



BLOODSONG

An Original One Act

by

JESSICA CORNWELL

Premiered January 15, 2009
Directed by Cassandra Vergel

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STANFORD
UNIVERSITY

BLOODSONG

By
Jessica Cornwell

Directed
by
Cassandra Vergel

Cast

Oracle – Tiffany James
Gypsy – A-lan Holt
Anarchist – Irys Kornbluth
Poet – Bethany Woolman
Wife - Anneka Gerhardt
Student – Raine Hoover

A Play in One Act

SCENE I

--

The light on stage is colored to match the warmth of a fire at night.

Six women sitting in varying positions on the stage.

All are distinct.

The GYPSY is singing, the others are contributing to the song, tapping out beats with their bodies, or humming along.

Suddenly the music is interrupted, as the ORACLE in the center, an old woman draped in coarse grey fabric looks up and gestures for the world to stop. Lights only on her.

ORACLE

Addressed to Audience.

Her gaze is unfixed and disconcerting. She sees, yet she is blind.

Who's that figure near the shadows of the light?

Friend, if you linger at the edges

You're doomed to never find the center.

ALL

Come closer

ORACLE

Don't be alarmed.

Absently

Through my childhood

A woman from my village

Would sing to me in the evenings

Round the fire

My father lit

On the barranca

A great big fire,

With greedy flames

And a kind round face

She said it was an old song

A bloodsong

Handed down

From generations

Of life tracks.

And she pointed to her chest

Where the light of the fire

Danced

Like

The hands of a thousand fireflies.

[beat]

ALL
Have you heard it Friend?

ORACLE
You must know it in your dreams, I'm sure.

POET
It's a very old song

ALL
Built under the muscles of your tongue.

GYPSY
No, don't be afraid,

ALL
Join us friend.

ORACLE
Sit by the fire.

ALL
Come sing.

*The Oracle falls silent.
A Girl rises from the circle, she begins singing. She is the Gypsy
And her voice pierces the void of the theatre*

GYPSY
*In song, rendered with Duende. This is the refrain for the entire play,
and establishes the haunting cadence of the women's voices.*

Tiny roads and golden fields
An olive tree for two
Virgin Mary
Tears of silver
A dark and heavy bruise.

The story that I tell you
Happened far from home
But the memories that it carries
grow in our own bones.

Blood song thick as ages!
Blood song thick as night!

Green Olive tree bleeds into the night!
Blue shadows rambling!
Steel Toed Black Boots!

A dancer enters the stage dressed in red. She builds the crescendo of the song, dancing around the heaving bodies of women and as the volume and energy reaches its most frenetic high, the Oracle slams the ground with both hands and the action stops.

[Lights Out]

SCENE II

--

Student's Story

A young woman is sitting behind an interrogation table.

Harsh light shines in her eyes, illuminating the harshness of her features.

She's dressed in a loose prisoner's uniform, all in grey. Her hair is messy, and she is sitting with her legs splayed, a cigarette dangling from her hand

All of her belongings are on the table beside her. Black moleskin, two pens, a brown and beaten apple, a copy of Voltaire's Candide, a pistol tossed quietly to the side.

She enters the conscious of the audience looking down. Before speaking she picks up the gun and begins nervously fiddling with it. Putting it down again, a firmness comes into her body. She begins to speak with great purpose, as if answering a direct question that has pushed her limits.

Her tone is patronizing and polite.

As her voice gains confidence, her gaze lifts and penetrates the space of the theatre

STUDENT

Where to begin, eh?

It's a long complicated story...

But in the end not that long or complicated at all.

To tell the truth, though, I don't really see why you're interested,
because we're all dead within the hour.

The thing is you see, you only come here if they're going to kill you at dawn.

Their strange sense of justice demands a certain *poetic theatricality*

So the bastards round you up, and bring you here in the dead of night.

They don't want anybody to know what's really going down, see.

And at six they'll say: 'Bring out the Student'

And then they'll shoot you

Where only the goddamn sun can see.

I mean

It's an old story

One that's been practiced before

Again.... And Again.... And Again.

The monotony was getting overwhelming.

That's when we decided to shake things up

And Bang
[beat]
Well...
Now
I'm here.

It all begins with a train-ride, mid afternoon.
A train that leaves the station around 1 o'clock and makes its way to the recently renamed
Smithville, incidentally the site of the Al-Jumah Mosque,
Or what's left of the Mosque now that they've
Raised it to the ground.
When you walk up the path, all you can see is a minaret, a spire of memory
attached to the Brutalist Shrine of the Divine Right.
They build that Shrine on the heart of the Mihrab,
About a year and a half ago. Nobody noticed it going down—or at least they chose not to.
A grey office of the Divine Law, with a parking lot that paved over
Fountain gardens and the grave of a Sufi poet.
It's pretty fucked up, all round.
But not uncommon these days.
Seems to be what the world is concerned with doing
Erasing and drawing over
Erasing and drawing over
But when you come down to it, there are certain marks on the ground
You can never rub out
And these scars, left and ignored
grow rank and angry
Festering in the midday sun.
So this train leaves the station at 1 o'clock on a Monday afternoon.
Moving slowly through the old city,
It is already half an hour late
When a young woman
Dressed in a button-down shirt
And corduroy pants
Walks into the first class cabin,
Orders a glass of wine
And detonates the explosives
Wrapped around her chest and stomach.

ALL
She isn't an Idealist

STUDENT
She is something else
Although her politics were connected implicitly to the destruction of the Al-Jumah Mosque

ALL
She isn't a terrorist

STUDENT

She is something else.

POET

A Freedom fighter of sorts

ANARCHIST

At-least that's what she would tell you.

STUDENT

You see, [stress]

ALL

She isn't a terrorist. [beat]

STUDENT

No there is something greater there

POET

something more complicated

ANARCHIST

Less clear round the edges

STUDENT

You can choose how that label falls,

I personally don't care to use it.

It's a fucked up story, man,

This civil war business...

I mean,

three weeks ago people lived in denial.

ALL

In the face of

ANARCHIST

Economic crisis and a nation shorn in two.

ALL

In the face of

POET

rigged elections in which electronic machines

WIFE

Sided clearly with the Divine Fundamentalists

ALL

People live in Denial

STUDENT

While a butcher

GYPSY

stalks the streets at Night

ORACLE

Gathering undesirables for the fusillade at Dawn.

STUDENT

[beat]

Just one little train ride, and

ALL

Bang

STUDENT

Well

ALL

Now we're here

STUDENT

You start reading the news

And you can't get away from it---

Though the newspapermen butter it up

And water it down

As the mood suits them.

You won't find the truth in black and white

Anymore,

That's

For sure.

SCENE III

--

ANARCHIST

So the order's really out.

STUDENT

The bastard priest has come to bless us.

ALL

There is not much more time

ORACLE,

Come, then, there is nothing more to hide.

GYPSY

I could sense my future well before I died.

STUDENT

I saw it in my reflections when I was a little girl

POET

running through the water gardens of the Generalife.

WIFE

I could sense it carved into the words that raced around my palace,
etched into the history of my people.

ORACLE

I could sense my Future in the golden script of Arabic, the divine presence of my maker, the dark olives and the white earth I walked on. And I read the scent of war on the wind as a child, breathing in orange blossoms on hot summer nights.

GYPSY

They called me a gypsy. Claimed I have no home.
But they are wrong, and I will never let this go.

ANARCHIST

When I looked at the Fundamentalist army at the gates of my city, I knew the Governor would hand over the keys to our history well before he actually admitted to.

ORACLE

When I felt the priests purify our streets, raze the mosque and beat the women, I knew the book of love would close on my people forever.

STUDENT

In that instant my love for my City grew into a kind of religious fervor,

POET

an alternative spirituality of memories,

ANARCHIST

a spirituality that would be at odds with my enemy's.

ALL

And I became

ANARCHIST

This anarchist before you

POET

Mock bow

A lowly poet of her people.

STUDENT

I shrugged off my university
And became a student of the struggle

WIFE

I am but the wife, the war's unwilling martyr.

ALL

And I have no thing to offer,

WIFE

Other than the wedding band

That joins me to this slaughter.

ALL

And you? And You? And You?

ORACLE

No, we will not ask you who you are,
and we will not ask you to remain the same.

GYPSY

For we have not much more time.

ORACLE

Minutes now.

ALL

There is not much more left.

STUDENT

Because the facts of this place take no denying

ANARCHIST

And our names are on a list that knows no ending.

STUDENT

Six women to be

ALL

Shot

Shot

Shot

ANARCHIST & WIFE

For crimes against this so-called State

POET

I cannot believe it is so!

STUDENT & GYPSY

Six blood beats for

ALL

Dawn

Dawn

Dawn

ORACLE
Six victims of a simple fate

SCENE IV

--RAIN--

Anarchist's Story

ANARCHIST

When I enlisted in the Army
There were
Long chains of carriages
Pushed through the mud.
The river had risen
And the streets were full of thick debris;
Cattle were hauling carriages through the mud
Rocking chairs, tabletops and excrement.
They had barricaded the streets--
The old quarters--
Winding streets
And white cobbled steps
were blocked with old carriages
Turned over,
Mortar and stone,
And the bodies of dead horses
Decaying into foundations.

I met a journalist on the side of the road,
A stranger with a thick notebook
And a lilting voice.
The rain dripped down his nose.

ALL

“No end and no beginning”

ANARCHIST

He sighed.

Just carts loaded with everything they own.
When I enlisted in the army

GYPSY

I went with the chairman's black book

ANARCHIST

tucked inside my pocket
At the door, a preppy asshole in uniform with slicked back hair
Stopped me for a cigarette.

POET& ANARCHIST

“I wouldn’t bother pursuing this shit.”

ANARCHIST

He said, taking a slow drag in the rain.

[beat]

MOVES Agitated

Speaks very slowly

My unit

was executed last Sunday.

WIFE & ANARCHIST

Twelve coups de grace

POET

And a hole in the ground

ALL

Six feet deep, and six feet wide.

ANARCHIST

On my way to this prison, spared of that fate

I saw a tiny girl tossed onto a heap of men.

Her neck was broken and a stuffed doll dangled from her pocket.

I saw the weakness of my body in her frame and her figure

And for the first time in my life

POET & STUDENT& ANARCHIST

I shut my eyes

ANARCHIST

And turned away.

ALL

For

The streets of the city

Are black

With the ash

Of the dead they are burning

WIFE

And now

POET

they load our carriages up

GYPSY
with bodies.

ALL
With no end and no beginning.

POET & WIFE & ANARCHIST
Just cartloads of the

ANARCHIST
dead and dying.

[Lights Out]

SCENE V

--

Poet's Story

POET

I had heard of the Disappearances
News echoes fast through town
Of carriages filled with shrouded souls
Draped in their own sorrows.
I had heard of a man so terrible he
would never show his face
And in the moments before dawn
The shouts of his revolver echoed down on our white tiled rooftops...
And I heard—
yet paid no mind.
You see,
I have never held a gun or a blade
Only a pennies worth of pens
and I like you
shut my ears to the world outside
Hiding in libraries and on sidewalks
And in the velvet underbelly of the opera house.
Hiding from Premonitions
Riots in the streets
Gunshots and cartloads
Silent ghosts
No fault of mine.

POET&ANARCHIST
Yet this fear.

WIFE

Fear in every corner of the city

GYPSY

The governor dead

POET

and a nation shorn in two

ALL

A victory for liberty—

WIFE

‘By the people for the people’

POET

Destroyed by the very men who once propped it up

WIFE

Devils in disguise

POET

A vanguard of the rich Plutocracy

ALL

A victory for Liberty

POET

Destroyed by corruption of court,

GYPSY

Church

ANARCHIST

And countrymen

POET

Poison in the Olive earth

POET& WIFE

And madness

POET & WIFE & ANARCHIST

and mayhem

POET

And murder
Throughout the city

Vile men and vile deeds
Spilt blood on my doorstep every night
AND I SHUT MY EYES TO IT AND SCREAMED THAT I WAS BLIND

ALL
Till
I dipped my wick in it wrote

POET
Bloodsongs.
For Blood people.
In the hopes of pardoning my crime.

SCENE VI
--MODERN WAR--
Collective Story

ORACLE
breaking from the group and addressing the audience
Friend?
You huddled in the back.
What brought you here, hmm?
What deed or race or creed
Landed you in this prison hill, dung heap horror?
Was it the laugh-lines of sedition
at the corners of your eyes
Or blood you gouged out
Of a soldier's shattered body?
Or perhaps it was just the color of your skin
or
That scarlet scarf that covered up your face?
Be honest now.
What brought you here?
Awaiting the executioner's shot at dawn?
What gave you the righteous honor of our company
On this last night
Of the living?

ANARCHIST
In laconic response
The Poet next door
Has two blue thumbprints

On her neck
And a black gash
Through her left eyebrow
Her shirt is ruffled
And torn
And there are ink stains
On her hands and
Underarms
As if she had scratched out letters
With her elbows.

GYPSY

The Colonel breaks her right hand
Right here in front of all of us
Smashed into the wall
By the window.
I think
I will see
Streaks of blood
And flakes of flesh,
But the hand only grows
Four sizes larger,
Filled with water
And islands of cartilage
Dislodged.

WIFE

The student
dressed in black
is tossed into the back of the cart
With us
She is unwounded
Unmarked
By the battle
She emerged from.

POET

On the cart to up the mountain
To the cemetery where they keep us
I am jealous of her silence

ALL

Her remote silence

WIFE

Her

WIFE & GYPSY
lack

WIFE
of pain.

ANARCHIST & POET
At least she knows
What she is fighting for.
At least she can look to her hands
And see the end she took for herself
In her own grip.

ALL
Enemies of a state bent on self-destruction

WIFE
we find ourselves

GYPSY
In a makeshift prison shorn up by thatched roofs

POET
mud plastered walls...

ALL
conveniently close
to a cemetery

GYSPY
surrounded by trees,

ANARCHIST
and as far as I can make out
populated by those not long destined for the living.

ALL
Enemies of a state bent on self-destruction

WIFE
We find ourselves

POET
The playthings of a petty despot

ALL
Rounded up from street corners

POET
Libraries

GYPSY
and country caverns

WIFE AND ORACLE
poets
and soldiers

POET AND GYPSY
murderers
and lovers

ANARCHIST and STUDENT
innocents
and saviors

ALL
we woke up today
to find ourselves
on the wrong
side
of Absolute Justice.

POET
Spoken sarcastically
And
Our Absolute Judge,

STUDENT
Our highest priest—

WIFE
The mastermind of our century's greatest genocide

ANARCHIST
Calls himself the Butcher!

GYPSY
Our Colonel!

ORACLE

Butcher
Of
His own people.

ANARCHIST & WIFE
Imagine that!

ORACLE
He is a monster.
A man built of lead and steel

GYPSY
His eyes are gouged out
With leaden knives

ORACLE
And beneath his fingernails
The entrails of rabid dogs.

POET
Even his men fear him
Jumpy and ill at ease
Their eyes are wide behind the shadows

WIFE
And their fingers twitch nervously on
Switch blades and belt buckles.

ALL
You can't see him from the outside.

ORACLE
Oh no! Not at all!

ORACLE & WIFE & ANARCHIST
But see him from the inside

POET
And you will find

WIFE
Something cringing and mis-formed.

ORACLE
Ah, the brutal savagery that

ALL
masquerades

ORACLE
as modern war.

[LIGHTS OUT]

SCENE VII
--MOON--
Student's story

STUDENT
Calm center stage

So
Why did we do it?....
I think it
comes down to
Love--
excitingly enough.
It all comes down to Love.
At the end of the day it's wrapped into everything...
In strange
and
Powerful ways...
When I woke on the morning of the 11th twelve days after the train ride to the Al-Jumah mosque
My stomach threatened to destroy me.
I felt nauseous, painfully so,
And I lay in bed for almost two hours before I can begin preparing.
That morning
I bobbed my hair
and
Bleached it blond
Painted my lips
Like a thick fat bruise
One stroke for the morning
Two strokes for the dawn.
The commander tells us that
Disguise has always been
Crucial to Revolution...
The RIGHT had executed my Atheist compatriots
Three women and a young boy who had run secrets back and forth
Over enemy lines.
Shift in tone.
I'm sure you heard this news.

They've splashed it all over the papers.
One woman was pregnant, and instead of killing her softly
They slit her belly open and burned the fetus alive.

A so-called 'deterrence policy.'
I mean fuck, man,
After that, there was no mercy.

[beat]

My commander left the explosives in a safe box
Under a bench in La Giralda
I picked them up the day before,
and prepared them dutifully.

packing

One bag with swimsuit and towels,
And a copy of Brothers Karamazov
laid over dark wires
And a heavy heart

And

One purse,
yellow leather
laced with dynamite,
a homemade container packed with
Chemicals
And shards of glass.

Over my belly I taped the last explosives, cold metal and warm plastic
Wrapped round the skin that touched the waistline of my pants.

When I left my home that afternoon
I was tipped off in the street
That my commander had
Sanctioned the attacks.
A café in the 10th quarter
and

a FUNDAMENTALIST checkpoint near the docks.

The Colonel

Was my particular target,
My body's special price....
I was to meet him as his lover.
Both bags went off I'm told--

But the metal and the plastic wrapped round *my* chest—
Strangely enough
Stayed cold.

[beat]

Looking back on it
It's a fucked up story, man
This civil war business.
But then again, it's a fucked up world in general.

And in a fucked up world
Sometimes you have to do some fucked up things
To set it right.

GYPSY

Enters stage, in entirely alternative world

Says, matter of fact

The sun will surely out tonight.

There is not much more time.

She gets up and begins to move about the stage anxious, following the light of the moon.

And the chinked form of the cell window

To audience, plaintiff and afraid

Moon!

Pauses, there is something infantile about her, like a little girl

With penetrating eyes...she half sings

Can you not halt the light?

Not break off daybreak?

Not stay the sun

Just one life's breathe longer?

Let me sink into the fever

Of this dark secret place before dawn.

I do not love the light now!

No! I do not love the dawn!

I love this now

She moves into the shadows of the stage

This deep darkness

All wrapped up in the skin of the sleeping bird beside me

Dark feathers scattered and bare beside me

Can you not see! I love him!

Let me rest! Stay awhile!

Let me be! Moon! Moon! Let me be!

Speaks irritably

But the moon would have nothing.

Sung in a lilting way

and slid gracefully away to her gardens of poplars and purple linen.

SCENE VIII

--

Poet's Story

THE POET

The man in my cell this morning was taken out and shot.

Beat

ANARCHIST

Tell them not to kill me.

He told his son.
Clinging to the bars of his prison cell door.
Tell them not to kill me! Ride out and tell them!

STUDENT
He was taken away this morning.
Blind folded, he pissed his pants.
A stupid man with fancy shirt and nice buttons,
Sweat stained through the back and fine leather shoes.

ANARCHIST
Apparently the bastard had shot the Colonel's father--

ALL
Don Rulfo--

ANARCHIST
Straight through the back

WIFE
smashed his skull in

ANARCHIST
and buried him in a ditch
Thirty years ago, they tell me,
over a she-cow who had strayed through a field.

POET
How stupid.

GYPSY
What a stupid man.

ALL
Such stupid stupid men.

ANARCHIST
This so called Colonel's found him now.
Apparently searched for years.
'Spose there's a perverse justice in that.
Bullet for bullet
Man for man
Even in war, there's justice in that.

POET
The man in my cell this morning was taken out and shot.

GYPSY

Singsong

Pants all soiled and stained

ANARCHIST

His body shook from the strain of it,

POET

Normal, clear voice

All night he told me off his suffering,

mistakes he'd made

And Lives he'd taken.

The other woman buried her head in her hands.

Said the heat of the bullet would burry the crimes of his heart.

But I could not be so cold.

I listened and listened till the Man came to take him away.

The colonel's face is masked.

I cannot see his eyes.

POET and WIFE

I wanted to know

WIFE

his mouth, and

GYPSY

cheeks and

ANARCHIST

teeth

ALL

to see his face

POET and WIFE

to understand a little more.

POET

The guards told the prisoner that he would be taken to be tried.

He stopped weeping and followed meekly with them.

Perhaps it is true,

and the gunshots in the morning

are only administered to the justly punished.

Beat

speech suddenly directed at audience

But you and I!

We are all here for the wrong reasons.

They have labeled us traitors and criminals and liars and thieves

But this is not true.

And there must be some reason to this madness, some grain of rationality or logic.

I have studied philosophy for years now at university.

ALL

I have read about war and politics and prison sentence.

POET

But I have done nothing wrong other than read and write.

I have said no thing wrong other than having spoken right,

POET & ANARCHIST

as honestly and justly as possible.

POET

And no court of law would see it otherwise.

What they accused me of last night, will not stand.

What they have claimed I committed, will not stand.

For these accusations are nothing but smoke and mirrors.

ALL

And I am not the man who shot his neighbor,

Nor I am the man who orphaned that child

I am but a woman

who read

and read

and read.

ANARCHIST

Who shot her soul out

GYPSY

on cotton sleeves

WIFE

And linen pages.

POET

In the hopes of finding something more.

SCENE IX

ORACLE'S Story

ORACLE

The Problem with the world is that it's falling to pieces

*Only the oracle is lit. She is in her own world. Surrounded by darkness on an empty stage
Only when she is isolated can she see clearly. Otherwise she is blind. She soaks up the
moonlight greedily)*

You ask me who I am friend?
Do you really want to know?
Do you seek the truth from those shadows?
No matter that I can't see you,
I can feel the humming in your bones
Such a great ache to know!
And know what child?
Light burns.
It will seal up your human eyes.
I had to be born blind
To find my greater vision.

*Beat, starts slow, enters an almost trance like state,
by mid way through the monologue her whole body is shaking
although her clouded eyes consistently look piercingly ahead.*

I am an oracle.
A
Blind woman
Who sears with the soul
Though I have never seen the sun down in the west
Or scream out from the east
I have felt its sunkisses light the knifepoints
Of church steeples and watchtowers,
I have known the tattooed ink stains of roads
And factories,
I have seen the great gashes and gorges
Man inflicts upon the land.
Punching and smashing the earth in
Opening arteries of ore and oil.
I have traveled to the soil in my sleep,
And felt its life song course beneath my skin
My Mother gifted me with
Great portals in my fingers and throats
Carved holes into my body, where knowledge could slip through.
I have never needed eyes, for my seer is crueller,
More accurate, more true.
I scent the beggar woman wrapped in stale cloth

And the madman in the asylum screaming to a lost god.
I have ridden on ships of slaves and felt their sweat course beneath the floorboards of galleys
And bleed into an ocean that grew salty with the taste of their wounds.
And before me great towers have burned burned burned
Into bruised and purple skies.
And whole nations have risen and fallen before me
To the poison of their own avarice.
The moon screams her wisdom into my ear, the sun hums his bitter love.
Bitter and painful,
She has seen all,
He has known all.
And I have known all as they know all.
The moons hides in the hair of the willow tree that weeps at night and
Walks among the dead and dying,
lighting the wounds of soldiers
with her trail of glistening tears.
She tells me all their secrets. Their night howls. Their broken sighs.
My nights are tortured with their pain.
The sun calls down from clouds, proud and vain.
I hear his song too.
But the moon knows better
Seers further.
For she has fed us in our darkest hour.
And her light is crueler.
More accurate.
More true.

POET

Oracles are born in times of peace

ALL

To tell of times of war

ORACLE

And each birth is marked
With the knowledge that its life will
End by the

ANARCHIST & POET
hands of the people

ORACLE

She has been chosen to protect.

ORACLE & ANARCHIST
We and only we

ALL
Alone

ORACLE
Are permitted to remember our passage into life
So that we always
know

WIFE
Of suffering

POET
Of expulsion

ANARCHIST
Of pain

ALL
of
Triumph
and Joy
and Love

ORACLE
Wrapped into the same moment
Of being given
From Darkness
Into the Light.

SCENE X
---THE COLONEL---

Wife's Story

GYPSY

The Colonel is a dark man

ANARCHIST
As far as we can tell.

POET
His face is covered in indigo

GYPSY
Hanging from threads round his ears,
All covered in cloth

[Wife lit, center stage]

WIFE

I met him six years ago

At a party

Thrown by the district magistrate

His hair was thick and black

And he had a blue lapel

and a red blazer.

I had no husband then, and no engagement.

When he asked me for a dance

he kissed the inlay of my wrist

In the half light

Beneath the marble stairs

A young man with dreams and aspirations

He came from the countryside

And his boots were new and gleaming

He carried a penknife in his pocket

And when we walked beneath

The old poplar tree

He killed two snakes with a shovel

So that their skulls went

Crunch

ALL

crunch

WIFE

On the ground.

He sliced through their necks

With the blade of a shovel and smashed

Down their skulls with his heel.

Warm, green garden snakes slick and smooth.

No poison, and no malice.

Just dark snake blood

In the gaps between stones

And tails that twitched anxiously

In the sun.

[BEAT]

I was in the kitchen

When he came for my husband

The newly elected

Governor for two days

An angel of progression

He ran on a platform

Of transformation
A mantra for change
By the people for the people
Education
Liberation
Idealism
Yes
We called ourselves
Idealists.

When they came for my husband
I was in the kitchen
So I did not get to see his fall.
Just shots ricocheting off plaster walls and through windows.
I hid inside my pantry
Covering my ears
To block out the noise.

When they found me they took
To the living room
Where they had propped my husband up at the dinner table
With a bullet through his brain.
They had covered the top of his head
With a pink lace napkin.
At least they could do me that favor.

STUDENT
“Its dinner, is it not?”

WIFE
Says the Colonel

GYPSY
Trailing his finger along the long cool edge of the oak table.

ALL
“Now you may feed him
All the rotten truths
you have fed our Nation. ”

STUDENT
“Its dinner, is it not?”

WIFE
Says the Colonel
And smiles with his clean teeth

POET
And blue lapel

ORACLE
And red blazer.

ALL
“Its dinner is it not?”

WIFE
Says the Colonel
And kisses the inlay of my wrist
In the half light
behind the old oak table.

ANARCHIST
“A gift to you my lady”

WIFE
He says and smiles.

POET
“A present.”

WIFE
He says

ALL
By the people for the people.

[Beat]

WIFE
I should have known then
And

ALL
I should have known there

WIFE
what a devil in disguise
Had met me beneath the warmth of the poplar tree

ALL
What a snake in the grass.

WIFE

What a monster.

All action stops, like the wind blowing out.

ANARCHIST

Breaks the silence, responding to the story

Beginning very slow

When I enlisted in this war it was

WIFE

voluntarily.

ANARCHIST

To protect my 'people'

POET

From derision and from scorn.

ANARCHIST

But I wouldn't recommend pursuing this shit.

Because,

After all

STUDENT

We are just societies 'undesirables'

GYPSY

The last remnants of liberty and justice

ALL

We are

ANARCHIST

The sacrifice made to the world at large

ALL

For the men with the steel toed boots

Have beat this earth before

And the carriages they load with bodies

Have crossed this earth before.

WIFE

And the pits of earth they build

ALL
Dig deep dig deep

ANARCHIST
Are scars on every soul

ORACLE
Old Scars

GYPSY
Old wounds

POET
That open up with memory

ALL
Time and time again

GYPSY (*Song*)
Every Generation
One of us is born...

POET
They have blackened up their boots
And sharpened all their knives

GYPSY (*song*)
...To save a dying nation
From derision and from scorn.

WIFE
Can't you see!
That's all we have!

ANARCHIST
A bullet to the brain
And a deep mass grave!

[LIGHTS OUT]

SCENE XI
--HISTORY--
Student's story

The student is Alone on the stage
Back at the interrogation table. The light is identical to the first moment we meet her
Would I do it again?

You mean be born?
Of course...Of course
How could you think otherwise?
I know there's not much time left.
10 minutes...
Not more.

The guards are stirring and the birds are calling out to dawn...
But I won't take your sympathy,
and it's important that you know—
I mean I think I would like you to know that there is beauty everywhere
Even in the darkest moment of the darkest day
That there is something beautiful waiting
That there is a great love behind the violence
Even in the horror.
I have to think that
And I am determined to die thinking that,
No matter what way they make me go.

You look to my hands and say
You don't believe me?
When you have faced injustice as I have faced injustice,
How could you not be compelled to act?
How could you not choose to be born?
And what is that choice
Tell me what is that choice—
When faced with the violence of the world
You have to respond in kind
Or it will trample over you.
We freedom fighters,
Over the years
We've formed this strange kind of knowledge,
That distinguishes our acts of resistance
From the atrocities of the opposition.
Its a
Love knowledge!
A knowledge that great violence is and can be motivated by great love!
These are the only tenants we know.
Because
When you love something and you see it beaten, threatened, abused
Destroyed!
Love wells in your throat and chest and it becomes
Rage—
towards
Anger-- Violence--Liberation!
But at its core that violence is still linked to love
And linked to hope!

Each feeds the other
 A love that protects nation, state and neighbor,
 A love that protects the sacred from the inhumane
 The raising of mosques, burning of synagogues,
 The butchering of Idealists and attack on Atheists
 The destruction of Liberty
 Pogrom on innocents
 And abuse of women
 Advocated
 by the divine tenants
 of the reigning Fundamentalists---
 In such a fucked up world
 How could there be any other choice?
 Tell me!
 How could there be any other choice
 When *history* has silenced our story?
 How can there be any other choice
 Than to kill for love at any hour of the day!
 For how many millions have met our fate?
 The silent victims of a global cleansing?
 This shouldn't be so surprising!
 Modernity began with the institutionalization of violence and after a century's worth of
 ALL
 Genocide
 STUDENT
 Genocide has been reduced to dirty little word
 POET
 A dinner table topic for the liberal hearted.
 STUDENT
 But where are the women of Auschwitz and Darfur ?
 Las *desparecidas* of
 GYPSY
 Chile
 ANARCHIST
 Argentina
 WIFE
 Bolivia
 ALL
 Bogota?
 POET
 Silent ghosts history has written over!
 STUDENT
 Where are the women of Granada, of Juarez, rape victims of Gujarat and Ahmedabad,
 women of
 ORACLE & GYPSY
 Cambodia and Vietnam,

STUDENT & WIFE & GYPSY
Algeria and Rwanda,

POET & ANARCHIST
Bosnia and Serbia?

ALL
Where are the women of Baghdad and Ramallah?

STUDENT
Or the women left to die on a
prison camp dunghill heap
conveniently close to a cemetery ?

ALL
We are disappeared

STUDENT
Only the whisper of a song remains! But

ALL
does our silence keep you up at night?

STUDENT
In this world of noise and commerce? I mean

ALL
Does our silence keep you up at night?

STUDENT
Because all it takes, all it takes
In our regimen of violence, our political networks
and frameworks and dialectics,
All it takes is one bad wind
one presidential whim and a

ANARCHIST
knock at the door

WIFE
kills your next of kin.

ALL
So ask yourself
When faced with love in such a world

STUDENT
Can there be any other choice than kill

ALL

or be killed

STUDENT

in return? Tell me!

[beat]

Voice breaks entirely—she has absolutely lost control

ORACLE

My mother told me...

GYPSY

My mother told me...

WIFE

Washing back my hair!

STUDENT

That every generation one of us is born!

ALL

To save a dying nation from Derision and from Scorn!

STUDENT

And I have not forgotten her song
For when History has silenced our story.

ALL

Our story

STUDENT

is her story

ALL

our love's story

STUDENT

She is our future!

I can feel it!

She is our future!

And

When her song breaks the Bloodsong

Into love song

And Sings to memory.

ALL

Then her-story will be re-wakened
and we who have suffered

STUDENT

Will rise up singing!
Resplendent in the new dawn...
Her voice trails off and returns again, full force

ORACLE

There is not much more time.

GYPSY

...Moments now.

[beat]

STUDENT

Answer me!

I need another answer please!

Tell me!

ALL

How can there be
any other choice?

*The light brightens on stage to a point where it is almost blinding—a pure clean white light
And then as suddenly as it has flashed into its full intensity cuts out.
Now there is only darkness.*

SCENE XII

-BLOODSONG-

*the lighting has changed to mirror the warm ambiance at the start of the play.
We are in another time and space, though one implicitly connected with the interior of the
prison.*

ALL

I had a dream last night

POET & WIFE

Wide and open.

GYPSY

Singsong

Ripped from the breeze of the summer evening
They took me from my window place
Where I sang to the fields below me
Ripped from the olive earth and the Olive Tree
And the ants all covered in dust
Who crawled round my footsteps
In the great wide
bowl of the world

ANARCHIST

They stole me from my nationplace

GYPSY
My fireplace

POET
An old woman who sang to the soul.

ALL
I had a dream last night

POET & WIFE
Wide and open.

GYPSY
That the olive tree whispered through my hair

ANARCHIST
Lady! Fair Lady!
With the sweet Black Hair!

GYPSY & ANARCHIST
Your father descended of kings
Drawn down to the red earth
Where the river sings.

GYPSY
to which I replied

ALL
My father is a woodcutter.

GYPSY
In song
He lives in the poor man's shed
where the blue bird weeps every winter.....

ORACLE
Breaks from the group, again looking into the audience

Friend?
Friend? Are you waking?
You have fainted from the cold.
Your body fell with such a start we were afraid
You had grown old...
Come, warm by the fire.

POET
Sit by the fire

WIFE
Come sing.

GYPSY
It's a very old song

ALL
You must know it in your dreams, I'm sure.

GYPSY
It's a very old song

ANARCHIST
A song built under the muscles of your tongue.

ORACLE & GYPSY
No, don't be afraid

ALL
Come, Join us friend.

ORACLE
Sit by the fire.

ALL
Come sing.

GYSPY
singing, building in volume

Every generation one of us is born
To save a dying nation
From derision and from scorn.
Tiny roads and golden fields
An olive tree for two
Virgin Mary
Tears of silver
A dark and heavy bruise
Repeats verse, gaining volume

The Poet at her desk was taken into night
The moon hid her face as darkness turned to light

Five shots for the forest
Ten shots for the sea
GUNSHOTS
never sounded so very close to me.

The sandman sings of stories
Old man on watchtower too
The muse who sings of sadness
Knows through and through
That memories never fading
Beat the bloodsong after light
Bloodsong thick as ages
Bloodsong thick as night
Green olive tree sings into the night
Blue shadows rambling
Steel toed black boots

ALL
(Spoken, Gypsy girl singing)
The Women at last
Were taken into night
The moon hid her face
As darkness turned to light

HIGH staccato intensity, each syllable pronounced like a shot

Five
Shots
For the Forest
Ten
Shots
For the Sea

GUN
SHOTS
Never sounded
So very
close to me

GYPSY
lessening intensity
The story that I tell you
Happened far from home

*A crescendo of voices, a chorus of sounds all women
entering stage at same time growing into cacophony, wall of varied sound*

But the Memory that it carries grow in our own bones
Please remember
Please remember
The memory that it carries grow in our own bones
Please remember
Please remember.

*All the other female voices begin to sing
A round throughout the Gypsy's refrain. They sing*

Every generation
one of us is born
To save a dying nation
From derision and from scorn

The voices mix the two into one song and the women are dancing

That the memory that it carries grows in our own bones
Please Remember
Please Remember
The memory that it carries grows in our own bones

*continuing to climax
and
SILENCE*

FIN