

T H I S

IS THE WAY

TO R U L E

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

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*LEADER – Gray-haired. In his early 70s. Constantly tired, but nothing scares or surprises him.*

*SURVIVORS – We do not know who survives this.*

*AIDES & ADVISORS – They speak for the gods.*

*GENERAL – He leads nations to war.*

*DJ – We hear them on the airwaves. They tell stories. They preach.*

*SOLDIERS – They burn & kill & die.*

*CHILDREN – They do not understand the pain.*

*GHOSTS – They have not killed the one(s) responsible.*

*VOICE – Possibly the voice of god(s) or a psychotic break. Imaginary?*

*PREACHER – Just a preacher.*

## ACT I

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it's not fiction speaking to me from quiet places. what noiselessness unfolds when the deed's done. & it is darker. it lends ideas about what it means to be good. / in the cities, silence only comes for tragedy. we would don hoods to shade our faces, stir up dust, haunt the alley mouths. / this responsibility unleashed on us we bumped at it, till we could no longer breathe, till our appendages hurt. / in my vision before the visit the world buckled in & they came from above us, two floors maybe, & they were spiraling & burrowing till they breached the doorway & stopped in the hallway to settle before the change. / it's dark in there where reality lands—slabs of night had been stripped & laid inside as though they were mortared with tar & pine. sound gets caught between the edges. where it's said, dialogue from decades back bangs up against what i let slip. / i feel as though it's coming—as though i must pay for my decisions. but what fault am i at for leveraging what i need to keep the towers happy. / this is about legacy, my legacy, & i must make decisions based on sustaining the diamond gleam my name produces.



VOICE (*from the shaft of light*) young women, praise the suffering!

*A gaggle of YOUNG WOMEN enter the room. They are dressed as OFFICE AIDES, but glow & there are clearly wings under their blazers.*

YOUNG WOMEN (*harmonizing with the YOUNG MEN*)  
ba-ba-baaa  
aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh  
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*The room parts down the middle, dividing the YOUNG MEN from the YOUNG WOMEN, & the room begins to shake violently. The YOUNG MEN & WOMEN throw themselves across the divide & begin stripping themselves / each other till they are sharing each others' bodies.*

*The room spins quickly.  
We can only see the actions through a window.  
The room aches.*

*Outside, WIND slams against the walls.*

*Inside, the YOUNG MEN & WOMEN keep at it.*

*LEADER is frozen in time. Standing there.*

*The WIND throws bottles at the wall.  
Bottles' mouths kissing the window frames.*

VOICE (*from the shaft of light*) old men, curse the suffering!

*A clot of OLD MEN enter the room. They are dressed as ADVISORS, but glow & there are clearly wings under their blazers.*

OLD MEN (*octave higher than the YOUNG MEN & WOMEN*) ba-ba-baaa  
aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh

LEADER (*yelling over the OLD MEN*) i'm not interested in the silence before notes, but the tempo slowly ratcheting





dear survivors,

in the bruised light of dawn, when birds begin those steady single notes, piano-like, we rise from the rubble. the city is all piles & spires of smoke, as though someone had plunged their hand into the center & yanked. we mourn alone & gather where highways used to merge.