know that they raised the retirement age again this year! Are they counting on me to hang myself?

TRUBAUD:
You can't do that! I mean, of course you can, and you would probably do it impeccably. What I mean is, you shouldn't! Think of your wife!

EXECUTIONER:
You, Mr. Piórkowski, are a good man. You can empathize with other people's situations. In my line of work, they say that empathy is not an advantage and that you should separate your professional life from your private life. Well, with my wife, as it is with wives, we sometimes argue. Sometimes you stay late at work, sometimes you have to go on a trip because they need a specialist. It happens that the local executioner does not want to take on the task, does not have experience in a given technique, there are special requirements...

TRUBAUD:
Well, I understand. Sometimes you're not at home. But you don't bring your work home with you, do you?

EXECUTIONER:
Now it's not even allowed to do that. There are new regulations. But in the old days, it happened... My wife once wanted to help me at work, but I never let her. I have my principles. She thinks that if it looks easy, she could do it too. And once she said to me: "You know, old man, I'm glad I married you, not the guy who was studying to be a scribe." Because she had a suitor, I knew him, he was indeed studying to be a scribe.

TRUBAUD:
Her fiancé?

EXECUTIONER:
No. He had something in mind, but I talked him out of it. Then he pretended not to recognize me on the street, thinking he would make a career for himself... He promised her the moon, his own carriage. And now what? He takes off his hat from afar when he sees me and says, "Master Dobromil." Well, I bow to him too, but - between you and me - I remember how he behaved back then, how he thought he was better than everyone else.

TRUBAUD:
Of course, there are people like that. In our industry, there are those who once sang for, say, the Castellan, and now they don't recognize people and don't want to lend them a penny. It's as if only they had the right to sing. Anyone can sing, after all.

EXECUTIONER:
I know exactly what you mean. Professional skill is not always required. The most important thing is understanding. Goodwill. Let me give you an example from my industry. I come home tired. All I want to do is sit down and rest. My wife understands that. I remember, she'll bring home a rooster from the market, and it needs to have its head chopped off, and she says, "Sit down, old man, you've worked hard, you're exhausted, your hands are covered in dirt up to your elbows." And she takes the axe herself to chop off its head. Nowadays, I'll tell you, the only thing you can't buy is people's recognition.

TRUBAUD:
Your story is moving.

EXECUTIONER:
You understand people, Mr. Piórkowski. You are an artist, of course. But now we live in times when what matters most is not what you know, but whether you are popular. Someone who rents himself out to be flogged at the pillory becomes extremely popular simply because he was flogged. No one wonders whether what he says makes sense. What matters is that he was flogged. After a few such floggings and public handouts, he has a good chance of getting into City Hall. Even into the Castle. And the one who flogs him, who does it professionally, who puts his heart into his work, well, Mr. Piórkowski, he doesn't matter.

TRUBAUD:
Don't say that, Master Dobromil! Your wife appreciates you! Inquisitor Sprawiedlicki appreciates you! I am sure that many of your clients will remember you fondly. Your commitment is evident even in the way you talk about your work.

EXECUTIONER:
You speak so beautifully about it, Mr. Piórkowski. I can't do that. Obviously, the work of an executioner is physical labor and requires manual dexterity. Sometimes my hands even shake from exhaustion. I like my job, but I must admit that I don't see any prospects when I look at the younger generation. An apprentice will come along and, for example, take a delinquent for torture, and then leave him in two minutes flat because he has to go grab a hamburger.

TRUBAUD:

Yes, it sounds like a certain nonchalance. The younger generation does not have this work ethic instilled in them from childhood.

EXECUTIONER:

That's nothing. A short break is not a problem. But imagine that when such a person finishes work, he leaves the job, so to speak, half done, and the offender has to wait until morning. In the past, even if we had temporary difficulties, a working man had human respect but also respect for people. The offender knew he could trust him.

Scene 3
Torture Chamber
TRUBAUD
INQUISITOR
EXECUTIONER

INQUISITOR:
I'm here! I'm here, I'm there. I work with various Torture Chambers. It is, so to speak, a rapidly growing network of facilities offering comprehensive execution services. Gentlemen, you've had a chance to get to know each other. How are you, Mr. Piórkowski? Have you thought about your project?

TRUBAUD:
I must admit that the Inquisitor has given me a new perspective. A similar project came to mind, but based on the laws concerning Lèse-majesté. You see, as a troubadour, I am also a man of letters, in a way.

INQUISITOR:
Well, get to work! Write some plays! Do you know how much money there is in it? It's serious business now, Mr. Piórkowski.

TRUBAUD:
What do you mean? Money from writing plays? I always thought that plays were written by people who were really unsuitable for any other job. Besides, it's a shame for the whole province! What would my friends say if I admitted to writing plays? No, I was thinking more about writing malicious pamphlets. The audience likes that. And it comes very easily to me. All you have to do is characterize someone accurately and then mock them as maliciously as possible.

EXECUTIONER:
Gentlemen, I have to get back to work. The culprit is waiting, and I promised him it wouldn't take long. Unless one of you has any suggestions for me.

TRUBAUD:
I would like to take up the Master's time for just a moment. Doesn't the Master think that with his connections he could at least get me beheaded with a sword? I mean a sentence for the crime of Lèse-majesté...

INQUISITOR:
I think I know what you have in mind, Mr. Piórkowski. You want to quietly withdraw from heresy and confess to the crime of Lèse-majesté against our Most Gracious Monarch.

EXECUTIONER:
I've never heard of such a thing. I cannot pass sentence on my own, that requires a court, a verdict, evidence, witness testimony... I only carry out sentences, although, I must admit, we all know each other very well in this business. If you admit to committing the crime of Lèse-majesté, you must pay a stamp duty, write a report on yourself, and wait. But, even though you are a young man, Mr. Piórkowski, let's be clear – this is a serious matter and you will most likely not live to see the verdict. And even if you do, I will almost certainly not be able to carry it out, although I would very much like to. I have grown very fond of you, Mr. Piórkowski.

INQUISITOR:

Master Dobromił refers to the particular meticulousness with which the courts of our Kingdom deal with such cases. It happens that a man commits a crime as a young man and receives his deserved punishment only as an old man. Although this matter does not fall within the jurisdiction of the Inquisition, could you tell me, Mr. Piórkowski, what crime against the Majesty of our Most Gracious Monarch you have in mind? Perhaps I could be of some assistance.

TRUBAUD:

I... I will tell you, but of course in the strictest confidence. When I was writing my first pamphlets, I noticed a disturbing tendency in myself to question the intellectual competence of our Most Gracious Monarch.

EXECUTIONER:

Mr. Piórkowski... Is this some kind of charade? Tell us openly what you mean. Mr. Sprawiedlicki? Could you translate?

INQUISITOR:

Halt! Not a word, Master. I can guess what this is about, but I cannot exert the slightest pressure. Otherwise, we could be accused of the testimony being extracted in the Chamber of Torture by the Inquisitor in the presence of the Executioner. Mr. Piórkowski... Would you be so kind as to speak a little more clearly?

TRUBAUD:

Well... I publicly suggested that our king is a bit stupid!

INQUISITOR:

Silly?

TRUBAUD:

Silly!

The INQUISITOR and EXECUTIONER laugh loudly.

INQUISITOR:

Is this your Crime of Lèse-Majesté? That the king is silly? Sir... He is a complete idiot! The heralds sometimes don't know how to announce what he babbles! Legends about our king's stupidity circulate throughout the kingdom. Silly... These artists.

EXECUTIONER:

Mr. Piórkowski! Let me explain...

INQUISITOR:

No, Master Dobromil! Today I will tell my distinguished fellow Inquisitors! It will be the story of the evening! Dear Mr. Piórkowski. Would you call Master Dobromil an indelicate man? If you call Master Dobromil an indelicate man, and then you call yourself a literate man, and then, for example, you call me a practical man, you will still not match, you will not even come close to the level of prudence that you were kind enough to achieve with your description of our king.

TRUBAUD:

So... I'm not in any danger? Gentlemen, are you suggesting that I did not commit the crime of lèse-majesté? Then perhaps... I took bribes from neighboring kingdoms for exerting behind-the-scenes influence on the politics of our Kingdom.

INQUISITOR:

I don't want to be rude, Mr. Piórkowski, but your desperation is not a good advisor. We all take bribes here. If you had anything to do with it, you wouldn't be looking for a job, you'd be wondering which of the lucrative offers to choose. If you took bribes, they would probably be a little more than the four thalers that, if my memory serves me correctly, you currently have at your disposal. And the influence you have on the politics of our Kingdom...

EXECUTIONER:

Mr. Piórkowski! I just wanted to say that you restore my faith in people. I work professionally with those who want to lie to me. It often takes a lot of effort to get a word of truth out of them. Each of them firmly believes in their innocence. And at the same time, each of them lies like there's no tomorrow. I've never seen anyone like you before. You try to lie, you see, but you're completely incapable of doing so, Mr. Piórkowski.

(*handing over the papers*)

If you'd like to take advantage of them, we have various discounts here. For example, there's a subscription: ten lashes, one extra lash for free. A lottery with the grand prize of being put in the stocks. We have a loyalty program: bring in a new customer and you'll receive a discount on our services. And please remember us fondly. If you're ever in the area, come on by. Here, take our business cards—comprehensive executioner services, Chamber of Torture, Inquisitor Sprawiedlicki, and Master Executioner Dobromił. Well, maybe we'll see you sometime!

INQUISITOR:

Master Dobromił is right! Think about those plays. Just don't write under your own name, because it's a bit embarrassing for a decent person. Choose yourself an artistic pseudonym. Many authors do so, in case they need to deny that they wrote it. If the play turns out to be a flop. And if the play turns out to be good, then you can admit to the pseudonym. That's how it works, Mr. Piórkowski.

TRUBAUD:

A pseudonym? What kind, for example?

INQUISITOR:

Anything. Choose one at random. Or this – let the Master say the name of the delinquent who is now waiting for the service to be completed. Let that be your pseudonym, do you agree, Mr. Piórkowski? Master, what's his name? What is the name of this delinquent?

EXECUTIONER:

Biernacki?