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Deathbox

or

I Rule This World With Rage And Abandon

Molly Rice

I.

The audience

Suddenly

Without warning

With subconscious, wolf-like pleasure

But lacking direct intent

Collectively assassinates the vice-president of the United States

Dick Cheney

Using telepathic violence

In the form of a hypervirulent strain of death fantasy

That they instantly and unknowingly contract from the playwright

Via their theater seats

As they settle in for the play:

Upon sitting, they all experience the same vision

Of a dusty black alarm clock dropped from a fortieth-floor window

And the moment it hits the cracked macadam in the vision

The real-life veep's fake ticker jams for all time

The playwright

Huddled in the back corner of the theater

Mostly hidden in black curtains

Feels the vice-president's sudden toppling from far away

Senses invisible arrows burrowing into the mottled soft tissue

The marbled flesh

Of that swollen old gnarl-hearted man

A sensation which stirs up an oleo of guiltpanicthrill

And triggers an electric pulse in her solar plexus

An electric pulse which travels through the air

*And activates
A transistor radio in the upstage left corner
On the stage*

*The radio grumbles to life
Coughs static
And picks up a transmission
From a lone rogue red-state dj
A surfer of the shortwave*

*The DJ is live
Broadcasting from his basement
He is lonely
He is bewildered
He just got the news that the VP has died
The lump in his throat makes his voice husky and dry*

DJ

Hello?
Are you still out there?
Anybody?
Hey

We're changing our programming, people
Shuffling up our lineup
Altering our rhyme scheme so to speak
Cause we can't keep up
With the calls we're not getting
Is this thing on?

Microphone tap tap

All these hours
No calls
No tiny lights perkin up on the phone
In that cheery way they do
Like a Christmas tree
Or a super sale
That feel-good glitter of people waitin to talk to me

What do I move on for
What do I put one foot in front of the other toward

Without your voices calling me
Givin me somethin to argue against

I want to talk to you
We need to talk
you musta heard the news by now

Was I the only one
With his heart in mind?

People
There's a dead man
Same forked shape as your father
Two arms two legs
Hair silver as the light from
an old constellation
nobility, people
Julius
Caesar
And now it's
Giving off the smell of burnt plastic
In that underground luxury bunker
Flaking ashes on a salmon pink sheet
That he didn't pick out
600 thread count
No comfort now, sweet king

Oh God
People
Things are outta whack

The stars, they're lopsy-daisy
Drifting
Unanchored to the black

That's not safe, people

He's not sposed to go
He's not sposed to be able to
He's not like you and me
Wasn't

--Damn that past tense creepin into the present

I know what you're sayin
Liberal goo bleedin blue all over
"No one likes a dark lord"
But a dark lord is forever
I think we're in trouble

Unmoored

You know I got up on my tiptoes
About an hour ago
At sunset
And looked out the little window
down here in the basement
The little one up near the ceiling
Like a prison window, way up high
You know what I saw?
You aren't gonna like it

There's no horizon
There's nothing
Separating things
It's all one view
One gray mash of light
High bleedin into low

God save you people
God save us all

II.

*The radio coughs static
Tunes in to Lynne Cheney
Weeping
Rhythmically
Painfully
Like a loop tape
This hurts to listen to*

LYNNE CHENEY
Ah huh huh huh
Ah huh huh huh
Ah huh huh huh
Ah huh huh huh
Ah huh huh huh

Her tears are caught in an old tin can

*With each wave of weeping
Electricity builds in the radio
In a feedback loop
Until
An electric pulse is sent
Throught the air of the theater
Through the solar plexus of the audience
Who feel suddenly
Violently
Guilty
For killing the veep*

*The guy in the third row of the audience
The one with the leather patches on his jacket's elbows
Pulls out his cell phone
And calls the cops*

*The radio picks up the cop car transmission
The conversation between the guy in the third row and the COP:*

COP
What's up

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Uh...

We just...

Could you come over?

COP

I'm kinda busy right now

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Yeah but

We did something

COP

You sound sorta

strangled

Are you OK?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

We did something

Big

COP

Can we talk about this later?

I'm on duty

AUDIENCE MEMBER

It pertains

Could you come over?

COP

You sure you're not strangling?

What's that crying in the background

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Come over

Bring uh "backup"

COP

On my way

III.

*COPS come to the theater
Hit in the face with the deathsmell
Arrest the Audience*

Municipal Minuet:

*One two three
One two three
Hands-be-hind
Back two three*

*One two three
One two three
Fold-in-to
Car-two three*

Etc.

*While a COP weighs the smashed black alarm clock
Against the tin can of Lynne Cheney's tears
It's hard to get a good read
The scale keeps tipping
One side, then another*

*The Audience
After a speedy trial by their peers
Goes to jail*

IV.

*In prison
The Audience
Languishes*

*The COP
Keeps weighing
Clock and tears*

V.

Six months later

In the TV room

At Huntsville Federal Prison

The AC's broke

A rocking chair rocks

The Audience swoons in the dry Texas heat

Through the window

Up near the ceiling

(like a basement window)

Can be seen

No horizon

Just one gray mash of light

And far away

If you look very closely

In the sky

In the stars

A new constellation

In the shape of an alarm clock falling through the sky

The radio

In the corner of the room

Crackles to life

Coughs static

The playwright

Dodging in and out of earshot

In and out of apology

In rhythm

On the radio

Like a looping tape

PLAYWRIGHT

I'm sorry

but

--I'm sorry

but--

--no, I'm sorry

yeah
I think I am

But-

*The COP's scales stop tipping
The balance is perfect
Who knew*

END OF PLAY