

THE MINUTES

A Secretretric Dialogue

SECRETRES: I was returning from Bartlett yesterday with Paolon, son of Misterpaolon, when Shanno approached us. "Secretres," she said, my friend Clairetin and I wish to talk to you."

"Of course," I said. "What would you like to talk about? I already know that first place in the House Writing Contest went to Bruces for his 'Interesting Narrative of the Life of Samuel Boyd,' second place to Megon Wells for 'Inside Out,' and third place to Chrisistemus Lee for his untitled work. I also know that Julias and Peteus won prizes for their topics."

"Yes," said Shanno. "I know. I wrote all that down for you when I was doing your job for you at the last House Meeting, while you were out seeing *The Importance of Being Earnestes*, in which Chrisius Martin appears in drag."

"For this I am thankful, Shanno," I said.

Clairetin approached us. "Hello, Clairetin!" I said.

"Good day, Secretres," said Clairetin. "I have come to speak with you for many say that you are great and wise."

"But what is a wise man, Clairetin?" I said. "Why should you think I am wise?"

"Well," said Clairetin, "do you not take down the Minutes every week and then send them out in some humorous but digestible and informative form?"

"Ask Shanno if you wish to know the answer to that," I replied.

"Indeed, Clairetin, this week it was I that took down the Minutes," said Shanno. "And yet I am not so renowned as Secretres."

At this point Paolon interjected. "Yes," he said, "it is true that you wrote them down. You must also be great and wise. For certainly you recorded that the Veenstron-Vanderweelethons will be beginning their Thanksgiving activities at eight o'clock in the Green Room on Thanksgiving Day, and that there will be a decorating contest. And you must have recorded Corrigon's remark that there are 'bonus points if the Fire Marshal says it's unsafe.'"

"Indeed I did," said Shanno. "But that is all I did. Surely the great wisdom of Secretres lies in his transformation of the Minutes into infotainment."

"It is an interesting question," I said. "What is wisdom? Clairetin, what do you think wisdom is?"

"Wisdom," said Clairetin, "is great knowledge."

"Yes," said Paolon, "that is why Secretres is so wise: he is greatly knowledgeable."

"But Paolon," I said, "how can you say that I am wise? Is it not you who is truly wise?"

"I?" said Paolon. "Perhaps I am knowledgeable in the ways of numbers and forms, but surely I am not as truly wise as Secretres."

"But, what do I know that makes me so wise?" I asked him.

"Well," said Paolon, "for one thing, you know all about what goes on in the House. And what could be more important than knowing that?"

"A very good point, Paolon. Yet, who was it that knew, before I did, that Thanksgiving would begin at eight in the Green Room?"

"It was I," he admitted sheepishly.

"Therefore you must be wiser than I. Truly people should be stopping you on the streets for advice and conversation, and not me."

Here Shanno spoke again. "Secretres," she said, "it is true that Paolon is very wise and knowledgeable, for he remembered many things from the meeting, and probably he also

remembered that Dannius has asked everyone going on the *Christmas Carol* trip to give him their money, and that he also reminded everyone about the downtown shopping trip for Friday, the day after Thanksgiving.”

“I did remember that,” said Paolon.

“Yes,” said Shanno. “But, Paolon, how can you say that I am wise? For although I wrote those things down, I did not remember them all only in my head? Truly you are wise and I am not.”

“You are very humble, Shanno,” I said. “But truly you are just as wise as Paolon. For you said before, I believe that you thought that I was wise?”

“Indeed you are very wise,” said Shanno.

“But how could I produce such wise Minutes, which include information about Thanksgiving morning community service with Zarahon and Dannius, and about the absence of Jason the RCAnaut from 8 A.M. on Friday to 2 P.M. on Sunday, and about Lauron’s shelter project for 2nd or 3rd week of next quarter, had you not given me the information?”

“This does not mean that you are not wise,” Shanno replied.

“Perhaps not,” I said. “But it does show that you are wise. For if wisdom is knowledge, and the Minutes are wise because they impart much knowledge, think how much wiser still you must be, for you impart knowledge to the Minutes. You, in fact, are the ultimate source of all wisdom.”

“Secretres, you are too kind,” said Shanno. “But all I did is write down what happened. Truly I cannot be wise.”

“But have I not proven to you that, if wisdom is great knowledge, that you are the wisest of all?”

“You have,” said Shanno. “But I know that I cannot be so wise. Perhaps, then, wisdom is not great knowledge.”

“An interesting possibility,” I said. “What are the alternatives?”

“Well,” said Shanno, “everything that I wrote down was merely the secondary reporting of events orchestrated by Clairetin, who was running the meeting. Thus if we are to trace wisdom to its source, Clairetin is the most wise, and then Paolon and I, and lastly you.”

“Lastly,” I pointed out, “those people who did not go to the meeting and are trying to get their information from the Minutes.”

“Of course,” said Paolon, “those people are the most unwise of all.”

“But the point is,” Shanno continued, “that truly Clairetin must be the wisest, because she was in charge when Julias announced the final Bartlett dining meeting for Wednesday and reminded kitchen users to turn off their ovens and lock the freezer. Likewise was she in charge when Marenon revealed that, among other IHC news, there is no sign of a card-value machine coming to Hitchcock. Is that not so, Clairetin?”

“It is true,” Clairetin admitted. “I was running the meeting when those things were said, when you wrote them down and Paolon overheard them.”

“Thus,” I said, “it is you are the ultimate font of knowledge about the House, which, as we agreed, is the most important kind of knowledge that there is, more important than forms and numbers, or than rhetoric and poetry, or history, or philosophy.”

“Yet I wanted to talk to you, Secretres, because you are great and wise. Why should that be if I myself am the wisest? Surely it cannot be so.”

“How can you say so?” I asked her. “How can you say so when you are clearly the person responsible for the dissemination of all knowledge?”

“But,” said Clairetin, “I was only standing there and calling on people. It was not I, but Corrigan, who announced that our game of capture the flag with Alpert will be postponed until the first snowfall; it was not I, but Willius, who announced that someone named Steven will be moving into Section Four; it was not I, but Lia, who said that Section Five is angry at the consistent lack of Minutes and might impeach their representative, Benesthenes. Likewise was it not I but Ryon who reminded us that Snell still exists, and not I but Margarea who told us that we have \$488.11 in our account. It was not I but Jimistotle and Julias who announced that *The Core* will be shown for Bad Movie Night. It was in fact I who reminded everyone that there will be a meeting during Reading Period, but that is beside the point.”

“You are quite correct, Clairetin,” I said. “It would seem that you are not the most ultimate source of all knowledge after all.”

“But if Clairetin is not,” said Shanno, “then who is?”

“Is it secretly Christian? Or Duffius?” said Paolon. “Perhaps Marcus Conkus? Or Maxenes? Or is it Norvalophanes?”

“No, Paolon,” I said. “You seem to be missing the point. The ultimate source of all knowledge are the meeting participants themselves. Without people to make announcements, there would be nothing for Clairetin to do, and nothing for Shanno and Paolo to remember, and nothing for me to translate to infotainment.”

“So,” said Clairetin, “it would seem that true wisdom lies in the dozen or so people who made announcements. However, Secretres, I thought that you wanted our meetings to be shorter (and indeed this one was only 34 minutes long!). This view that you are expounding would encourage more people to speak for no reason except to become more wise.”

“Right you are, Clairetin,” I replied. “You have made me to realize that there is another layer, even beyond the speakers. There is the audience. For without an audience, who would speak? It is truly the audience of attentive and responsible House citizens who must be the most wise, for without them there would be no speaking, and no facilitating, and no recording, and no infotainment.”

“Truly you are a great genius, Secretres, to have discerned this,” said Paolon. “But you are completely correct. All greatness and wisdom flows from the House itself, through the speakers, and the officers, and the recorders, and the infotainers, back to the House. It is like Oroboros, the snake that feeds on its own tail.”

“Indeed it is, Paolon,” I said. “Indeed it very much is.”