

Optic Antic – H. W. Tigoteus - 2024

8x8 chairs are arranged in a grid, facing the audience. All places are filled. It looks like they are about to watch a movie. Said movie begins somewhere: we do not hear nor see it, but see the audience in soft lighting, like it's being reflected from a screen. The audience laughs, and “wow”s and “boo”s. To understand the script underneath, the following designations apply:

		Back wall									
Stage LEFT	A1	B1	C1	D1	E1	F1	G1	H1	Stage RIGHT		
	A2	B2	C2	D2	E2	F2	G2	H2			
	A3	B3	C3	D3	E3	F3	G3	H3			
	A4	B4	C4	D4	E4	F4	G4	H4			
	A5	B5	C5	D5	E5	F5	G5	H5			
	A6	B6	C6	D6	E6	F6	G6	H6			
	A7	B7	C7	D7	E7	F7	G7	H7			
	A8	B8	C8	D8	E8	F8	G8	H8			
		Real audience									

All instructions regarding “left” and “right” concern the audience’s left and right. Our protagonist, hereby shortened to “P”, sits on E5. A followspot is kept on P. Yellow highlights in the table above show the protagonist’s projected path. Grey highlights show seats with a bigger role. P eats popcorn, drinks soda, then looks up. Looks left. Looks right. Then reluctantly stands up.

E4: Sit down!

P sits back down. P turns right to F5, who is sprawled out over nearly two seats, sleeping very deeply and snoring loudly.

P: (clears their throat, timidly) Excuse me?

SOMEONE: Pssht!

P flinches, then turns back to F5.

P: Excuse me, Sir?

F5 does not budge and answers by snoring. P looks left, guiltily, then starts climbing over F5.

F5: What exactly is this maneuver going to be?

P: (scares and jumps back to their original seating, E5) Sorry, Sir, sorry. Uhm...

P turns left. D5 and C5 are spread out as well, making out. P taps D5 on the shoulder, wanting to grab their attention. No answer. P stands, crouched, and tries again.

D5 forcefully swings around and hits P. P crumbles.

D5: (aggravated) What?

P falls back to their place, hands held high in a peace offering.

P: Look, can't you just let me through?

D5: What, you want in?

P: No! No, I just want...

But D5 has already turned back to C5, kissing.

P: Seriously? Hey, (*P tries to tap D5 on the shoulder again*), hey!

SOMEONE: Shut up!

P sits back down, waits. Then turns around, climbs onto their chair. Many people cry out. Lots of "boo"s and "sit down"s and "cut it out"s. But P persists and climbs over to D4 and then C3, under heavy protests.

C3 is engrossed in a conversation with B3, but looks up as P approaches.

C3: Oh, hello, are you interested in joining? Do you've got a moment to talk about our lord and savior Jesus Christ?

P: No thanks, I've got more pressing things on my mind.

P climbs onto C2 but can't progress any further. C2 and B2 are engaged in a medieval sword fight. They get cheered on by the surrounding people. C2 is losing, being pushed to the right into D2, taking P with them. P jumps back into F2.

P: Sorry:

F2: Oh, it's quite fine.

P: Yes? Thank you. If you'd be so kind, I need to exit this row.

F2 gets up.

F2: Of course!

F2 motions something grand with their hands, like opening a grand gate, thus successfully parting the crowd between row F and G. F2 smiles wide. P smiles with pain, but moves forward through the rows up until G7. H8 stands up.

H8: (*very unenthusiastically, with one hand stretched out*) Stop.

P: (*tries to squeeze through*) Sorry.

H8: (*just as apathetically as before*) Stop!

P: (*annoyed*) Watcha want, pal?

H8: You can't go through here.

P: Why not?

H8: Well, I can't tell you.

P's face slips. P takes a step forward.

H8: Stop. That's just the way it is.

P surges forward, bends over G7, grabs H8 forcefully by the collar.

P: Listen, I don't care how you do it where, I gotta take a leak, buddy, and if you don't budge by yourself, I'll make you.

P pushes further, making H8 stumble and fall into F8, E8 and E7. P follows, H8 screams.

E6: What's going on here?

H8: Argh! They pushed me, I fell!

Surrounding people pull H8 and P up and restrain them.

P: Who am I to influence gravitational matters – that's just the way it is!

C6: Okay, hold on. Everybody calm down, let's settle this like adults... in court.

A court is built up, plaintiff and defendant are reluctantly placed to their seats: C6, the judge, D6, the defense attorney, D7, the defendant, B6, the prosecuting attorney, B7, the plaintiff. P looks so extremely out of place.

C6: Order. *(C6 is hit in the back, then turns around at C5, who is sprawled out in a full-blown orgy now, disrupting the court proceedings)* Hey, can you stoop back there.

B6: *(reluctantly)* Your honour... They are already stooping, I fear.

C6: Oh, well... *(to C5 and orgy-goers)* at least moan a little quieter... Order in the court! Order. The first witness, please.

C8 stands up. P looks even more flabbergasted.

C8: Well, there seemed to have been a fight.

P: What?!

H8: *(stands up)* I'll jog your memory! *(is then pulled back down by their attorney)*

C6: Order. Order!

C8: And they seemed to have pushed them, indeed.

P: For the last damned time: I need to piss!

C6: The defendant is to be acquitted on all charged, the court is hereby adjourned.

P is lost. The improvised "court" dissolves to their original seatings. In the chaos, where everyone is stumbling over everyone, P moves to C6. P looks around. Order establishes itself. Everyone is seated, but P keeps standing on their chair. And then:

VOICE: Attention... Formation!

The grid "dissolves" into a chess board. Rows "C" to "F" leave the board completely, the rest get out hats that show their designation and keep a "believable position". P has a look of fear on their face.

VOICE: King to F6! *(nothing moves)*

A DIFFERENT VOICE: *(laughs)* Bishop to F6!

P is thusly slain dramatically by the bishop, one of the sword fighters. P is quickly picked up by two other people one on the feet, one on the shoulders, carrying P over their shoulders.

P: What are you doing there? Hey! I'm not dead!

P struggles against them, but can't shake them. They quickly transport them off the chess board and finally off-stage. Everyone returns to their seats. E5 stays suspiciously empty. D5 shares their popcorn with F5.