

CollabOrate
Justice #2
Capuchin

LADY JUSTICE, JUSTITIA, GOES TO HER FIRST PSYCHIATRIC APPOINTMENT. *When Justitia enters her psychiatrist's office, there sits a skinny monkey in a nicely-styled black business suit. An equally skinny necktie, also black, snakes down his tiny starched white shirt. The monkey removes his mini-fedora, and nestles it on a cherry end table to his right, where a half-eaten banana waits further attention, and small black box rests. The capuchin's tail strokes his left ear.*

CAPUCHIN: Have a seat, Justitia. Name's Capuchin. Lost your toga?

JUSTITIA: Oh, the toga? I'm off today. My analysis appointment is a sick day for justice in America. Jeans and sweatshirt for me. The whole Lady Justice gig. Yuck. Everyone's always kibitzing. If I were not made of marble, it would wear me down. . . . Capuchin, you say? Nice to meet you, Capuchin. I must say I am surprised to see a monkey working as a psychiatrist.

CAPUCHIN: Market's been tough. Got downsized when the organ grinding business fell off. Tried the tracks, riding as a greyhound jockey. Did a few movies in Hollywood. Entirely too wacky for me. Grad school worked. Besides, this is fiction, Justitia. Don't make too much of a psychiatric monkey.

Justitia smiles comfortably and settles onto Capuchin's divan. Capuchin sips his itty-bitty latte.

CAPUCHIN: Tell me why you have come to see me, Justitia.

JUSTITIA: I am a bit confused, mostly about myself. I have one thought; it seems good to me. I hear another concept; then that idea seems preferable. I am constantly waffling. I cannot stay any course.

CAPUCHIN: Tell me more about this indecision, Justitia.

JUSTITIA: I might have post-traumatic stress disorder, you know. You see, every time a judge fails to grasp details, or a lawyer lies, and every time the law contradicts common sense, I get blamed. The ranters get out their sticks and chase me, screaming, "Commie anarchist!" or "One Percenter!" or "The Sky Is Falling!" Seems no matter what I do, someone scolds. I am not sure I can take this battering any more. It's just too much.

CAPUCHIN: I see. You sound distressed. Is there more?

JUSTITIA: I can't address a hundred cultures. Can one theory encompass maritime trade and pet law? How is divorce like predatory lending? How do transgender morality and Islamic Shariah mesh? I am asked to do so much with so little. . . . I am just a country girl from Egypt. You know, some days I feel a twinge of tenderness. Then, wham, just like that, I slash and gore with my sword of retribution. I am plainly unhinged. Do you have any insights, Capuchin?

Capuchin strokes his chin hairs, and squints a bit. Capuchin puffs his mahogany burl pipe, aping Freud. A shiny black box sits next to Capuchin on the coffee table. It pops open. There is nothing inside. The box closes as mysteriously as it had opened. (What is that about?)

CAPUCHIN: Perhaps we should try to simplify things a bit. Let me recount some research. Sarah Brosnan, from Georgia State University, paired up some of my people and offered them cucumber slices in exchange for little rocks. If either capuchin partner traded with a researcher, both got cucumber. Capuchin pairs were situated in cages where they could see the exchanges of other pairs. Researchers began upgrading some of the trades. A trader's partner would get a grape instead of cucumber, while the trader got cucumber. Or a trader in the next cage would get a grape, while the observer continued to get cucumber. The capuchins objected. When non-identical rewards were proffered, the capuchins stopped trading altogether. They refused to eat their treats. Some flung rewards back at researchers. Inequity offended the capuchin sense of justice. At root, the human sense of justice emerges from deeply rooted brain structures that humans share with complex animal life generally.

JUSTITIA: So, it should be simple. Look to the primitive brain and there lies the gold nugget of justice?

CAPUCHIN: Not likely. Humans build cultures. In cultures, social groups cope with specific problems and answer unanswerable questions. Every group embellishes the root sense of fairness uniquely, with rules and thoughts specific to themselves. The rudiment of justice is not, however, mere local invention. Justice has murky neurological foundations in cooperative survival and empathy and social mirroring.

JUSTITIA: Okay. So, that's not nothing. Humans may share some fundamental emotions about justice.

CAPUCHIN: And capuchins share them also. Our time seems to be up.

JUSTITIA: You are little, but I just love you. Would you like to get some dinner?

CAPUCHIN: No, thank you, Justitia. Your affection for me is just transference. Besides, I am given to capuchin ladies. Stone women never really rock me.

JUSTITIA: I see. Next week, I'll have a different shrink?

Capuchin nods. Justitia drags her confused self out the door. Her lower lip trembles.

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