

Clarence and the Council of Nine

Clarence stood before the Council of Nine pleading his case for termination. He stared at each member with wide-eyed anticipation of their ultimate answer and explained his unique situation. When he faltered, a Member of the Nine urged him on, saying, "Please continue. We will give every consideration to your story." The use of the word "story" should have told Clarence that he never had a chance.

Standing tall, he announced, "It was a rainy day. I had no way of knowing the sun would come out. The weather report promised 100% chance of rain for the entire afternoon. I couldn't have known; I just couldn't have known. But it *wasn't* reckless of me. I didn't bring this on myself, not with 100% chance. Full clouds, not a hint of blue in the sky."

One particularly conservative Member asked, "Did you know you were opening yourself to the sky? Were you aware of what might happen?"

Clarence swallowed a lump in his throat and answered, "Yes, yes I knew I was unprotected, but I was careful."

With an impressive poker face that gave away no thoughts, the Member argued, "The Angels send their offspring through direct rays of the sun, when no clouds interfere. Furthermore, they are drawn to the testosterone needed for proper development. You are a man, and you exposed yourself to direct sun." The Member maintained eye contact. "So, I will ask you again. Were you aware of what might happen?"

"Yes, but there was a 100% chance of rain! Full clouds!" Clarence shook his head, trying to make sense of his situation. This couldn't be real. He was 38 years old, worked hard labor on a landscaping crew, and never dreamed of hosting a Cherub, no matter how much of a blessing these aliens offered humankind. He saw from Members' bland expressions that they remained unmoved. Trying a different, more desperate appeal, he said, "So many men welcome the chance to host! Why should I be forced to carry a Cherub for 40 weeks?"

A gentler Council Member responded with some measure of compassion, "You must be aware that doctors cannot remove a Cherub from one man and insert it into another. Termination of your hosting means death for the offspring – the very outcome we have outlawed."

Defeated now, Clarence mumbled his response. "Look, I don't have an answer." He dragged a hand down his face, adding, "But I'm begging you. Please don't leave me like this, suffering for the next nine months against my will. Please."

The gentle Member smiled, probably a gesture meant to be comforting, but Clarence found no comfort. The Member asked, "Is it the scrotal elephantiasis that concerns you? Because we have medications to ease the discomfort."

“It’s all of the permanent changes to my body, and the loss of pay when I can’t lift 50-pound bags of fertilizer or walk a few yards without stopping to rest. It’s the daily choices I have to make, always putting the Cherub first.” Clarence again examined their faces and knew the answer before they gave it. But society had put them in charge, so he stood quietly before the Council and waited for the inevitable.

The Council Director stood, and in a booming voice proclaimed, “Request for termination denied.” He glanced at his notes before continuing, “The Cherubs have a right to life regardless of your desires. Reasons for implantation are moot. Your own desires remain unimportant. You carry life within you, and that life has the right to continue. For you, serving as a host is an inconvenience, but it’s an inconvenience you will continue through 40 weeks of growth. And shame on you for even asking to terminate. Shame on you.”

Clarence bowed his head, allowing tears to drip from his nose. Inside his tired body, the tiny Cherub moved, but Clarence felt nothing.