The Dark Crystal:
An Honor Council Academic Trial
Released Spring 2020

This abstract was not released in accordance to the timeline specified by the Students’ Association Constitution. The confronting party consented to the release of the abstract. The confronted party did not consent to the release of the abstract.

Key:
Confronted Party: Kira
Confronting Party: Professor Aughra
Course: Skeksis and Mystics 200

Summary:
This case involves a student, Kira, who was confronted by Professor Aughra about suspected plagiarism in her midterm essay. During the fact finding meeting, the jury learned that Kira had plagiarized on every single assignment for Skeksis and Mystics 200. Given the extent of the violation, after conversations with Kira and Professor Aughra, the jury decided to separate Kira for one semester.

Fact Finding:
Professor Aughra explained that the midterm paper for Skeksis and Mystics 200 was primarily intended to be an exercise in the student’s own analysis, although outside sources were allowed if properly acknowledged. She said she initially suspected that Kira plagiarized on her midterm paper because of inconsistencies in the writing style and voice. Looking online, Professor Aughra found sources from which passages had been taken verbatim without attribution. She brought highlighted copies of the midterm paper and online sources to the meeting and shared them with the jury.

Kira agreed that there was no excuse for plagiarism, but explained that Skeksis and Mystics 200 required a mode of thinking that was unfamiliar to her, which made her lose confidence in her own writing. She felt very uncertain about the midterm paper, especially since it contributed more to her course grade. Unsure of how to approach the paper, she used other sources that she found online to supplement her argument. Kira acknowledged that she did not cite her sources.

Professor Aughra said that she felt Kira intentionally chose the portions of the online sources that were not exceptionally well written, since they blended in better with Kira’s own
work. She also mentioned that she had offered an extension on the assignment, which Kira declined. Kira explained that she declined because she was traveling and would not have had time to do the paper.

The jury then spoke with Kira alone. Kira was confused by Professor Aughra’s impression that the paper was not her own voice; Kira felt like she did have her own argument. Kira agreed that failing to cite online sources was a violation of the Honor Code. One juror asked Kira how she had chosen and incorporated the outside sources. Kira said she met with Professor Aughra about how to break down the paper, but she ended up doing the paper last minute and had forgotten much of her discussion with Professor Aughra. When looking for additional sources, some reminded her of things that she had discussed with Professor Aughra earlier, so she decided to incorporate them. She said that some of the plagiarized portions were directly copied while she changed the wording of other parts. Kira added to her earlier explanation about the extension, saying that she didn’t take the extension Professor Aughra offered her because accepting it would have felt like a sign of weakness. She said she now recognized that she should have taken the extension.

Next, the jury spoke with Professor Aughra alone. She began by noting that during confrontation Kira asked if there was another option to resolve the case outside of Honor Council. Professor Aughra had said that she was bound by the Code to bring this case to Council.

Moreover, Professor Aughra said that her firm commitment to following the protocol laid out by the Code had produced further important facts in the case-- as she was getting ready for the Fact Finding meeting, she reread Kira’s earlier assignments for the course. In all five assignments that Kira had submitted since the start of the year, she found similar incoherence to what roused her suspicion in the midterm paper. Outside sources for those writing assignments had been explicitly forbidden, both orally and on the syllabus, but Professor Aughra found material online that was similar or identical to portions of Kira’s writing assignments.

Kira’s first writing assignment contained only a small amount of plagiarism, but as the semester went on, more and more of Kira’s work appeared to be plagiarized. Professor Aughra was concerned because she didn’t know what to do with this information. She didn’t want to re-confront Kira, but she felt that there was a deeper sense of violation after discovering plagiarism in all of Kira’s writing assignments prior to the midterm paper.

A juror asked if Professor Aughra felt that Kira had turned in anything without plagiarism. She said she hadn’t looked at the assignments Kira turned in after the confrontation, but she felt especially concerned about a writing assignment that was completed around the time of the midterm paper. This writing assignment was shared in small groups, so Professor Aughra was concerned that other students in Kira’s group would then be put in the position to confront Kira if they noticed the plagiarism (which Professor Aughra had not detected at the time). Professor Aughra also noted that she thought the plagiarism was due to a habit of copying rather than Kira wanting to get more information to support her argument. She presented Kira’s five
writing assignments and the potential online sources to the jury with the portions where she was suspected of plagiarizing highlighted.

Professor Aughra said that she had met with Kira and provided detailed feedback throughout the semester, as she felt that Kira was not very confident in her writing and wasn’t comfortable going into analysis beyond what was exactly in the readings. She said, however, that Kira had been a good participant in class and that she hoped that her relationship with Kira would not be ruined.

**Jury Deliberations/Statement of Violation:**

The jury disagreed about how to proceed. One juror felt that it was necessary to meet with Kira for a second fact finding meeting before coming to a statement of violation. This juror also suggested that, because the initial confrontation was only about the midterm paper, the trial could only address violations related to that assignment. The rest of the jury, however, argued that looking only at the midterm paper would go against the Honor Code. The jury did not want to blindside Kira with the other writing assignments but agreed to move to circumstantial since they were certain a violation had occurred (even looking at the midterm paper in isolation).

The jury felt strongly that suspicion of the writing assignments should be communicated carefully with Kira since it could feel unnecessarily confrontational. The jury did not feel comfortable addressing the new evidence in the statement of violation. Therefore, the wording of the statement reflected the general sense of the jury that a violation had occurred, but left the extent and severity of the violation vague, since the other writing assignments had not been discussed with Kira.

**Statement of Violation:**

[Kira] violated the Honor Code by plagiarizing from outside sources. (10 jurors consent)

**Circumstantial Portion:**

Kira began by saying she did not intend to act maliciously when she plagiarized in her midterm essay. She read all the course materials, did all of her homework, and tried to have original thoughts, but she was insecure about her writing. She said she didn’t know what plagiarism was in high school and the plagiarism education in Customs was not extensive so more resources could be helpful for those without as much knowledge about what constituted plagiarism. A juror asked why Kira had not sought help with her writing process. Kira said she used the Writing Center once during a different semester, but now she thought that she should be able to do her assignments herself. She expressed that she had difficulty asking for help.

The trial chair then let Kira know that the jury was aware of the plagiarism in the writing assignments she turned in before being confronted about the midterm. Kira said she was unaware that outside sources were not allowed for the writing assignments. She expressed not knowing
that poor paraphrasing, not just copying and pasting words, was plagiarism. Kira noted that she hadn’t used outside sources for writing assignments after being confronted about the midterm.

The jury was concerned that much of the content in the writing assignments was directly lifted from external sources. Kira said she was dealing with an injury when she had to write one of the writing assignments and may have directly copied text for that specific entry, but she didn’t remember it very well. The jury, however, thought there was content that had been directly lifted in all of the writing assignments, not just one. Kira saw what the jury had been concerned about and agreed that there was plagiarism in her other assignments only after reviewing the highlighted portions of her writing assignments.

In terms of potential resolutions, Kira said a writing partner from the Writing Center might be useful. Kira believed she was on good terms with Professor Aughra, since they had communicated well up to that point. She thought Professor Aughra really appreciated her change after the confrontation. As for accountability, Kira recognized the extent of her violation, but said that her parents worked really hard for her to attend Haverford and she couldn’t fathom telling her mom about her violation, let alone going through separation. Kira wanted to just start fresh after the upcoming winter break rather than be separated because she felt separation would be too long and punitive. Kira said that getting zeros on the five plagiarized assignments and the midterm essay or failing the course would be appropriate. She said that she recognized what she did and felt that she didn’t deny anything. She reiterated that she had not intended to go against the Code. If separated, she felt that she would also be separated from resources that she could use to learn like the Writing Center or CAPS.

Jury Deliberations I:

A juror acknowledged Kira’s concern about separation, but mentioned that they would not feel comfortable taking a class with her if she didn’t go through the restorative process of separation. Another juror said that although there was blatant plagiarism, they felt that failing the course was a lesson for Kira. This juror also said that nine months of separation could build resentment, whereas the month of winter break was a long enough time for reflection. Other jurors expressed concern that Kira seemed very willing to reflect for one month but not for any longer. They pointed out that winter break would happen regardless of the trial. Another juror noted that separation is not always the best choice since not everyone can reflect at home.

The jury was concerned by the extent of the violations, as well as the duration of time over which they occurred. The jury was also concerned by Kira’s emphasis on her lack of confidence in her writing; a juror mentioned that this might point to plagiarism being an issue for Kira beyond this course. Additionally, the jury recalled that Kira only admitted to using outside sources on all of the assignments after being shown the highlighted areas of suspicion within them.
A juror brought up the relationship between Professor Aughra and Kira, since they seemed to be on different pages about how damaged the relationship was. Another juror said that they thought the relationship was salvageable, potentially with the help of a period of separation.

**Jury Deliberations II and Tentative Resolutions:**

The jury spent the bulk of the second meeting discussing separation. Most jurors were in favor of separating Kira from the community because they believed that Kira didn’t recognize the severity of her violation and separation would help Kira reflect, which she currently seemed reluctant to do. They hoped separation might provide the space necessary for accountability and reflection that would otherwise be difficult to do on campus with a full course load.

A few jurors thought that Kira should be separated for a full year, citing that Kira had deeply violated the trust within the community, the plagiarism was extensive for half a semester, and Kira only stopped after she was confronted. However, these jurors were also comfortable with just one semester of separation, given other resolutions addressing accountability and restoration. Other jurors said they were more in favor of one semester of separation because they did not want to be punitive and felt that more than one semester would not be productive since winter and summer Breaks made separation functionally longer than just a semester. One juror felt that 9 months, the functional length of one semester of separation, was too long, especially considering that he didn’t think Kira would reflect anyway. The jury came to a consensus that one semester of separation would be the most appropriate length.

The jury then discussed having Kira complete reflections during the separation to help restore her to the community. They decided to provide topics for the reflections, as well as having a final reflection covering the separation as a whole. Kira had mentioned that she had trouble seeking help, so the jury wanted to address that as a topic for reflection. Additionally, the jury felt that Kira should reread the Honor Code and write a reflection on it.

The jury also wanted to address education and further address restoration. Because Professor Aughra seemed worried about her relationship with Kira, the jury wanted Kira to write a letter to Professor Aughra. Additionally, the jury thought it would be helpful for Kira to meet with her dean to check in every two weeks. Kira had said a writing partner would be a good resource, so the jury included that in their resolutions. Another juror brought up the fact that it was unclear whether or not Kira understood the impermissibility of using outside sources on the writing assignments, which had been specified in the syllabus, so the jury felt it would be useful to have Kira be in touch with her dean every semester about her understanding of her course syllabi. A juror felt that Kira should write a letter to the community. While some jurors questioned whether the final reflection on separation should be combined with the letter to the community, other jurors felt that it was important to distinguish the private reflection and the more public letter to the community. The jury then discussed the statement on reporting and unanimously felt that this case should be reported.
Tentative Resolutions

1. [Kira] will be separated from Haverford College for the [redacted] semester. (8 jurors consent, 1 stand outside, 1 stand outside in absentia)

2. The jury recommends that [Kira] receive a 0.0 in the course. (9 jurors consent, 1 stand outside in absentia)

3. During the separation, [Kira] will submit monthly reflections from [month] to [month], and she will complete a final reflection in [month before her return] reflecting on the whole separation. [Kira] can choose to submit the reflections in any forms she chooses, including but not limited to videos (at least 5 minutes) and written reflections (at least 500 words). Each of the following topics should be addressed in at least one of these reflections:
   1. The impact of her violation on the whole Haverford community;
   2. Her violation in the context of the course;
   3. The impact of plagiarism on the entire academic community;
   4. The idea of seeking help when she needs to, and the social stigma on seeking help;
   5. Her relationship to the Haverford community;
   6. Her perception of the Honor Code, and how it is taught and implemented in the Haverford community.
   
   (9 jurors consent, 1 stand outside in absentia)

4. Before rejoining the Haverford community, [Kira] will reread the Honor Code, write a reflection on the Honor Code itself (at least 500 words), and re-sign the Honor Pledge. (9 jurors consent, 1 stand outside in absentia)

5. [Kira] will write a letter to [Professor Aughra] before [Kira]’s return to the Haverford community. (9 jurors consent, 1 stand outside in absentia)

6. The first semester after returning, [Kira] will meet with her dean every other week. (9 jurors consent, 1 stand outside in absentia)

7. After returning, [Kira] will meet weekly with a writing partner from the Writing Center. One of these meetings will focus on how to avoid plagiarism. (9 jurors consent, 1 stand outside in absentia)

8. For her remaining semesters at Haverford, after [Kira] finalizes her course selection, [Kira] will sign a note and submit it to her dean. The note should read: “I have read the syllabi for all my courses, and I was given the opportunity to ask questions.” (9 jurors consent, 1 stand outside in absentia)

9. [Kira] will write a letter (at least 500 words) to the community over the summer of [year], reflecting on the impact of her violation on the whole Haverford community. This letter will be appended to the abstract of this case. (8 jurors consent, 1 stand outside, 1 stand outside in absentia)
Finalizing Resolutions:

The jury began by discussing the separation resolution with Kira. Kira explained that her parents had other burdens at home and she did not want to be another burden on them. She said that she did not think self reflection was something she could do at home. She emphasized that the zero on her transcript felt more like accountability since it would be on her transcript forever. She added that she would not be going home for the upcoming break so as not to be a burden on her parents. She explained that there were personal family circumstances that she felt would make separation extremely punitive. The jury decided to return to the separation discussion later.

Kira agreed with the remaining resolutions and suggested an additional community service resolution as another means of reflection.

The jury returned to the idea of separation. Kira emphasized that she was strongly opposed to separation. She said that if she returned home then her parents would want her to stay home and help out, which she felt would be very difficult for her to do.

A juror asked Kira about how she viewed this violation and its impact on the community. Kira said that this was a big violation and that the whole community was built on trust, which is found in every aspect of the community. She believed she broke the community’s trust, and she also emphasized that the community had a big impact on her, especially through the trial process.

Nearly all of the jury’s deliberations after Kira left concerned separation. Two jurors felt they would feel comfortable cutting separation if the jury added more resolutions. Two other jurors disagreed, and said that they were still in favor of separation and felt it would be restorative even if Kira didn’t currently feel that way. They felt that Kira misunderstood the breach of trust and how best to repair it. One juror wanted everyone to consider if they would feel comfortable in a class with Kira the following semester and if they felt they could trust her not to plagiarize again, personally expressing discomfort in that scenario.

Many jurors felt somewhere in the middle. They thought that separation could be restorative, but had serious concerns for Kira’s specific situation. Some felt that they wanted to see more accountability beyond the 0.0 in the course if separation was removed. A juror emphasized the gravity of separation for Kira’s specific situation and said that they felt that separating Kira for any length of time would effectively separate her forever. They felt very strongly that the jury was considering things theoretically without sufficient consideration for Kira’s unique situation. Kira had described feeling like a burden to her parents if she went home,
but this confused the jury since she had also mentioned that if she went home her parents wouldn’t want her to leave again.

A juror said that he felt comfortable with Kira and did not think that this confidential case would affect those unaware of it. He also felt that Honor Code violations really only affect the person violating the Code and not the entire community. The other jurors disagreed. They argued that violations of the Code had repercussions for the greater value of a Haverford degree in the world, since Haverford is supposed to uphold a certain set of values and skills. They also brought up that student’s work can be judged against other students’ work, which is extremely unfair when some people are submitting dishonest work. A juror said that they felt this situation would likely result in immediate expulsion if it occurred at any other institution. They said they felt it was important that breaking trust in a community like Haverford was addressed seriously.

The jury brought up the fact that Professor Aughra, one of the parties affected in this case, felt that Kira should be separated. The jury felt that this should be taken into account seriously because professors are part of the community and the trust between students and faculty is important to maintain. Some jurors cited instances in which professors were severely shaken by breaches in trust, and felt that it was important for the jury to consider the trust between students and professors.

The jury reviewed their level of comfort with separation. The jurors who were uncertain about separation previously felt more in favor of it, because it addressed accountability and restoration. One juror noted that they felt that if the jury did not separate Kira, the jury would not be fulfilling its duty to make sure that each member of the community is worthy of the trust they are given. One juror remained uncomfortable with separation due to Kira’s family situation, but because his concerns had been expressed he felt comfortable standing outside. The jury made a few wording changes and consented to the following final resolutions.

Final Resolutions:

1. [Kira] will be separated from Haverford College for the [redacted] semester. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside)
2. The jury recommends that [Kira] receive a 0.0 in the course. (10 jurors consent)
3. During the separation, [Kira] will submit monthly reflections from [month] to [month], and she will complete a final reflection in [month before her return] reflecting on the whole separation. [Kira] can choose to submit the reflections in any forms she chooses, including but not limited to videos (at least 5 minutes) and written reflections (at least 500 words). Each of the following topics should be addressed in at least one of these reflections:
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4. The idea of seeking help when she needs to, and the social stigma on seeking help;
5. Her relationship to the Haverford community;
6. Her perception of the Honor Code, and how it is taught and implemented in the Haverford community.
(10 jurors consent)
4. Before rejoining the Haverford community, [Kira] will reread the Honor Code, write a reflection on the Honor Code itself (at least 500 words), and re-sign the Honor Pledge. (10 jurors consent)
5. [Kira] will write a letter to [Professor Aughra] before [Kira]’s return to the Haverford community. (10 jurors consent)
6. The first semester after returning, [Kira] will meet with her dean every other week. (10 jurors consent)
7. After returning, [Kira] will meet weekly with a writing partner from the Writing Center. One of these meetings will focus on how to properly cite sources. (10 jurors consent)
8. For her remaining semesters at Haverford, after [Kira] finalizes her course selection, [Kira] will sign a note and submit it to her dean. The note should read: “I have read the syllabi for all my courses, and I was given the opportunity to ask questions.” (10 jurors consent)
9. [Kira] will write a letter (at least 500 words) to the community over the summer of [year], reflecting on the impact of her violation on the whole Haverford community. This letter will be appended to the abstract of this case. (10 jurors consent)

Resolution as whole: (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside)

Statement on reporting:
The jury recommends that this case should be reported to institutions of higher learning. (10 jurors consent)

Post-Trial:
Kira appealed Resolution 1. Due to extenuating circumstances, the appeal was heard by the Provost, who did not grant it.

Letter to the Community:

Dear Haverford Community,

Haverford College is a place where ideas are formed, autonomy is practice, and integrity is valued. These may seem like universal goals, but at Haverford, they are engrained and
implemented in our daily activities. The Honor Code attracts like-minded students who are eager to get involved and make a difference whether through academia, society, and/or day-to-day life. It upsets me to admit to you all that I made one of the biggest mistakes of my life by breaking the Honor Code. I allowed external situations to cloud my judgement which, in all, lead to my separation. This separation has been an invaluable experience full of self-reflection. The Haverford community truly is an amazing place and you do not realize it until you are no longer present in the community. The values of trust, honesty and care for each other is so obvious and creates an environment that all members feel safe and protected. My violation impacted the entire community, because I popped this bubble of integrity, trust and honesty that surrounds our community. This trust and honesty weaves layers of fabric that hug this community in ways that impact connections between the students and professors and between students themselves. I know that my violation tore this fabric, however I am holding myself accountable in sewing it back together in a way that everyone in this community can take me back and feel whole again. Trust goes a long way within this community, not only through academics, but in every aspect. We trust our peers to respect and protect each other’s belongs; we trust our peers to put in the same amount of effort to complete their coursework as everyone else.

I initially entered this environment for the bond that exists within this community based on these values and I intend to reenter with more clarity and appreciation for the Honor Code. This bond is not only for the time that we have at Haverford, but it is something that will stay with us for the rest of our lives. I was involved with this community at many levels and I would like to continue to be influential, but first I need to rebuild the trust. The first step in rebuilding this trust is to express my sincere sense of regret in what I did and the emphasis how my mistake had such profound impact not only on myself, but on the entire community. The amount of guilt I felt for the past several months, has made me a better person, a person who knows more about what is important in life and will never do anything to break this valuable and trusted bond. Haverford’s community is small, but mighty; therefore, it is crucial that every member abides to the code, for our system to govern properly. I now have a greater understanding and sense of pride in our self-governance because it allows every student to have a voice. Every community has its own culture, but what we have at Haverford is truly unique and I hope I can reintegrate myself back into the community fully and prove to be worthy of my peers’ trust.

Discussion Questions:

1. Do you agree with the jury’s decision to separate Kira for one semester?
2. In what ways does a Code violation harm the community?
3. How should juries handle situations where new evidence is discovered after the trial has started?