## THE WAY

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

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.

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. TIME – THE FUTURE (NEAR DISTANT, MOST LIKELY)

CURTAIN RISES revealing a SPOTLIGHT on an EMPTY ROOM. Outside the light, there is darkness covering an entire nation. It is night. There are mountains & plains & roads & rivers & lakes & homes & deserts & suburbs & cities & malls & people. There are many peoples.

LEADER sits at his desk under the light. He stares out the window. The moon glows in the window. He is quiet.

The sound of life MURMURS from the other side of the walls—phones, conversation, footsteps, laughter, copy machines.

Moments pass.

Suddenly the roof bursts open & a MASSIVE SHAFT OF LIGHT pummels into the room. Covering everything like oil. The room becomes crooked. It loosens.

LEADER rises from his desk & stumbles through the room, fighting for balance. The room unlevels, lifts up, throws him to the floor, then shoves him up against the wall & back to the ground.

Time slacks, begins sifting. The space swells & stretches where it can.

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

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

LEADER *(shouting over the YOUNG MEN)* conversations get lost in the creases & corners. i would gather them later, when they finally quiet—

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.

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.

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

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

A clot of OLDER WOMEN enter the room. They are dressed in business suits, but glow & clearly have wings under their blazers.

The OLD MEN & OLDER WOMEN do as the YOUNG MEN & WOMEN do.

LEADER i do not understand these metaphors. please speak clearly.

The room coughs, throwing the MEN & WOMEN across the room out the window, into the backyard of decades' leftovers.

The sofa shreds & the fabric follows the MEN & WOMEN, covering their naked bodies if only momentarily.

The walls strip & follow. They sing, a half-step up.

OLDER WOMEN ba-ba-baaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhhhhh

These four choruses continue & LEADER attempts to speak over them.

LEADER (pretending he can't understand, screaming over them) i am not listening because i cannot hear you & i cannot understand you. i am not listening because i cannot hear you & i cannot understand you. i am not listening because i cannot hear you & i cannot understand you. i am not listening because i cannot hear you & i cannot understand you. i am not listening because i cannot hear you & i cannot understand you. i am not listening because i cannot hear you & i cannot understand you. i am not listening because i cannot hear you & i cannot understand you. i am not listening because i cannot hear you & i cannot understand you. i am not listening because i cannot hear you & i cannot understand you. i am not listening because i cannot hear you & i cannot understand you. i am not listening because i cannot hear you & i cannot understand you. i am not listening because i cannot hear you & i cannot understand you. i am not listening because i cannot hear you & i cannot understand you. i am not listening because i cannot hear you & i cannot understand you. i am not listening because i cannot hear you & i cannot understand you. i am not listening because i cannot hear you & i cannot understand you. i am not listening because i cannot hear you & i cannot understand you. i am not listening because i cannot hear you & i cannot understand you.

STAGE LIGHTS DOWN.

We still hear them—the four choruses & LEADER, then—

The sound of RUMBLING fills the theater. It is so loud the speakers DISTORT.

SILENCE.

A DOG BARKS.

A BIRD CHIRPS.

A COUGH.

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.