

The last words of a

Dictator

(That's DICK-tator!!!!!!!!!!)

By

Nozhan Resalati

Senior Editor CHARLES writes...Under ordinary circumstances this play submission would have been declined (with a kind note). But the circumstances around it are not ordinary. Quote:

Nozhan Resalati is a writer from Iran who has ten years of writing experience in a country that suppresses freedom of expression. So he clutches at straws, maybe a second language is effective.

The author took a risk—not just artistically but politically—in sending this play. We accepted it for political not artistic reasons. We laud Resalati's courage—and, his defiance.

Our message to you Nozhan, and every other writer living under the stinging lash of oppressive tyranny, is that while you can't publish such work in Iran you can definitely publish it in Canada. Please note, this is second language lit. The original play was written in Farsi.

WHY I TOOK IT: *Drama Editor JOHN SULLIVAN writes...Writing this experimental piece took immense courage and the will to persist in resistance against an authoritarian regime that, at times, must seem impervious to significant change and is always willing to resort to brutality in enforcing its standards of correct thought, right action and approved relationships between individuals, and within the greater community. I hear echoes of similar cries for justice from writers during the late Russian Tsarist period, the Soviet era, the Chinese Cultural Revolution, the Cold War East Bloc, and more. And this play – I'd almost call it the pretext for performance art – did not come easy as the playwright is a native speaker and writer of Farsi; that he could produce such a script in English is even more remarkable. It warms my wit and sharpens my heart for my own (much less dire) cultural battles knowing Fleas on the Dog is committed to publishing work with such socio-political ramifications, and to upholding and promoting the power of unarmed truth.*

The last words of a Dictator

In court. The dictator is tied up on the chair. Three men were elected by popular vote to determine how he should die.

Judge: 60 years old

Counselor: 50 years old

Defense Counselor: 48 years old

Mr. M (Dictator): 65 years old

Judge: Forty years of crime, terror, violation, and murder in Jurasia. But based on democracy, the government has not deprived you of your right to a lawyer. Defense Counselor.

Defense Counselor: Your honor, I should add sexual harassment, torture, exile, and press censorship. It's ridiculous to defend a case in which there's no positive point.

Counselor: I add political corruption, torture of minorities, political executions, and executions under the age of eighteen.

Defense Counselor: Thanks for mentioning it.

Dictator: You're here to defend me (looks at him)

Defense Counselor: Of course I am, but half my friends are maimed and died in your prisons.

Dictator: I'm sorry brothers.

Counselor: Don't say that. (loud) Communists, Zionists, Christians, Muslims, they all called each other brothers.

Judge: They had one thing in common.

Killing (All three repeat together)

Counselor: Mr. M, we are here to decide about your death.

Dictator: The death of all of us is in God's hands.

Counselor: Do you consider yourself his representative in Jurasia?

Dictator: Kind of.

Judge: What does it mean?

Dictator: I saw God talk to me.

Defense Counselor: That's irrational.

Judge: Do you have schizophrenia?

Dictator: No, your honor. I'm in perfect sanity.

Counselor: God told you that you should rape a child, and kill innocent people?

Dictator: I didn't.

Defense Counselor: We have a parade of witnesses.

Dictator: How do I know you didn't pay them to give false testimony?

(Counselor slaps him to the left side of his face)

Judge: You are disrespecting democracy by violating it.

Counselor: Now democracy has been established. (He gives him another to the right side)

Judge: I warned you (loud)

(He sits down)

Judge: Go to the point.

Defense Counselor: Mr. M, you are gonna die. That is obvious. How would you like to die?

Dictator: By drug.

Defense Counselor: You mean overdose?

Dictator: Kind of.

(Judge takes a look at him with a question mark face)

Dictator: I mean... cocaine or something like that.

Counselor: How about a bottle of Johnnie Walker?

(Everyone laughs)

Counselor: How about pork steak?

Dictator: It's against my religion.

Counselor: A perfect human being (He stands up and claps)

Judge: Any ideas?

Defense Counselor: Your honor, I would say Shooting.

(Judge looks at the counselor)

Counselor: I have an idea. Each of us draws a circle in front of the defendant's feet, then we'll write down the method of killing in it. We put a piece of meat on it, the meat of different animals. We'll bring a dog, the way of killing is chosen by the dog.

Defense Counselor: I am in.

Counselor: Your honor, please.

(Judge gets up, picks up a marker, and draws a circle)

Judge: Hanging, put a piece of beef.

Defense Counselor: Shooting, put a piece of lamb.

Counselor: impaling, I put a piece of pork.

Dictator: Your honor (Terrified)

Judge: For the first and last time in my career, I accept. It depends on the dog.

(Counselor goes and brings the dog, a German Shepherd. Defense Counselor puts pieces of meat on the circle)

Counselor: Your honor, please.

Judge: Judge gets up, grabs the dog's leash, and stands in front of the dictator. Dog sniffs out different pieces of meat then it eats pork.

(Dictator gets panic attack, Counselor takes the dog)

(Pause)

(Everyone's sitting down)

Judge: Would you like to make a final statement?

Dictator: God forgive you, I know I'm going to heaven.

(Everyone looks at each other. the hammer comes down)

Jurasia: An imaginary country

THE PLAYWRIGHT SPEAKS: *I feel I am a boner that I need to shoot my sperm in the form of words. Maybe one of them would achieve fertility on the way to the ovum. Yeah... Words*

"I am the slave of those words that kindle fire," Hafez said. Beckett, Pinter, Ionesco, Arrabal, Albee, and all those who were original, knew how words could creep into the bone marrow. This piece can be visual mental imagery of the future of society where everything goes to ruin. All we have to do is look back and see the fate of the totalitarian governments that fell. With anger, of course.

AUTHOR BIO: Nozhan Resalati lives and writes in Iran.