

THEORIA REPUBLICA

a play in two acts

SYNOPSIS

The play is a commentary on the perils of global fascism that is currently looming large in the world today.

The story is about a group of intellectuals who bonded themselves for a common and what they claim to be, a noble mission, which is, to assassinate a right-wing dictator.

After their successful mission, they decide to spare the dictator's wife, a staunch human rights lawyer who they think is the rightful successor to the presidency, despite her seeming indifference to her husband's despotic rule.

Did she conspire with the assassins to assassinate her husband?

The play is also an attempt to a narrative discourse between political expediency, autocracy and greed for power vis-a-vis a Machiavellian strategy to resolve genuine human and social justice.

The play is likewise a study on the schism between theory and action.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

BRANDON

DESSA

KRISTOFF

THE PRESIDENT'S WIFE

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

AN ATTIC ABOVE AN ABANDONED WAREHOUSE. ONLY A HANGING CEILING LAMP ILLUMINATES THE SOMBER AMBIENCE. THE ROOM IS AKIN TO AN INTERROGATION OR TORTURE ROOM. A HIDEOUT OF SORTS.

DESSA IS SLOUCHED ON A RUNDOWN COUCH. BRANDON IS FACING HER SEATED ON A DECREPIT EASY CHAIR. HE IS SMOKING.

DESSA

They handcuffed me. Rammed my undies down my throat. Spread my legs and fucked me. Hard. Like anything. They fucked me like anything. Like time was running out. Like it was the end of the world.

BRANDON

And then.

DESSA

And then what?

BRANDON

What else did they do to you?

DESSA

Then they put their penis in my mouth. The other penis was in my cunt. The other went inside my butt. I couldn't move. I was shaking and moaning with pain but couldn't move.

BRANDON

Did you finally tell them about me?

DESSA

No.

BRANDON

Why?

DESSA

I could still take it. I guess.

BRANDON

Then why did they release you?

DESSA

I don't know. No fucking idea.

BRANDON

Did you recognize them?

DESSA

No. I was blindfolded.

BRANDON

Not even their voices? Their smell?

DESSA

Their breath smelled that of my cunt. They ate it too by the way.

BRANDON

You must have enjoyed it.

DESSA

FUCK YOU. BANDON. FUCK YOU! FUCK YOU! FUCK YOU!

SILENCE

BRANDON

Go on.

SILENCE

BRANDON

I said go on. I'm listening.

DESSA

Then they turned on the electric razor inside my vagina. I was spread eagled. And she bled.

My vagina profusely bled. Then I passed out. Didn't know what happened next.

BRANDON

I found you sprawled in the corner of the street. You were bleeding. Unconscious.

SILENCE

DESSA

Am I supposed to thank you for this?

BRANDON

No. You don't have to. We're in this together, right?

DESSA

I don't know. I don't know anymore.

PAUSE

DESSA

I wanna go. Let me go. Please.

BRANDON

No. We have to get over with what we've started. There's no turning back.

DESSA

FUCK YOU, BRANDON. THIS IS NOT FAIR.

BRANDON

What's fair anyway, huh? Why talk about fairness? There's nothing fair in this shitty fucking world at all.

DESSA

You fooled me. You made me believe that you'll protect me. But you didn't.

BRANDON

You think I didn't try to catch you in time? I almost got myself killed.

PAUSE

BRANDON

Remember this. And better put this in your thick head. We have to do away with him. By whatever means. We have to.

DESSA

But what about ---

BRANDON

We shall not let him go on with his despotic rule. He has already lorded over the entire Judiciary, the Congress and the Senate. So what is there to hang on to? And it's damn crazy that everyone has become indifferent to what's going on. It's as if he was able to make time stop in his favor. People don't care anymore.

PAUSE

BRANDON

Trust me. We'll get over this. Sooner than we think.

BRANDON HOLDS ON TO HIS M16 AND STARTS TO TAKE AIM AT DESSA, PULLING THE TRIGGER, PRETENDING TO FIRE IT ON HER. DESSA RUSHES TO HIM AND VIOLENTLY SEIZES THE MACHINE GUN. SHE PINS HIM DOWN ON THE GROUND AND POINTS THE GUN AT HIM.

PAUSE

BRANDON

Oh. That was fast.

DESSA

Don't you fucking patronize me.

A FRANTIC KNOCK ON THE DOOR IS HEARD. SEVERAL FRANTIC KNOCKS ARE HEARD.

BRANDON

Who's there?

NO ONE ANSWERS. LONG SILENCE.

BRANDON

WHO'S THERE, GODDAMN IT!

SILENCE.

BRANDON AND DESSA SCAMPER BEHIND THE DOOR WITH THEIR GUNS AIMED AT THE DOOR.

SILENCE.

KRISTOFF

It's me. Let me in.

BRANDON

Kristoff?

KRISTOFF

Yes, of course. Who else?

BRANDON UNLOCKS THE DOOR AND OPENS IT. DESSA MOVES BACK TO HER COUCH. SHE LIES DOWN, STILL DISHEVELLED.

BRANDON

I was waiting for the password, Goddamn it.

KRISTOFF

Eclipse, you mean? Why eclipse anyway? Doesn't make sense.

BRANDON

We're always in hiding, right? And we'll always be in hiding for the rest of our lives until we're done with our noble mission: to annihilate that monster.

KRISTOFF

Godzilla. The monster Godzilla.

BRANDON

Yes. Godzilla. The lord and monster Godzilla. Relentlessly at war against drugs. And yet endears himself to be the lord of all drug lords. What a circus, indeed.

PAUSE. BRANDON LIGHTS A CIGARETTE.

BRANDON

Have you placed the bomb to where it should be and timed it as it should?

KRISTOFF

Yes. Mission accomplished.

BRANDON

The plan is to let it explode split seconds before I snipe him. That way bodyguards would scamper to ground zero so I would have all the time to aim at him. Without fail.

KRISTOFF

Sounds perfect. I timed it at exactly 0915 hours. Just exactly when he sets foot at the podium to begin his speech.

BRANDON

Good.

KRISTOFF

Don't forget their usual SOP: the celebrated and controversial bulletproof glass in front of him.

BRANDON

I know, for Christ's sake. I'll make sure that the trajectory would hit the top of his head. I know what I'm doing. I've done my research. Even the zoom lens that I will use. It has to

match the distance between my position and the target. I've spotted the target as well. I saw his men rehearse the event. Even where the canines would be placed.

PAUSE

BRANDON

Do you know where the canines would be placed?

KRISTOFF

Of course. We were together there yesterday, right? Though not exactly together.

BRANDON

All systems clear then. And what if there's a snafu? What could be the snafu?

KRISTOFF

There will be no snafu. Trust me.

SILENCE

BRANDON

Let's give Dessa a break. She has done more than enough for us.

THEY BOTH TURN THEIR GAZE TO THE SLEEPING DESSA.

KRISTOFF

In fact, more than enough. She just put her life on the line. How is she?

BRANDON

Better than yesterday. She can walk now. But with some effort. And still wobbly. Her eyes are not as dark and puffy. The huge lump on her forehead has so far subsided. Well, just a bit. And the wound below her left eye has healed. But she's still in pain.

KRISTOFF

Thank you for taking care of her.

BRANDON

You don't have to thank me.

KRISTOFF

We must not abandon her.

BRANDON

Who says we'll abandon her? We're all together in this. Whatever happens we're all together in this.

SILENCE

BRANDON

Did you bring food?

KRISTOFF

Of course. I thought you're not gonna ask.

BRANDON

I'm famished. Wake up Dessa.

BLACKOUT

SCENE TWO

LATE EVENING. STILL IN THE ATTIC.

BRANDON AND KRISTOFF ARE IN THEIR SEPARATE SLEEPING MATS. THEY'RE BOTH FAST ASLEEP.

DESSA IS LYING ON HER COUCH, TOSSING AND TURNING. SHE IS HAVING A NIGHTMARE.

DESSA

STOP! STOP! GET AWAY FROM ME! NO! PLEASE! ANYBODY HELP!

KRISTOFF IS AWAKENED BY HER SCREAM. HE RUSHES TO HER, SHAKES TO WAKE HER UP.

KRISTOFF

DESSA!

SILENCE

DESSA IS NOW SITTING UP.

DESSA

I still can't take my eyes off them Those giant humanoids. They have the crown of goats.
Sharply clawed, with large hoofs and horns.

KRISTOFF

Hold on. Will give you a drink.

KRISTOFF GOES OFF. SECONDS LATER, HE GOES BACK TO HER WITH A FLASK
OF WATER. SHE DRINKS.

KRISTOFF

Better?

DESSA

Don't leave me yet. Please. Stay. Stay with me.

SILENCE

DESSA

I don't know what's really going on in his mind. He's gone mad.

KRISTOFF

Who?

DESSA

Brandon. Who else?

KRISTOFF

You think so?

DESSA

Are we really going to do this?

KRISTOFF

Do what?

DESSA

Assassinate the president.

PAUSE

KRISTOFF

If that's the only way.

DESSA

The only way what?

KRISTOFF

The only way to liberation. Towards true democracy.

PAUSE

DESSA

Are you sure? Are you sure this is the only way? To annihilate him?

KRISTOFF

Hey listen. Have you not been tortured enough? Gang raped enough? You should at least owe it to yourself to see him dead. And we're not just talking about you. What happened to you.

We owe this to the thousands of our compatriots who have disappeared, who were killed

indiscriminately, extrajudicially. those who were abused, tortured, raped, abducted, maimed, harassed, like you. It's not only you. We are not doing this for ourselves alone. We're doing this for the rest of our people who have resigned themselves to take action against what the fuck is going on in our country. Do you think I enjoy this? In fact, I wanna get over this.

DESSA

So we're taking the cudgels for them

KRISTOFF

Yes. In a manner of speaking.

PAUSE

KRISTOFF

Are you not proud of it? Or not at least honored? Or privileged? Or humbled? Yes, we are doing them a favor. We are taking the cudgels for them.

PAUSE

DESSA

OKAY.

SILENCE

As if I have a choice.

PAUSE

DESSA

Let's review what I have to do then.

KRISTOFF

You have to watch over the bomb. It must not be within reach of the canines. Take close watch over the president's wife. Make sure you move her away from the explosion and the commotion. You have to whisk her with you. And better bring her alive. Is that clear?

DESSA

Yes. Very clear. Absolutely.

THEY FIST BUMP AND HUG EACH OTHER TIGHTLY AND LENGTHILY AS IF
THERE'S NO TOMORROW.

KRISTOFF

Let's sleep and break a leg for tomorrow's mission.

DESSA

Yes. It's going to be 'freedom day' tomorrow. May God be with us.

BLACKOUT

SCENE THREE

THE FOLLOWING MORNING. ROOFTOP OF THE ABANDONED WAREHOUSE.

BRANDON IS SET IN HIS POSITION, ARMED WITH HIS M16, READY TO ASSASSINATE THE PRESIDENT. KRISTOFF IS BESIDE HIM, HOLDING HIS MOBILE PHONE, WAITING FOR BRANDON'S SIGN TO PRESS THE BUTTON THAT WILL BLOW THE BOMB. THEY CLOSELY WATCH THE PROCEEDINGS IN THE EVENT. A MOBILE RADIO IS ALSO PLACED BETWEEN THEM.

A GIANT VIDEO WALL OR PROJECTION OF THE EVENT ON ONE OR TWO SIDES OF THE THEATRE CAN BE SEEN BY THE AUDIENCE.

BRANDON

Do you see Dessa?

KRISTOFF FOCUSES HIS BINOCULARS.

KRISTOFF

Yes, I see her. She's by the huge Dandelion flowerpot backdrop right behind the podium where the bomb is.

BRANDON

Perfect.

SILENCE

BRANDON

Has she gotten in touch with us yet?

KRISTOFF

Nope.

SILENCE

BRANDON

Here goes nothing.

SILENCE

KRISTOFF

Are you really sure about this?

BRANDON

Yes, I'm sure.

KRISTOFF

How sure?

BRANDON

One thousand percent sure. And shut the fuck up! I need to concentrate. Can't focus. And do what you're supposed to do, Goddamn it. Focus on that fucking bomb!

SILENCE

KRISTOFF STARES AT BRANDON MEANINGFULLY, AS IF WAITING FOR HIM TO SAY SOMETHING ELSE, PERHAPS CHANGE HIS MIND, OR OTHERWISE.

BRANDON WOULDN'T LOOK BACK AT KRISTOFF, NOT A SECOND, INDICATING HIS FIRMNESS TO SHOOT THE PRESIDENT. THE RADIO RECEIVES A MESSAGE FROM DESSA WHO'S AT THE SITE OF THE EVENT.

DESSA (OVER THE RADIO)

He is about to commence his speech. Get ready. Over an out.

VOICE OVER ANNOUNCEMENT

Ladies and gentlemen, the President of the Republic of the Philippines: His Excellency President Oscar Hidalgo.

THE PRESIDENT GOES UPSTAGE AND GOES STRAIGHT TO THE PODIUM. OPENING FANFARE MUSIC IS HEARD. WHEN HE IS ABOUT TO OPEN HIS SPEECH

THE PRESIDENT (VOICE OVER)

Ladies and gentlemen, my fellow compatriots, my fellow Filipinos, Good morning!

BRANDON

GO!

KRISTOFF PRESSES MOBILE BUTTON. BOMB EXPLODES. A SPLIT SECOND LATER, BRANDON FIRES AT THE PRESIDENT. THE TRAJECTORY HITS THE TOP OF HIS HEAD. HE DROPS ON THE PODIUM THEN SLUMPS WITH HIS HEAD AND BACK ON THE GROUND.

THE PRESIDENT'S FALL COULD BE SEEN ON A VIDEO WALL PROJECTED ON THE BACKDROP OF THE STAGE.

BLACKOUT

ACT TWO

THE FOLLOWING DAY. A HIDE OUT SOMEWHERE UP IN THE NORTH. THE ROOM SEEMS ARCHITECTURALLY SIMILAR TO THE ATTIC.

THE PRESIDENT'S WIFE IS SEATED, IN A RUSTY STEEL CHAIR, HOGTIED. SHE'S BLINDFOLDED. HER MOUTH IS GAGGED. SHE'S STILL WEARING WHAT SHE WORE DURING THE EVENT, BUT VERY DISHEVELLED.

DESSA, BRANDON AND KRISTOFF ENTER THE ROOM. THEY ILLUMINATE THE SCENE WITH THEIR FLASHLIGHTS AND GAS LAMPS.

DESSA ENTERS WITH A TRAY OF FOOD. SHE PUTS THEM ON A TABLE IN FRONT OF THE PRESIDENT'S WIFE.

BRANDON

Untie her.

KRISTOFF UNTIES AND UNGAGS HER, ALMOST LETTING HER LOOSE.

DESSA

Take your breakfast.

BRANDON

Better take your breakfast. We don't want you to die soon. That's never been part of our plan.

WIFE

You expect me to eat while I mourn over my husband's death?

BRANDON

Give yourself another time. As the Bible says, in Ecclesiastes, 'there's a time to weep, a time to mourn, a time to harvest, a time to celebrate.' Now is the time to celebrate. The dictator is gone. And the people are free. Cheers!

EVERYONE EXCEPT THE PRESIDENT'S WIFE

CHEERS!

THEY EACH TOAST WITH THEIR CHAMPAGNE IN CHAMPAGNE GLASSES. THE PRESIDENT'S WIFE IS GIVEN A GLASS OF CHAMPAGNE BUT WOULDN'T BUDGE.

THEY DRINK EXCEPT THE PRESIDENT'S WIFE.

WIFE

Why do you have to spare me?

BRANDON

We don't think you deserve to die. Like what your husband deserved.

WIFE

You seem to be justifying your crime.

BRANDON

There's no crime to speak of here. Ours is a justifiable act.

KRISTOFF

We did what we had to do. Besides, we feel there's no one in his right mind ever had the gall and temerity to do what we bravely did. It takes a lot of courage and chutzpah to assassinate a president, no less.

DESSA

With all due respect, Atty. Hidalgo, we believe in our heart of hearts that it was a must that we do what we did. Ours was a sacred and noble mission. A calling if you will. Even if we sometimes had doubts, I still think we did the right thing. I'm sorry but your husband had to be disposed of, the way he would dispose his constituents as easily as trash. Not to mention his Death Squad and EJKs. And of late, the many killings, death threats, harassments, tortures, and disappearances of journalists, members of the clergy, lawyers, doctors, farmers, human rights advocates, illegal arrests and silencing of critics, political oppositionists, the abuse of our marginalized and disenfranchised lumads, indigenous people and katutubos, who continue to support their kind, victims of social injustice, of violence, and the oppressed. The list went on and on ad nauseam and never ceased to end until we finally decided to liquidate him.

PAUSE

DESSA

And we ceased to be a republic because democracy is dead.

PAUSE

DESSA

A republic without democracy is dead.

SILENCE

WIFE

What do you want from me then?

KRISTOFF

We think that you're the only person deserving to succeed him.

WIFE

Are you serious? What gives you the right to enthrone me? And what makes you think I'm going to agree with your whims? Are you planning to declare a revolutionary government?

KRISTOFF

We have no army nor political capital to declare such. Besides, the reason why we killed your husband is because his greed for power is becoming infectious and uncontrollable, reaching staggering proportions. He thinks he's God's gift to humanity. Not even you, his dear wife could not stop him from his delusions of grandeur. And we all know that he was slowly losing his grip to sanity.

WIFE

I know that. But wouldn't it be better to allow the vice president to take over? I think this is the most acceptable option to consider. It's about time we do away with extra constitutional and extra judicial options. We should not play around with the law. No one should be above the law.

BARNDON

That is why we have so much respect for you, Attorney Hidalgo. There was never a time that you wavered your sense of dignity and integrity as a lawyer in exchange for the president's whims and caprices.

WIFE

Quite frankly, it was extremely difficult and challenging to toe the line between my roles as wife and political and professional partner to Oscar. I've been awfully walking on a tightrope with him. And since we're both lawyers, many a time we clash. But at the end of the day, it's really all a matter of prioritizing which is more important, what really gives

meaning in life: between love for oneself vis-à-vis the needs and welfare of others. And this is where our differences, priorities and values in life come in.

BRANDON

And this is also why we opted you to succeed your husband as president because we are very much aware of your unwavering and genuine love and concern for our beloved country, being a staunch human rights lawyer and advocate yourself. I'm just wondering how you were able to contain and fathom all the illegal, unconstitutional, immoral, inhuman and extrajudicial machinations of your husband.

WIFE

Maybe it's my love for him that made me sacrifice my principles in life. I was blinded by the lure of the heart. Sometimes the heart has no regard for logic, morals and reason. Sometimes we have to let reason rule over us more than our emotions wantonly taking over. It's been years since we stopped sleeping together, claiming separate rooms. Living in one roof was just for show, a façade, like what most married couples experience. Especially those in the public sphere, the fact that we have conflicted political priorities and persuasions, Yes, we live hypocritical lives but what can we do. All for political expediency.

PAUSE

WIFE

How we wish living simple lives.

SILENCE

WIFE

I'm now beginning to understand where you're all coming from.

KRISTOFF

Only if you were to give yourself a chance to lead and serve us.

WIFE

I'm sorry but my decision is non-negotiable. Let the due process of law takes over. Let's allow our constitution to dictate our destiny as a nation.

SILENCE

BRANDON

We respect your decision, Atty. Hidalgo. We only have one request, if you don't mind.

WIFE

What is it?

BRANDON

If you could vouch for our innocence by sparing us from whatever the law would decide upon us. It would be great if they think of us as heroes instead of criminals, but that's wishful thinking. And if they think we're criminals, I wish they could give us a light sentence, or perhaps, an amnesty. We're willing to succumb to the rule of law.

WIFE

I admire your sense of patriotism, selflessness, love and sacrifice for our dear beloved country. Yes, I will vouch for your innocence.

BRANDON

We can't thank you enough, Atty. Hidalgo.

KRISTOFF

Thank you for your inspiration, Madame Hidalgo.

DESSA

I'm also beginning to be proud of myself as a woman, Madame Hidalgo.

WIFE

Just call me Alicia.

AND AS THEY SHAKE HANDS AND HUG EACH OTHER, THE SOUND AND FURY OF POLICE AND MILITARY SIREN DOMINATE AND DEAFEN THE SCENE. THEY BARGE INSIDE THE ROOM.

POLICE

DON'T MOVE! PUT YOUR HANDS IN THE AIR!

WIFE

DON'T SHOOT! THEY'LL SURRENDER! I'LL VOUCH FOR THEM! I'LL ANSWER FOR THEM!

DESSA, BRANDON AND KRISTOFF PUT THEIR HANDS IN THE AIR. BUT WHEN DESSA SMELLED THE PRESENCE OF THE MILITARY MEN WHO GANG RAPED, ABUSED AND TORTURED HER, HER EMOTIONS RUN HIGH ENOUGH TO

BETRAY HER. HER RELIVED TRAUMA PUSHES HER TO DELIBERATELY SHOOT THEM.

DESSA

YOU FUCKING RAPISTS AND ASSHOLES! YOU ALL DESERVE TO DIE!

SHE INDISCRIMINATELY SHOOTS THEM. THE REST FOLLOW SUIT. EVERYONE SHOOTS EVERYONE.

DESSA, BRANDON, KRISTOFF AND THE PRESIDENT'S WIFE ARE ALL SPRAWLED ON THE FLOOR, DRIPPING WITH BLOOD. THERE WERE ALSO CASUALTIES FROM THE POLICE AND MILITARY.

END