

FALAFELOSOPHY

by David Steven Cohen

excerpts from the poem "Instructions" by Neil Gaiman

FIRST DRAFT

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ARTHUR - SEASON XIII
WGBH
125 Western Ave.
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FIRST DRAFT - 12/22/09

TEASE

INT. THEATER STAGE - EVENING

Awards telecast. CLOSE ON ARTHUR at lectern as he holds generic awards statuette. He speaks into lectern mike.

1 **ARTHUR**
It's wonderful to be appreciated,
but many great achievements didn't
exactly get a big round of applause
at first. The Italian astronomer,
Galileo, was sent to prison for his
revolutionary ideas...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. INQUISITION CHAMBER - DAY

Arthur as Galileo faces accusers: D.W. and MUFFY. (See Cristiano Banti's 1857 painting "Galileo Facing the Roman Inquisition.")

2 **ARTHUR**
...The Sun does not revolve around
the Earth. The Earth revolves
around the Sun.

3 **MUFFY**
Everyone everything revolves around
the Earth. Well, actually,
everything revolves around me.

4 **D.W.**
(SING-SONG TO ARTHUR) You're going
to jail. You're going to jail.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THEATER STAGE - DAY

As before, Arthur at lectern with award, speaking to mike.

5 **ARTHUR**
Even Abraham Lincoln's famous Gettysburg
Address got some pretty lousy reviews...

DISSOLVE TO:

14 **MR. ARMSTRONG**
 (TO MRS. ARMSTRONG) As I recall,
 dear, you were the one who slept
 with the lights on for a week.

15 **MRS. ARMSTRONG**
 That was just in case Sue Ellen...
 was having a bad dream... and
 needed some late night company.

As Sue Ellen and Mr. Armstrong shoot a knowing look at Mrs. Armstrong, they enter the building.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TOWN HALL THEATER - NIGHT

ON NEIL, standing at a lectern at the front of the hall, a large hard-bound book before him.

16 **NEIL**
 This is a poem about what to do if --
 or, perhaps, when -- you find yourself
 inside a fairy tale. And it's called
 "Instructions".
 (READING) "Touch the wooden gate in
 the wall you never saw before.
 Say 'please' before you open the latch,
 go through,
 walk down the path..."

ON SUE ELLEN AND HER PARENTS, listening.

17 **NEIL (O.S.) (CONT'D)**
 "A red metal imp hangs from the
 green-painted front door,
 as a knocker,
 do not touch it; it will bite your
 fingers.
 Walk through the house. Take
 nothing..."

INTERNAL DISSOLVE TO:

SAME, MOMENTS LATER, OVERLAPPING NEIL'S DIALOGUE SLIGHTLY
 TO SHOW HE'S FURTHER ALONG IN THE POEM.

18 **NEIL**
 "...Remember your name.
 Do not lose hope -- what you seek
 will be found.
 Trust ghosts. Trust those that you
 have helped to help you in their turn."

EXT. STREET NEAR SCHOOL - DAY

Arthur, Binky and Francine are in line at a street-side falafel cart. Buster, already enjoying a falafel sandwich, stands near Arthur.

Sue Ellen, hanging back, has a notebook and pencil in hand, making notes, juggling it all with a falafel sandwich. She's carefully observing the stand's proprietor, the loopy and loony MR. CONTABULOUS. He's a round guy, seemingly built of spheres, with a single and distinct tuft of hair sticking up from the middle of his otherwise hairless scalp.

Mr. Contabulous is Roumanian and speaks in rapid bursts. Imagine Lugosi's Dracula after feeding on an amphetamine addict. He's talking to a kid, making a falafel pita sandwich

25 **MR. CONTABULOUS**
It is the roundness. Of the falafel. Of the pita. Of the planet. Roundness is wholeness. Wholeness is oneness. You understand Mr. Contabulous, yes?

Mr. Contabulous proffers the sandwich, awaiting response. Arthur and his friends exchange glances, suppressing giggles. Sue Ellen, hanging back, makes notes.

26 **KID**
("NO") Uh... sure.

Mr. Contabulous hands the kid the sandwich. The kid speeds off. Binky steps up next; Mr. Contabulous continues.

27 **BINKY**
I'd like a falafel sandwich with white sauce and hot sauce. And extra white sauce and extra hot sauce.

Mr. Contabulous makes the sandwich as he continues.

28 **MR. CONTABULOUS**
There are pita people. And then there are pizza people. Pita people, round like pita. No beginning. No end. Pizza people: always have point to make. (HOLDS SANDWICH UP TO BINKY) You understand Mr. Contabulous, yes?

29 **BINKY**
(STIFLING LAUGH) Uh-huh. Sure.

39 **SUE ELLEN**
That's from your poem. "Instructions".

40 **NEIL**
I knew it sounded familiar.

41 **SUE ELLEN**
So it's like finding myself in a
fairy tale? I should just... go
inside? Is that what you mean?

42 **NEIL**
If that's what you think I mean.
After all, I am your figment.

Neil looks up and sees red hot sauce dripping his way.

43 **NEIL (CONT'D)**
Hot sauce. I'm out.

Sue Ellen stares at her falafel sandwich curiously, then begins to jot more in her notebook.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SUGAR BOWL - DAY

Sue Ellen is at a table, sipping absently on a chocolate milkshake, writing in her notebook.

ANGLE ON NOTEBOOK: Sue Ellen has completed several pages. PUSH IN to see circles and triangles, more articulated as characters, with hints of faces. The text is indistinct, scrawled in columns, margins, word balloons. And then...

THE GRAPHIC NOVEL "COMES TO LIFE" -- the figures animated against the sparse background. (Think UPA-style animation. Minimalist.) Circles roll up and down gentle slopes like happy hula hoops, spinning up into the air and landing with bounces. We hear Sue Ellen narrate the scene:

44 **SUE ELLEN (V.O.)**
Once upon a place, there was a happy
time when happy circles spun
endlessly and, also, beginninglessly.

A LITTLE CIRCLE accidentally bumps into a BIG CIRCLE. (THE CIRCLES SAY ONLY "OH"; INFLECTION IS EVERYTHING. AS THE "OHs" ARE SPOKEN, THEY APPEAR IN SUE ELLEN'S HANDWRITING, LARGER OR SMALLER OR WITH PUNCTUATION TO EXPRESS THE INFLECTION. THE WORDS VANISH AS SOON AS THEY ARE SAID.)

45 **LITTLE CIRCLE**
("PARDON ME") Oh...

46 **BIG CIRCLE**
 ("NO PROBLEM") Oh.

Several circles roll in to join in the "bumping" fun.

47 **CIRCLES**
 Oh! / Oh-oh-oh. / OoOOOhhh. / (ETC.)

48 **SUE ELLEN (V.O.)**
 Some circles spun to celebrate
 their circular roundness, some
 their round circularity. And there
 was no circle more circular than
 The Great Contabulous.

THE GREAT CONTABULOUS circle spins in, sporting a single tuft
 of hair like Mr. Contabulous.

49 **THE GREAT CONTABULOUS**
 (HAPPY PROCLAMATION) Falafelosophy!

50 **ALL OTHER CIRCLES**
 (IN AWE) Oooooooooohhhhhhhhh...

PAN OFF to find TRIANGLES, each stuck at a point in the
 ground, in trees, in rocks -- and arguing pointedly.

51 **SUE ELLEN (V.O.)**
 Nearby, which is much closer than
 farby, the Trifling Triangles always
 gathered to argue their points.

The Triangles argue, inflection informing meaning, the words
 appearing in Sue Ellen's handwriting as with the Circles.

52 **TRIANGLE STUCK IN TREE**
 Point! Pointy pointy point!

53 **TRIANGLE STUCK IN ROCK**
 ("ARE YOU KIDDING?!") Point?!
 (SETTING HIM STRAIGHT) Point-point-
 point-point!

The other Triangles chime in to bicker:

54 **MANY TRIANGLES**
 Point! / Poi-eeeent! / Pointy point
 point! / Pointy pointy pointy! / (ETC.)

55 **SUE ELLEN (V.O.)**
 The Triangles were so pointed in
 their arguing, they never stopped to
 notice their Circle neighbors.
 Until... the Triangulops dropped in.

A HUGE triangle drops in with a THUD! All the other Triangles stop arguing in mid-point.

56 **TRIANGULOPS**
(DEEP VOICE) POINT!

The Triangulops extends his upper point to point like a finger off into the distance. The other Triangles SPRING from wherever they're anchored to gather around the Triangulops and look where he is pointing.

ON THE CIRCLES, frolicking.

57 **SUE ELLEN (V.O.)**
The Trifling Triangles finally found something they could agree on: the Circles didn't make any points. All they did was circulate. And that made the Triangles angry. Well, angriER.

ON THE TRIANGLES, vibrating in rage.

58 **TRIANGLES**
(GROWLING MENACINGLY) Prrrrrooooint!

ON THE CIRCLES, frolicking.

59 **SUE ELLEN (V.O.)**
And the Circles didn't know it then, but soon they would, that they were about to face the Battle of the Shapes...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - DAY

As we dissolve from Sue Ellen's graphic novel, we discover that Arthur, Buster, Binky and Francine have been reading copies of the pages. They've all just about finished and are shuffling pages, looking at this and that, not entirely sure what they've been reading. Sue Ellen stands by, eagerly awaiting their response. Finally...

60 **FRANCINE**
Uh... what is it, exactly?

61 **SUE ELLEN**
It's chapter one of a graphic novel.

62 **BINKY**
Novels are so long, and have lots of words. Lots and lots of words.

- 63 **SUE ELLEN**
A graphic novel. With pictures.
Like a comic book.
- 64 **BUSTER**
If it's like a comic book, where
are the superheroes?
- 65 **SUE ELLEN**
It doesn't have superheroes.
- 66 **BUSTER**
It has circles. And triangles.
- 67 **SUE ELLEN**
Yes. They're characters.
- 68 **BINKY**
I'm confused.
- 69 **SUE ELLEN**
Don't you guys -- don't you like it?

Arthur sees how serious Sue Ellen is -- and how much she believes in her work.

- 70 **ARTHUR**
It's really -- interesting. Maybe
if you write more...

Unseen, Binky kicks Arthur for saying that.

- 71 **ARTHUR (CONT'D)**
Ow! I mean... wow. If you write
more, that would be... wow. Right?
- 72 **BUSTER/FRANCINE/BINKY**
(NOT QUITE ENTHUSIASTIC) Yeah. /
Wow. / Uh-huh.

ON SUE ELLEN, not convinced...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SUGAR BOWL - DAY

Sue Ellen is at the same table, absently sipping a chocolate milkshake, staring at her notebook. She tries to write, but her heart isn't in it. She slumps.

- 73 **SUE ELLEN**
It's just no good.

And from somewhere:

74 **NEIL (O.S.)**
 It's actually quite delicious.

Sue Ellen looks around in front of her for her Inner Gaiman and, spots him...

IN THE MILKSHAKE: A tiny Neil is swimming in the chocolate froth, wearing goggles with an attached snorkel (which is not, at the moment, in his mouth). He waves up at Sue Ellen.

75 **NEIL (CONT'D)**
 (LICKING LIPS) Frothy.

ON SUE ELLEN

76 **SUE ELLEN**
 Inner Gaiman, I don't think my friends like my graphic novel.

77 **NEIL**
 Do you like it?

78 **SUE ELLEN**
 Yes. No. I don't know.

79 **NEIL**
 "Do not lose hope -- what you seek will be found."

80 **SUE ELLEN**
 Really?

81 **NEIL**
 "Trust your heart -- and trust your story."

ON SUE ELLEN as she takes this in, now with even more meaning.

82 **NEIL (O.S.) (CONT'D)**
 And one more thing...

Sue Ellen looks down.

ON NEIL

83 **NEIL (CONT'D)**
 Next time, try strawberry. I like strawberry.

He adjusts the goggles and snorkel and submerges.

ON SUE ELLEN, taking a deep breath.

84 **SUE ELLEN**
 (DEEP BREATH) "Trust my story."

And she begins, again, to write...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. STREET NEAR SCHOOL - DAY

Sue Ellen, holding fresh pages in her hand, arrives at Mr. Contabulous's cart. He's holding a falafel sandwich out to a little kid, who is thoroughly perplexed and a little scared.

85 **MR. CONTABULOUS**
 Falafelosophy. It's called
 Falafelosophy. You understand Mr.
 Contabulous, yes?

The little kid just stares at him, getting more upset. Finally... the kid runs away without the sandwich.

86 **MR. CONTABULOUS (CONT'D)**
 He will come back. They all come
 back.

Sue Ellen steps forward, putting her pages down.

87 **SUE ELLEN**
 Mr. Contabulous?

88 **MR. CONTABULOUS**
 You have question for Mr.
 Contabulous? Answer is falafel.
 On the house. Or cart.

He hands her the sandwich he made for the kid. Sue Ellen puts down her pages and takes the sandwich.

89 **SUE ELLEN**
 Thanks. But I was going to ask if
 you saw my friends.

90 **MR. CONTABULOUS**
 Mr. Contabulous not saw your friends.
 Mr. Contabulous see your friends.

He indicates Arthur, Buster, Binky and Francine a ways up the street, heading in their direction. They're busy talking amongst themselves and don't see Sue Ellen.

ON SUE ELLEN. In her head, she hears from earlier:

91 **FRANCINE (V.O.)**
 What is it, exactly?

92 **BUSTER (V.O.)**
Where are the superheroes?

93 **BINKY (V.O.)**
I'm confused.

Disspirited, Sue Ellen ducks behind the cart.

94 **MR. CONTABULOUS**
You have problem with friends? But your friends are pita people. What is problem?

95 **SUE ELLEN**
I don't think they're such pita people. They don't understand my -- ideas.

Overwhelmed, Sue Ellen walks away, falafel sandwich in hand.

96 **MR. CONTABULOUS**
Mr. Contabulous know the feeling. (SIGH)

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SUE ELLEN'S ROOM - DAY

Sue Ellen is pacing in her room.

97 **SUE ELLEN**
Where are you, Inner Gaiman? I have to talk to you. I couldn't do it. I couldn't give them the new chapter. (TERRIBLE REALIZATION)
...Where IS my new chapter?!

FLASH OF MEMORY: SUE ELLEN PUTTING PAGES ON CART WHEN MR. CONTABULOUS GAVE HER THE SANDWICH.

BACK TO SUE ELLEN in her room, consumed with horror.

FLASH TO:

FANTASY OF MR. CONTABULOUS, ENRAGED, A FALAFEL SCOOP IN EACH HAND, RAPID-FIRING FALAFEL BALLS AT SUE ELLEN.

98 **MR. CONTABULOUS**
You make mockery of Mr. Contabulous and Falafelosophy?! You think Mr. Contabulous is comic book joke?!
You are pizza person!!!

As she is pummeled by fantasy falafel balls, Sue Ellen...

Sue Ellen realizes...

109 **SUE ELLEN**
You're Neil Gaiman.

110 **NEIL**
Yes, unless I'm the victim of a rather
unwieldy practical joke by the birth-
records department of Portchester,
England. In any event, I'm hungry.

111 **SUE ELLEN**
Neil Gaiman, I have a problem. It
all started when I heard you read
the other night at Town Hall and I
decided to write a graphic novel,
and then I showed it to my friends
and they--

112 **NEIL**
Okay, okay. I'll listen to whatever
it is you're trying to tell me, but
sadly we are without falafel. Will
you join me in a meal?

113 **SUE ELLEN**
Really? Okay! I mean, thank you!
Neil Gaiman.

114 **NEIL**
Please call me Neil.

As the two walk off:

115 **SUE ELLEN**
Wow. Okay. Neil. I'm Sue Ellen.
You can call me Sue Ellen. So it
all started when I heard you --
Neil Gaiman -- read at Town Hall
the other night...

ON MR. CONTABULOUS, watching them walk away.

116 **MR. CONTABULOUS**
This is kooky town.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SUGAR BOWL - EVENING - CONTINUOUS

Neil holds the door for Sue Ellen and follows her in.

117 **NEIL**
...I truly understand how you feel.
Over dinner I'll tell you about
some of my most dreadful reviews.
That should cheer you right up.

Sue Ellen suddenly spins around to face Neil.

118 **SUE ELLEN**
Oh no!

119 **NEIL**
Or, perhaps not.

120 **SUE ELLEN**
(SOTTO) They're here. My friends.
And they're all looking at my
second chapter. Let's leave now.

Neil looks over and sees:

ARTHUR, BUSTER, BINKY and FRANCINE, looking through Sue Ellen's pages, passing them around the table.

121 **NEIL**
(SOTTO) Sue Ellen, I'm looking at
four of your readers reading your
writing.

Sue Ellen pulls Neil into a booth hidden from view.

122 **SUE ELLEN**
(SOTTO) You're looking at four of
my readers hating my writing.

Neil looks over again. He sees the foursome is having an animated conversation, pointing at pages, debating. (The conversation cannot yet be heard distinctly.)

123 **NEIL**
Do they look like they hate it?

Neil and Sue Ellen lean towards the group, trying to watch and listen, Sue Ellen hiding her face behind a menu.

ON THE GROUP

124 **BUSTER**
I don't understand why the
Triangles had to start the Battle
of the Shapes with the Circles.

125 **FRANCINE**
I think they're jealous. The
Circles have all the fun.

126 **BINKY**
But the Circles just roll around.
What's the big deal?

127 **ARTHUR**
Well, maybe when you can't roll around,
rolling around's a big deal. ...I
don't know.

ON SUE ELLEN AND NEIL

128 **SUE ELLEN**
Okay, maybe they don't hate it.
But they don't get it.

129 **NEIL**
But it's getting them. And that's
more important.

Sue Ellen peers at them over her menu.

130 **FRANCINE**
Is The Great Contabulous going to
escape the triangulation of the
Triangulops? Whatever that exactly
means...

131 **ARTHUR**
I guess we'll have to wait to see
what happens next.

ON NEIL

132 **NEIL**
The three most glorious words a
writer can hear: "What happens next?"
Your fans, confused as they might be,
are demanding the next chapter.
(LEANS IN) I'd like to know what
happens next.

133 **SUE ELLEN**
You'd like to know?

134 **NEIL**
Well, first I'd like to order
dinner, but, yes. Definitely.

Neil picks up a menu as Sue Ellen sneaks another peek at her
friends. But before Neil can scan the daily specials:

144 **SUE ELLEN (V.O.)**
The Triangles were so distracted by
their quarrel over the story, the
Circles were able to free The Great
Contabulous.

The Great Contabulous rolls in and gives Circle Sue Ellen and
Circle Neil a big smile.

145 **THE GREAT CONTABULOUS**
Oh... yeah.

146 **SUE ELLEN (V.O.)**
And for many years to come, the
Triangles argued and the Circles
circulated and everyone lived
Falafelosophily ever after.

ONSCREEN APPEAR THE WORDS "THE END"

The "book" begins to close, but is suddenly pushed open --
and Neil appears.

147 **NEIL**
Would anybody mind at this point in
the program if I finally just
ordered some dinner?

FADE OUT

THE END