

CALIGULA 2022

BY ROLF ALME

CHARACTERS:

CALIGULA – the Roman Emperor
CASSIUS – commander of the Roman army
MILONIA – Caligula's lover and journalist at the Roman TV
OKRAINIA – a victim of the Roman invasion
ASINIUS – a Roman senator

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THE CONCEPT OF HISTORY

CHORUS:

We are in the second year of Caligula's rule, or the twentieth, it is hard to say, it feels like a long time.

OKRAINIA:

The phenomenon of time is subjective, Milona. Sometimes one hour can feel like an eternity. Especially if you are sitting in a bomb shelter listening to enemy bombs falling on the housing blocks near you.

MILONIA:

If you are at the dentist even a minute can feel like an eternity, Okrainia, but anyway, Caligula has been emperor for a long time. He doesn't seem to get older though. He has no sign of wrinkles, and he still rides his favorite horse Incitatus, shirtless. He still looks like the statues they have erected of him and his horse in every city.

OKRAINIA:

Speaking of statues. Did you know he ordered the heads cut off from all the statues of the gods? The heads shall be replaced by the head of Caligula. Caligula is now the only god.

MILONIA:

I don't think he perceives himself as a god, Okrainia, rather as a prophet. Or perhaps as someone who will change history.

OKRAINIA:

Or perhaps as someone who rewrites history?

MILONIA:

Isn't that always a part of politics? You rewrite history to make it fit with your political views.

OKRAINIA:

Yes. Unscrupulous politicians make the past fit into their plans, for the future.

CALIGULA:

Excuse me, ladies, I couldn't help listening to your conversation.

OKRAINIA:

Ops, I forgot. There are spies everywhere.

CALIGULA:

Yes. But only here in Rome a spy has become emperor. In fact, it is the ultimate logic of espionage. To take complete control I mean. But I was concerned by something you said about rewriting history. Did you suggest that what happened in the past could be changed?

OKRAINIA:

I did not suggest anything, Caligula, I am too intelligent to have thoughts of my own. In Rome independent thoughts lead to death by poison, lions, or labor camps.

CALIGULA:

Clever girl. As for now I have no plans of sending you off to a cold labor camp or killing you with poison. I want to discuss the idea of rewriting history.

OKRAINIA:

You want to rewrite history or re-interpret history or simply ignore the facts of history?

CALIGULA:

Do you really believe there are facts of history? When we go back one day, one year, ten years, a hundred years, or a thousand years, how much do we really know? Isn't everything just interpretations based on fluid, nebulous legends? I am quite sure you will not be capable of giving me a precise account of what you did hour for hour yesterday or the day before. As a professional spy I know about these things. When we interrogate suspects even the most painful torture cannot make them remember precisely what they did yesterday. In the end they just say what we want them to say. And so is the very concept of history. History is what we want it to be.

OKRAINIA:

But if the concept of history is that fluid and unprecise, why do we need history?

CALIGULA:

Very good question! History justifies what we do today. Don't you agree? We need history as an instrument to give us a collective identity, a collective concept of who we are and what we are destined to do. I see history as a mythical project, or a religious project.

OKRAINIA:

You rewrite the history of the nation and thereby you become God, Caligula.

CALIGULA:

In some sense yes. Although I could have you killed for that remark.

OKRAINIA:

I know. But these days holding up a blank piece of paper is enough to be arrested. Some words are even forbidden. I fear your punishment whatever I say.

CALIGULA:

Yes, you are right. Language is an effective instrument of submission. When the emperor controls the language of his subjects, he controls their thoughts. Forbidding certain words creates a constant fear of saying something wrong. This fear among people is important for me to maintain. As emperor your power is based on fear. Don't you agree? But let us return to the concept of history. I see history as a foundation or substructure for my politics of the future. Therefore, I had to rewrite our nation's history in such a way that it legitimizes my present and future actions. History has an incredible authority.

OKRAINIA:

Yes, I understand. When you say that a people have never been a nation historically, but an integral part of Rome, it gives you a certain authority to invade and assimilate these people today. Although everybody understands your reason to crush the nation is personal and political.

CALIGULA:

Clever girl. But you know, when you are in power, when you are an emperor or a tyrant, you don't really care if the people see through your arguments. You don't care if they understand you are lying. So long as you keep up the fear of being killed or sent to a labor camp, you can do what you want.

OKRAINIA:

But why are you so concerned about rewriting history, Caligula? Why do you need history as a prerequisite if you can do whatever you want anyway?

CALIGULA:

I need it for the history books, Okrainia. I do it so that Caligula's part in history will be glorious.

(Music. Physical action.)

THE ROMAN ARMY

CALIGULA:

Can I trust you?

CASSIUS:

Sir, my emperor, you can always trust me.

CALIGULA:

Good. So why isn't my army more efficient? In Rome we have a tradition of liquidating officers that are not efficient.

CASSIUS:

Sir, beloved emperor Caligula, your army is the strongest in the world. Our glorious military history is untarnished, without failures. Your army was born in the vast fields of our beloved Motherland. The immortal soldiers have grown up from the blood-filled sumps of the Great War. Like vampires, like living dead, they march without fear against the enemy. They know only victory. They are trained to fight without mercy to die without grief. No other nation, no other army has soldiers like you sir.

CALIGULA:

Good. This was the official answer. Why isn't my army more efficient? I repeat our glorious tradition of killing officers that do not fulfil our expectations. Just in case you had forgotten it.

CASSIUS:

Sir, we fight against the Devil. It is a mythical or even a religious fight. History or destiny is testing us. The world and the gods are watching us. Only in utter hardship can we prove our superiority.

CALIGULA:

So, you are saying my army must bleed to prove its divine position?

CASSIUS:

Yes Sir. It is a sacrifice we must make to conquer the world.

CALIGULA:

I don't care how many soldiers we sacrifice in this war. I don't care about the blood wasted. And as you know I don't care about the crying mothers. But give me the victory or else I'l make use of our glorious tradition. You know what I mean, don't you?

CASSIUS:

Sir, when you join your army of the Motherland, death is never far away. You are speaking about the bullet to my back head, aren't you?

CALIGULA:

Yes. Normally it is just a little bullet from a 9-mm «Gurza» pistol. Quick and clean. But sometimes we must hang your family members on meat hooks first to make things clear. Disappointment sometimes needs a ritual or a theatrical manifestation. For your extended family we always have the lions. You have four young nieces, Cassius. I saw them playing in the garden of the imperial palace the other day. As I watched them, I thought that each of them seemed to be a day's meat ration for a lion. So, why isn't my army more efficient, my dear Cassius?

CASSIUS:

The borders of The Roman Empire are breathing like the lungs of a fighting gladiator, Sir. They are breathing in and out, in and out. During its history the Empire has been expanding and shrinking, expanding, and shrinking. The gladiator's lung capacity increases when looking a lion in the eyes, and the Empire is expanding when confronting a deadly enemy. Like now.

CALIGULA:

At this very moment the gladiator is confronting a little cat, not a lion. So why isn't my army more efficient, Cassius? Has the little cat jumped up in the face of the gladiator and blinded him with its claws?

CASSIUS:

Your spies told us the enemy was a cat, Sir. But in reality it was a lion. Is that an answer you can live with, Caligula?

CALIGULA:

The question is not if \underline{I} can live with your answer, my dear Cassius. The question is if \underline{you} will survive that kind of answer. The question is if \underline{I} , the Emperor, Caligula, will let you live after such an answer. I will have to think about that.

(Music, physical action.)

THE OLIGARCHS

ASINIUS:

Milona, may I have a word?

MILONIA:

Asinius, do you want to speak to me in your position as a senator or in your position as an oligarch or in your position as a friend?

ASINIUS:

Do we really need this extremely annoying analytical approach before we start talking?

MILONIA:

Rome is a dangerous place, Asinius. A wrong word, a wrong gesture, a wrong interpretation, and you are dead.

ASINIUS:

That may be so. At present I think I would like to speak with you entirely as an oligarch, Milona.

MILONIA:

Good. Do you want to speak to me as your friend, as Caligula's lover or as Head of the National TV?

ASINIUS:

That is a tricky question.

MILONIA:

Take your time, Asinius. It is better to be sure.

ASINIUS:

I go for the Head of the Roman TV, or the Ministry of Propaganda as the Roman public calls it.

MILONIA:

Be careful, Asinius. I haven't heard you said the word propaganda. The emperor doesn't like that word. He prefers the word truth. What do you want to speak to me about, Asinius?

ASINIUS:

You know what is going on don't you? As Head of the State TV, you have access to information from abroad, from the external provinces, from the Orient, the Byzantine Empire, India, and China.

MILONIA:

I do. Sadly, I do.

ASINIUS:

So, what do they say? Something must be terribly wrong because all the trade routes stop. They just stop. Apparently, the camels stop in the middle of the desert and return home again with their full loads of silk and spices and jewels and incense as a demonstration against Caligula.

MILONIA:

I am not authorized to tell you this, Asinius, but it is not just the camels that stop. The trading ships stop too, and it is not because the wind stops. No. They change direction and sail to ports outside the Roman empire.

ASINIUS:

But why?

MILONIA:

Because of the so-called special imperial operation Caligula has started in our neighboring country. It has not only turned into a man-slaughtering catastrophe. Rome's once so proud army has been transformed into a horde of barbarians exterminating an entire culture! Temples and palaces and the entire infrastructure is wiped out. The foreign powers see our emperor turning into a madman. I haven't said anything of that of course, I am just referring what the foreign powers say. They say, and I am still just referring: "Caligula will try to destroy the whole world as we know it to become the most important tyrant in the entire history of mankind".

ASINIUS:

My God! This is a catastrophe! Do you think they are right?

MILONIA:

Of course, they are right, but you never heard me say it.

ASINIUS:

But what on earth are we going to do? The Roman economy is going to collapse.

MILONIA:

Asinius, don't be pathetic. <u>You</u> are going to collapse, not Rome. You and the other oligarchs. Rome is going to be fine.

ASINIUS:

What do you know about economics, Milonia? The Roman empire exists and thrives only because of its extensive trade with other nations. How do you want to get silk for your new toga if we don't trade with China? Have you ever seen silkworms spinning around in the trees in Rome?

MILONIA:

No, but I have seen baskets filled to the brim with olives from your olive plantations. You will have problems selling your olive oil to the Byzantine Empire because they do not want to touch products from Rome anymore. That is what worries you and the other oligarchs. You have never been worried about Caligula's actions, neither regarding the Roman population nor regarding other countries.

ASINIUS:

But now we are worried, Milonia, because Caligula is destroying the entire Roman economy. That will lead to a collapse of the whole society as we know it. We, the oligarchs, have so far been able to keep the economy going despite Caligula's corrupt kleptocratic system. But this is a new dramatic situation, and we can do nothing. We are his hostages, Milonia.

MILONIA:

Give me a break. A hostage is normally a person sitting naked in a cage waiting for the lions, while his terrified family is collecting all the jewels in the house and handing them to Caligula. You are not a hostage, you seem to be doing fine, Asinius.

50%.	
MILONIA:	

What?

ASINIUS:

ASINIUS:

50% was what he responded when we visited him after he had thrown our colleague Augustus into a cage. You remember the image of him sitting in the cage, don't you?

MILONIA:

Caligula said that one of Rome's most wealthy oligarchs, Augustus, was corrupt and threw him into a cage. Yes, I remember him sitting in the cage. He was later, together with his family, thrown to the lions to celebrate Caligula's birthday if I remember correctly. We made an extensive reportage on Caligula's birthday that year and I remember Caligula was eating ice-cream while watching an Egyptian lion eat Augustus. He was smiling in the camera. Caligula, I mean not Augustus.

ASINIUS:

When Caligula suddenly for no apparent reason threw one of the oligarchs to the lions, we, the other oligarchs, got worried, and we went to see Caligula. We asked why he had arrested Augustus.

MILONIA:

And he arrested Augustus because he was corrupt. That was the official version at least. That is what the Roman public was told.

ASINIUS:

Yes, of course Augustus was corrupt! We are all corrupt! The whole Roman empire is corrupt! And Caligula, Caligula is beyond corruption! He is the world master of corruption! ... But I have never ever said that of course. You didn't hear me say that did you, Milonia?

MILONIA:

Did you speak? Did you say something, Asinius? I think I just heard a fly buzzing.

ASINIUS:

Good, Caligula's argument is that because everyone is corrupt, everyone can be thrown to the lions anytime. That is so to speak his political system. We asked him what we could do to avoid ending up as dinner for hungry lions and then he said: "50%".

MILONIA:

50%?

ASINIUS:

Yes, 50%. He wanted 50% of all our wealth, of all our income, of all our estates and palaces. 50%. Right away. Then he would let us live "for the time being" as he said.

MILONIA:

My God! I knew Caligula was rich, but I didn't know he was that rich.

ASINIUS:

Caligula is one of the richest men in the world, Milona. He has 700 cars and 58 planes and helicopters. His favorite plane even has a toilet made of gold.

MILONIA:

Where does he drive with all those cars?

ASINIUS:

Where should he drive? There are no roads for cars in Rome. Cars are not even invented! And planes and helicopters! Who has heard of planes and helicopters? In the time of the Roman Empire?

MILONIA:

This is totally absurd, Asinius!

ASINIUS:

Yes, it is!

MILONIA:

As a journalist I will try to conclude. I hear foreign powers say Caligula is a threat to the entire world because of his disastrous, unprovoked war to a neighboring country, and you say Caligula is ruining the entire Roman economy. This is not what I normally call good evening news, Asinius.

ASINIUS:

No. It is worse than I had imagined. The question is what we can do about it?

MILONIA:

Yes. That is the question. And I am not even allowed to inform the Roman public about this catastrophic situation. The emperor has commanded a total news blackout regarding the war, or the special imperial whatever – whatever we are allowed to call it. The Romans must not know anything. They must only get good news about Caligula's divine speeches and his generous public appearances and light

entertainment from the circus. If I publicly say what I know, I will be killed immediately. There are two lions in a cage outside the studio of the Roman broadcasting cooperation.

ASINIUS:

What can we do, Milonia?

MILONIA:

That is the question. What can we do?

ASINIUS:

We could... ... You didn't notice what I was thinking about, did you?

MILONIA:

Yes, I did, actually. Be careful, Asinius. In my position as your friend, I want you to be aware of the fact that Caligula is known to read people's thoughts.

(Music, physical action.)

THE SENATORS

ASINIUS:

Are we alone? Can we talk here, Cassius?

CASSIUS:

My dear Asinius, in Rome we are never alone. As a senator you must know that.

ASINIUS:

I know. But can you see any of his spies?

CASSIUS:

His spies? Listen, Caligula has spies everywhere. Spies are an integral part of any tyranny. We are surrounded by spies. But the special thing about Rome Asinius, is that here even the emperor is a spy.

ASINIUS:

Yes, of course, Cassius. Everybody knows the emperor Caligula is a spy. But can he hear us?

CASSIUS:

I don't think so. He is occupied with rewriting history at the moment. I know from my own experience as commander of the Roman army that he doesn't even listen to his spies these days.

ASINIUS:

That is perhaps part of the problem. He doesn't listen to anyone anymore.

CASSIUS:

Or to be more precise, he only listens to people saying what he wants them to say.

ASINIUS:

You are right. When you speak with him, he starts by saying what you shall respond when he asks you a question. If you don't answer his question using precisely the same words as he used, you are executed or sent to the labor camps. Caligula has a strange way of communicating.

CASSIUS:

So, what did you want to speak about, senator Asinius?

ASINIUS:

Well, Caligula of course. What else troubles our minds these days.

CASSIUS:

The devastating military invasion troubles me and the entire Roman army these days.

ASINIUS:

The invasion and Caligula are more or less the same thing, the same problem, Cassius. This war, ops, I mean the "special imperial operation" is destroying our economy. All the senators are worried. The Roman empire is going to collapse economically. Our trade with the other provinces and the outside world has come to a complete stop. The Orient, the Byzantine Empire, India, and China, they have all stopped the trading routes. The camels have stopped walking and the ships have stopped sailing. The Venetian Trade Company can't import spices anymore!

CASSIUS:

Yes, I have noticed. We are out of silk and pepper. But I think Caligula can live with that. He doesn't like spicy food.

ASINIUS:

That may be so, but the consequences for our trading companies are dramatic. We can't export our olive oil anymore. And as you know Caligula is dependent on this export to finance his "special imperial operation".

CASSIUS:

Caligula is not dependent on the export of olive oil. He doesn't care about economics, and I think he prefers sunflower oil on his salad.

ASINIUS:

But we, the senators are worried about the economic situation of Rome.

CASSIUS:

You are not speaking on behalf of the senators, Asinius, but on behalf of the oligarchs. You are worried about your personal wealth and your company's export of olive oil to Byzantine.

ASINIUS:

You know just as well as I that most senators are rich oligarchs, Cassius. The senate is controlled by money and now unfortunately also by Caligula's terror. Before Caligula came to power it was just controlled by money and that was a much better situation, at least for the Roman economy.

CASSIUS:

I know for sure Caligula will not stop the invasion. He will not end his "special imperial operation" before he has achieved his goals.

ASINIUS:

What on earth are his goals? Does he want to destroy Rome? Does he want to ruin the whole civilized world?

CASSIUS:

His goals are to change history, Asinius, or to be the one that changed history forever. He wants to be remembered as the emperor that transformed the whole world.

ASINIUS:

Who the hell will remember him if there is no civilized world left after his disastrous actions?

CASSIUS:

That is an extremely relevant question you will have to direct to Caligula. But I don't think you will survive after having asked him that question.

ASINIUS:

No, of course not. I am not stupid.

CASSIUS:

And I will remind you that all the members of the senate voted in favor of the invasion.

ASINIUS:

Yes, of course we did! We were told that Caligula would have us killed if we didn't support his plan. One senator that didn't stretch up his arm high enough when we voted in favor of the invasion was thrown to the lions. Not because he voted against Caligula's invasion but because "he didn't show enough enthusiasm for the emperor's divine plan" as Caligula stated while watching the hungry lions eat him.

CALIGULA:

You are speaking about lions, Asinius? How interesting!

ASINIUS:

Caligula! Our beloved emperor! How nice to see you! Cassius just told me you are consumed by the study of history.

CALIGULA:

So, I am senator. So, I am. And you are consumed by the thoughts of hungry lions eating senators as I understand, senator.

ASINIUS:

As a senator one is always a little worried about lions, Caligula. One tries to do as well as one can to avoid the lions.

CALIGULA:

That is excellent, senator, excellent! And what about you, my dear army general Cassius? I hope you are worried about lions as well. Or you are perhaps more concerned about that little 9-mm «Gurza» pistol to the back of your head? I remember we once had an interesting conversation about the exciting theatrical event of hanging up family members on meat hooks. I hope that image hasn't slipped your mind, my dear Cassius.

CHORUS:

Caligula, your divine imperial images never slip our mind. Never!

(Music. Physical action.)

THE PHIOLOSOPHER

CALIGULA:

Welcome to this lecture about my favorite philosopher Ivan Ilyin. As stated, anyone who falls asleep during my speech will be sent to labor camps in Siberia. It is very cold up there at this very moment by the way. As you know I have sent the script of this lecture to all civil servants of the Empire. I also had the remains of the dead philosopher, to be precise his bones and his skull, transported to Rome where he was buried in a Russian Orthodox monastery during a state ceremony.

Ivan Ilyin once wrote: "Politics is the art of identifying and neutralizing the enemy". This wonderful statement touches my heart in a particular way as it confirms my life's assignment as a spy. And it still is fundamental for my present position as a tyrant.

Ivan Ilyin gives us the metaphysical and moral justification for political totalitarianism, which he expressed in his practical outlines for a fascist state. The so-called rule of law is nothing but a decadent infectious illness. The Roman Empire's destiny is to confront this illness with something Ilyin calls <u>national innocence</u>, which is a kleptocrat society with dramatic economic inequality and an unpredictable juridic system completely controlled by a tyrant. This society of national innocence doesn't try to achieve perfection or create social security. No! That would be an affront against the gods and the divine order. Only the gods can be perfect. That is also the religious argument why the societies outside Rome are godless in their striving for rule of law, individual freedom, and a socially balanced society.

Fascism, says llyin, is a liberating excess of patriotic coincidences. In this one sentence, the concepts of law and moral, are undone. A spirit of lawlessness replaces the spirit of the law, and a spirit of murder replaces a spirit of mercy.

Lawlessness and murder must therefore be the very foundations of our divine society of national innocence.

In Ilyin's book: «On the Use of Violence to Resist Evil» he gives us the metaphysical reasons why our enemies are godless and evil, and then the political argument to attack them and crush them with unlimited violence. History, ladies and gentlemen, history shows us that our godless enemies have oppressed Rome since the dawn of time. The Roman Empire is an eternal victim! Therefore I, Caligula, have now started the divine special imperial operation against our enemies. It is a religious fight against the evil forces that are against the gods. It is a merciless religious fight for fascism, oppression and conservative family values against decadence, rule of law, and individual freedom. Ladies and gentlemen, it is a fight for the Roman innocence! Our ultimate goal given us by history and the gods is to exterminate the decadence of our neighboring countries and to extend the innocent Roman Empire. We will slaughter and kill our hostile, godforsaken neighbors. And then we will extend the borders of Rome from the cold glaciers in the north to the dry deserts of the south and from the endless wastelands of the east to the sun-filled shores of the west.

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you!

MILONIA:

What an inspiring and thought-provoking speech, Caligula! We got everything on tape and will broadcast it to the entire Roman population tonight. The external provinces will get versions with Hebraic, Greek and Arab subtitles during the week. The horses and ships are on their way. Roman soldiers with freshly sharpened swords will make sure the entire population will be sitting tight in front of the television screens listening to your divine words.

CALIGULA:

How was my diction, Milona? I sometimes have problems pronouncing the word "metaphysical".

MILONIA:

It was absolutely perfect Caligula! Perfect! I heard no sign of lisping whatsoever.

CALIGULA:

Are you insinuating that I am normally lisping, Milona? Are you saying I am lisping? Do you have the guts to say that your emperor has a speech impediment? It seems to me that you say I am not able to speak correctly, and that I degrade the divine texts of Ivan Ilyin! You are insane, Milona! I will ask for a hungry lion to tear you apart this very minute, or perhaps I will hang you up on a meat hook and listen carefully if your pain cries will have a perfect diction!

MILONIA:

Sir, Emperor, my dear Caligula. You are a genius! You just exemplified Ivan Ilyin's theory of the Roman innocence! A tyrant that wouldn't lose his temper when someone is insinuating that he is lisping, would try to be perfect and therefor be godless. You, my dear Caligula show you are a human with imperfect anger issues. You are the embodiment of the Roman innocence and therefor divine!

(Music.)

LOVING A TYRANT:

CALIGULA:

Do you love me, Milonia?

MILONIA:

You know I love you, Caligula.

CALIGULA:

You have never asked me the same question, Milonia.

MILONIA:

You are the emperor, Sir, one doesn't ask that kind of question to an emperor. It would be inappropriate.

CALIGULA:

Good answer. Do you find me attractive, Milonia?

MILONIA:

Of course, I find you attractive, Caligula.

CALIGULA:

Do you find me attractive because of my looks or because I am the emperor, Milonia?

MILONIA:

I find you attractive because your looks are those of the emperor Caligula, the man I love.

CALIGULA:

Clever girl. Are you afraid of me, Milonia?

MILONIA:

Any subject of the emperor should fear him. We, your people, should both fear and love the emperor, just like we should fear and love the gods.

CALIGULA:

Nice. Very nice answer. When you share the bed with me, do you ever think about lions?

MILONIA:

When I touch your beard, I think about the magnificent mane of a lion, when I look into your eyes I think about the incredible intelligence of a lion, and when I feel your arms around my body I think about the immense strength of a lion.

CALIGULA:

Excellent. Did you enjoy the night together with me, Milonia?

MILONIA:

You know I did, Caligula. You know I did. As always, Caligula.

CALIGULA:

Well, I couldn't sleep. So, I watched you sleeping. You had nightmares, Milonia. The whole night. You were sweating, your eyes were rolling, your body retracted in spasms, and you were speaking, Milonia. You were speaking.

MILONIA:

Caligula, my emperor, my love...

CALIGULA:

Not so clever. I will keep the words you uttered in your dreams as my secret, Milonia. As my little secret. Remember, Milonia, now the emperor Caligula has read your inner thoughts, seen your inner images. You can leave now, Milonia. I will ask my guards to bring you back to me tomorrow night. They will find you wherever you are.

(Music. Physical action.)

THE FLIES:

CALIGULA:

I. Caligula, am the emperor of the Roman Empire and as emperor I have the ultimate power, which basically means I can decide everything and do everything I want like sending anyone I want to death. I know that most people will never have this experience of ultimate power, so I feel I have an obligation to share with you my experiences... Having power over everyone and everything is not so different from having power over let's say your little son or a fly. The fly is a good example. It irritates you and you smash it just like that. Then you brush away the dead fly from your arm and that's it. You don't make any reflections about how the fly felt when you smacked him. You don't think about who he really was, his personality, his family background, his hobbies, what kind of jam he liked, if he was engaged or even married with another fly and had maggots or kids, or if he was troubled by dandruff etc. You don't think about him as someone. You just smash him. With your young son it is similar but smacking him when he irritates you doesn't have the same consequences of course. Your son just continues irritating you. So, when I, Caligula, emperor of the Roman Empire, send hundreds of people to death it is just like you being surrounded by flies or mosquitoes using a very efficient fly swatter bug spray or insect repellent. Then you may argue that a fly isn't a human being like yourself, and you cannot expect us to have empathy towards insects... But this is just the point, you see. You don't have empathy towards something or someone you don't regard and define as someone like yourself. It can be an insect, someone of another social class, another nationality, another race, another religion or whatever. You or someone or your culture or your religion or whatever just defines that those guys are not human beings like yourself and smack! You smash the fuckers just like that, just like flies without problems.

CASSIUS:

This is the basic principle of war, Caligula. You dehumanize your enemy. You define him with words like "the barbaric hordes" or "the aggressors" or "the neo-Nazis". And you fabricate lies about him like "he is committing genocide to the Roman population". It doesn't feel wrong to kill people responsible for genocide, does it? It doesn't feel wrong to kill neo-Nazis. Then you can even bomb a children's hospital and get away with it.

CALIGULA:

I basically define all my enemies as flies, Cassius, as tiny irritating insects. It eliminates any idea of empathy. But to be quite honest, I define all human beings around me as flies, including you my friend Cassius.

(Music. Physical action.)

WOMEN AND VIOLENT MEN:

CHORUS:

We are in the third year of Caligula's rule, or in the thirtieth. We are not sure. Linear time has ceased to exist in Rome. We have returned to a situation where long cold winters follow long rainy autumns that just get colder and colder and turn into winters again. Apparently, there was something called spring and summer before, but we haven't seen them for a while. Everything in Rome is gloomy. The only distraction is the circus where Siberian lions eat enemies of the state. Here, in the circus, together with his lover Milonia, Caligula is watching the wild animals chew and swallow his human sacrifices to fascism and tyranny. But the tyrant is bored and has just given new orders to the Head of his guards.

CALIGULA:

I just ordered my guards to throw the audience sitting from row number 16 to row number 28 down to the pit to the wild animals, Milonia. All people are guilty of something, so why don't throw them to the lions right away?

MILONIA:

As you say, Caligula, all people are guilty of something.

CALIGULA:

The element of unpredictable violence is crucial for a dictatorship. It keeps the people on their toes. It prevents uprising.

MILONIA:

Those are words from your philosopher, Ivan Ilyin, aren't they? I seem to remember the phrases from one of your illuminating speeches we broadcasted.

CALIGULA:

Clever girl. But I advise you to be careful remembering when I quote Ilyin. Perhaps I prefer that people think they are my ideas.

MILONIA:

Ideas always come from somewhere or someone, Caligula. Thoughts and words are a universal heritage.

CALIGULA:

For a tyrant, words are just tools, Milonia, just basic tools. Violence is the crucial element of power. Violence creates fear and with fear you can rule the world. ... And now we will watch the spectators that were sitting on row 16 to 28 be eaten by lions! What a glorious sight it will be! Kiss me Milona! Swear that you love me!

MILONIA:

I needn't swear. You know I love you.

CHORUS:

Caligula and Milonia embrace and kiss passionately while the guards whip the last spectators down to the blood-stanched pit. Caligula caresses Milonia's hair and her face and then his hands descend to her neck. He holds his hands around her throat. Milonia holds on to Caligula's hands. It is hard to see if Caligula strangles her or if it is just a sign of affection. Milonia moans. Caligula is breathing heavily. He removes his head from her a little to watch her red face. Then he kisses her passionately while releasing his hands' grip around her throat...

CALIGULA:

Let the executions begin!

CHORUS:

Why do women fall in love with violent men? From the dawn of mankind women have flocked around dictators, murderers, executioners, psychopaths, and soldiers. Do women seek protection from a violent society in the arms of the cruelest? Or are women attracted to the smell of blood or the smell of gunpowder or the smell of death?

MILONIA:

I do think the element of power is attractive for women. Yes. But we must not forget that a tyrant like Caligula has been carefully fabricated and staged by a massive system of propaganda. Caligula is so to speak a product created by the Roman broadcasting cooperation. He is feared, yes, but he is also loved by all Romans due to the excessive number of programs about him. Programs where he is portrayed as an exceptionally strong, immensely charming, and extremely intelligent emperor that for some divine reason never grows old. Of course, women fall in love with such a man. And if such a perfect man is violent, then there must be a good reason for it. Then the people he kills have probably done terrible things. Who knows what the spectators from row 16 to 28 have done? They are probably horrifying monsters, or neo-Nazis.

(Music. Physical action.)

GREED AND DESTRUCTION:

CALIGULA:

Senator Asinius, I have sent for you. I have a question. Can you make the senate adopt a new law so that all private heritage goes to me, Caligula? My idea is that when someone in Rome dies, I, Caligula am the sole heir.

ASINIUS:

Sir, excuse me, I didn't quite understand. Was that a question if such a law is possible?

CALIGULA:

No, of course it wasn't a question. It was just a way of speaking. It was an order. As you know Rome has certain economic problems at the moment due to some hostile countries' ruthless and totally incomprehensible sanctions.

ASINIUS:

I think I know why they sanction us, Caligula.

CALIGULA:

Did I ask you to explain to me the sanctions, senator Asinius?

ASINIUS:

No, of course not, Caligula. But may I ask you a question, my dear Emperor?

CALIGULA:

Yes, of course!

ASINIUS:

I have a question about greed, Caligula. When is it enough? If my information is correct, you already have a private fortune of 200 billion Dollars. You can buy everything you want. Why do you want more?

CALIGULA:

It is not about a banal concept of purchasing power. As you know I already have 20 houses and 700 cars and a collection of 58 planes and helicopters including a 716 million Dollar plane called "The Flying Kremlin" that has a toilet made of gold.

ASINIUS:

Yes, I know. Have you been driving all those 700 cars?

CALIGULA:

No, of course not. Where the hell should I drive? And as you know cars aren't even invented yet. Nobody even knows what a car is. In what time do you think we live? We live in the year 40! We live in the time of the Roman fucking Empire! ... Greed is more like a philosophy or an ideology. Greed is one of the basic principles of my rule. I have installed a so-called kleptocratic rule. Stealing money from others gives me a certain satisfaction. I think greed is the constructive aspect of being a tyrant. The destructive aspect is probably the need to destroy and to kill. We steal all we can just to ensure ourselves that we can do it. And when stealing doesn't give us enough satisfaction anymore, we start to destroy and to kill. Just to ensure ourselves that we have the power to do it. You kill and destroy just because you can do it.

ASINIUS:

This reminds me of something Cassius told me about the soldiers in the Roman army. He said the army was built on a principal he called "accumulation of reciprocal violence". The young conscripts are beaten by the soldiers that are beaten by their lieutenants that are beaten by their captains that are beaten by their colonels that are beaten by their generals and they are at the end shot and killed by the emperor. This systematic violence results in soldiers and officers that in a war-situation mutilate, rape, and kill civilians almost automatically. Because they have accumulated so much unprovoked beating that they have efficiently been turned into sadists, and they have been taught that human lives have no value. In a war they kill and destroy just because they can do it.

CALIGULA:

Yes, exactly! That is in precise words the military doctrine of Rome! In fact, it is the doctrine of the whole Roman society: human lives have no value in Rome. My general Cassius by the way, calls his soldiers vampires or living dead which is a good description of their mental state. Destruction and killing is perhaps even more satisfying than just vulgar corruption and stealing. Destruction and killing is the proof of ultimate power!

ASINIUS:

So, your special imperial operation was nothing but a personal confirmation of your power?

CALIGULA:

I did it because I <u>could do it.</u> And you, my dear senator Asinius, will have the new law voted by the senate by tomorrow, won't you?

ASINIUS:

I will do what I can, my dear emperor Caligula.

CALIGULA:

I repeat: And you, my dear senator Asinius, will have the new law voted by the senate by tomorrow, won't you? It wasn't a question, my dear Asinius, just a way of speaking. ... And just before you go, senator Asinius. I would also like the senate to vote for a total assimilation of our neighboring countries, and to pass an official statement encouraging our soldiers to be more brutal and consequent in eradicating the civilians. You can go now, senator.

(Music. Physical action.)

THE VICTIMS:

OKRAINIA:

But the soldiers were already brutal. And they showed no signs of saving the civilians. And despite the cynical rhetoric from the aggressor, it was a war. But what is a war? I mean, do we have the mental capacity to understand what a war really is? Everything collapses. The infrastructure, schools, food-distribution, water supply, communications. Everything that you take for granted. You feel very vulnerable when all this disintegrates and disappears before your own eyes. You feel very alone. And then the bombs fall. Without any logic, without any understandable system. They just fall and explode with a terrifying sound. They destroy the housing block next to yours but not yours. Not today. They destroy your sister's school. Fires everywhere. Toxic smoke of burning chemicals. You see dead bodies in the street. You see the young mother and her son killed by rocket debris and you see their suitcase. They wanted to flee. She wanted to save her little son from the war. You see these dramatic human destinies everywhere. You read dramatic novels written on every bombed house, in every desperate face, you hear breathtaking stories in every cry for help, in every scream in utter desperation. Then you see the enemy soldiers. Strange. They look like you, they look like your friends, your father, your brother, your uncle. But they are dressed like soldiers, and they are enemies. They are vampires drinking your country's blood. Their heads are filled with incomprehensible stories, malicious lies, a manipulated false history, and an unbreakable will to kill you and your pregnant sister and your mother. Because for them, in their heads you are evil. I don't understand why their heads are filled with all this darkness, but that is not a useful thought right now. You must run, you must hide, you must wait for silence perhaps, for darkness. In a cold humid basement. In an over-crowded subway. The smell of urine, the smell of sweat, the smell of fear and the smell of death. Crying infants. A shivering old lady is just repeating the word "no". Perhaps she is in shock, perhaps she just saw her daughter die, or perhaps she just wants to say "no", and perhaps this word: "no" is the only relevant word in this situation.

CHORUS:

When you start a war in a neighboring country you must know what the consequences will be. You must know that many people will die, will be wounded for life, will be traumatized for life. You must know that cities, infrastructure, cultural heritage, temples for the gods, beautiful historic buildings, industry, and atomic power plants will be destroyed, and you must know it will ignite hatred towards your own country for generations.

OKRAINIA:

You knew all that, Caligula, didn't you? You are not stupid.

CALIGULA:

Yes of course I knew all that. I am not stupid. But it doesn't bother me. It doesn't give me sleepless nights or destroy my appetite. I got angry because my army wasn't more efficient though. It took too much time, but those are only technical details. The war is a historical and cultural necessity for Rome. In a hundred years, Romans will praise me for this war. They will sing songs for my glory.

OKRAINIA:

Have you heard about a phenomenon called empathy?

CALIGULA:

I think I have heard about a similar phenomenon, but it is called weakness. A tyrant cannot allow himself weakness.

CHORUS:

Scientists have detected a severe default in the brain of some people. They lack the so-called mirror neuron system that is vital for human communication and developing of human cooperation. These people are incapable of detecting emotional reactions in other people. They have no empathy.

CALIGULA:

I don't really understand what this group of degenerates is speaking about. It seems to be something very scientific. And I am sure this phenomenon, empathy, wasn't something we discussed during the time of the Roman empire. No! The Roman Empire has a long history of murder, of terror. We would sacrifice millions of innocent people if it was necessary for the state. The emperors have never hesitated in using untamed violence. The Empire is built on oppression, summary executions, torture, and murderous labor camps. No, no, no! This I am totally sure of: My motherland, The Roman Empire has never ever heard about empathy!

(Music. Physical action.)

THE CONSPIRACY:

CHORUS:

We are in the fourth year of Caligula's rule or the fortieth, we are not sure. Counting has been stopped by imperial order in Rome. The economy collapsed because of the sanctions. Draughts and toxic heat and lack of fertilizers have made agriculture impossible. All the remaining food and other recourses are given to the Roman army. They are still fighting their neighboring countries like roaring zombies in a nightly graveyard. In Rome groups of starving people dressed in rags roam the dirty streets searching for food. Caligula's spies and dehydrated lions lurk behind every corner. The emperor is hiding in an atomic bomb proofed bunker under one of his palaces.

ASINIUS:

Did you see anyone on your way here?

OKRAINIA:

It is dark, Asinius, and the spies are all dressed in black. They are strange, they even wear black sunglasses at nighttime. At some point I thought I heard someone breathing behind me, but I hope it was just the wind.

ASINIUS:

Let us hope so. Rome is a dangerous place. Caligula has his spies everywhere, but in fact I don't think he listens to them anymore. Rumors say he is hiding in the basement of one of his palaces, and he doesn't let anyone come close to him.

OKRAINIA:

Is he hiding because of the plague, Asinius? They say people are dying like flies in Rome these days, and the antiserum Rome is selling to people doesn't work. It just makes them die quicker and with more pain.

ASINIUS:

Would you trust anything coming from Rome, Okrainia? But, no, Caligula is not hiding because of the plague. Our emperor's body is already filled up with so many chemical substances to appear young, that no plague will affect him. They say he is immunized with a magical subtract called Botox.

OKRAINIA:

Yes, I have noticed he tries to escape the aging process. He has no wrinkles. He tries to become timeless and immortal. His intention is to rule Rome forever. We are all doomed, Asinius.

ASINIUS:

The last years he actually looks younger and younger every day. A little swollen perhaps, but undoubtably younger. An immortal Caligula is a terrifying concept.

OKRAINIA:

To live in a world with an eternal Caligula is in fact a terrifying thought. So why did you want to see me in this lonely place in the middle of the night, Asinius?

ASINIUS:

I have something very important to discuss with you. But we must wait. I have invited two others. What is the latest news from your home, Okrainia? It is still bad, isn't it?

OKRAINIA:

There are no more words to describe it, Asinius. All the words are used. The mothers have hardly any tears left to morn their dead sons. The ground is covered with blood. Palaces and houses have been transformed to dust. Dust taken by the wind, Asinius.

ASINIUS:

Rome could have prospered. We could have lived in peace with all the other nations surrounding us. Traded, developed our societies together and cooperated. The peaceful camels could have been walking in the sand and the elegant ships could have been sailing in the seas loaded with merchandise. But no. Caligula had to destroy everything and throw the whole world into this senseless chaos.

CASSIUS:

I just heard someone say: "senseless chaos" in the darkness. I think I have come to the right place. I see you have brought Okrainia to our conversation, Asinius.

ASINIUS:

Cassius, I am glad you could make it! You didn't see any spies on your way, did you?

CASSIUS:

Asinius, I am the commander of the Roman Army. If I didn't know how to get rid of Caligula's spies, I wouldn't have lived long. The black dressed men following me are all dead and my dagger is covered with blood. This is Rome.

OKRAINIA:

Cassius! The Roman general that has invaded and ruined my country and killed my brothers and sisters! And he approaches me with a dagger covered with blood!

CASSIUS:

My dagger is not covered with the blood of your brothers and sisters, Okrainia, but with the blood of Caligula's spies. I have come here to stop the senseless bloodshed of your people and the unreasonable destruction of your once so beautiful country. And I have come to save Rome.

OKRAINIA:

And how can I trust you, Cassius? A man that led the hordes of vampires onto the fertile fields of my beloved land. The land of abounding yellow cornfields under a blue cloudless sky. The land of gold-covered temples and marble sculptures of gods and poets. The land that never, ever in its history attacked anyone. The land where the people were free to choose their rulers and their destiny. This land is now filled with godless gruesome hordes of vampires drinking its blood. Your vampires, Cassius!

CASSIUS:

No, Okrainia, they are Caligula's vampires. Or to be precise, the vampires are just poor young men from the cold endless wastelands without any future except a future as doomed soldiers sentenced to a life in misery. These masses of damaged and terrorized young men form the wild hordes invading your fertile fields and devouring your country's blood. They are Caligula's army of the living dead.

OKRAINIA:

But you lead them, Cassius. You and no other.

CASSIUS:

Yes, I do. As a general I follow the orders of my superior, the Emperor of the Roman empire, Caligula. I would have been thrown to the lions if I refused. But seeing a lion eat me wouldn't help your nation, Okrainia. Many are those men standing behind me waiting for me to die. Waiting to take my place.

ASINIUS:

Okrainia, listen to me, Cassius wants the same as you, the same as me, and probably the same as the entire population of the Roman empire and the outside world. We want to stop this insane war and get rid of Caligula. ... But I have never said that of course. If you are taken by his guards, remember, I never said that.

CASSIUS:

Stop the theater Asinius. We don't have time for this kind of ridiculous theater anymore. We all want the same so let's say it out loud. Either we die and with us the whole world dies. Or we kill Caligula.

MILONIA:

I heard a voice in the darkness say: "Or we kill Caligula". This seems like a dangerous place. A place filled with people that soon will be thrown to the lions.

ASINIUS:

Milonia, so nice to see you! I am so happy you came. I hope you came alone and not accompanied by soldiers from Caligula's imperial guard. Because then, we will probably never see the morning light.

MILONIA:

Calm down, Asinius. I came alone. I know how to ovoid the horrible soldiers from Caligula's imperial guard. They are my worst enemies. You are my friends.

ASINIUS:

Yes, you are, but Caligula is your lover.

MILONIA:

He is. Yes, he is. But more women in Rome have killed their lover than their friends. Friendship is rear in these times and therefor valuable. A lover you can get on every street corner.

OKRAINIA:

Fortunately, there isn't a Caligula standing at every street corner. Then the world would be doomed. Then Armageddon would be just around the corner.

ASINIUS:

Armageddon <u>is</u> just around the corner, Okrainia. You just need one insane tyrant like Caligula and the end of the world is just around the corner.

CASSIUS:

Enough talking. Let's be efficient. I am a military man, and I can't be away from my army for too long without raising suspicion. How can we do this? A dagger or poison? Milonia, does he still let you approach him?

MILONIA:

He still needs to prove he is a man. Physically speaking, I mean. Although it becomes more and more difficult for him to perform like a man ... physically. His face looks younger and younger...

OKRAINIA + ASINIUS:

Yes, we have noticed...

MILONIA:

Yes, but other parts of his body do not seem to have undergone the same process of rejuvenation. ... I find it a little embarrassing to go in detail, but I think a psychologist would say that his recent aggressive behavior towards other countries could be the result of a certain ... personal frustration.

CASSIUS:

I am a military man, Milonia, not a psychologist, I don't quite understand what you are trying to say.

MILONIA:

Let us just conclude with the fact that I have access to the tyrant in bed. Is that clear enough for you Cassius?

CASSIUS:

Yes. Are you completely naked when you approach him in his bed?

MILONIA:

Isn't that a little too personal? Do we have to go into such details?

CASSIUS:

Yes, we do. Because it will decide <u>how</u> we can do it. It will decide if we can use a bomb, a dagger or if we must use poison.

MILONIA:

I will have to disappoint you, Cassius. His guards search me before I enter his quarters.

OKRAINIA:

But he eats, doesn't he? Do you ever have supper with him? Perhaps you could poison his food.

ASSINIUS:

Good thinking, Okrainia!

MILONIA:

Unfortunately, he has a young man tasting his food before he eats it. He watches him for some minutes to see if he gets sick and die, before he starts to eat.

CASSIUS:

Novichok! We will poison him with Novichok!

ASSINIUS + OKRAINIA:

Novichok?

MILONIA:

Novichok? What is Novichok?

CASSIUS:

Novichok is the deadliest poison that exists. Developed in a Russian state chemical research institute. The chemical compounds inhibit the enzyme acetylcholinesterase, preventing the normal breakdown of the neurotransmitter acetylcholine. Acetylcholine concentrations then increase at neuromuscular junctions to cause involuntary contraction of all skeletal muscles. This then leads to respiratory and cardiac arrest and finally death from heart failure or suffocation as copious fluid secretions fill the victim's lungs. ... In short Caligula dies. The good thing about this poison is that you only need a microscopic amount of it. We can place it inside your necklace. You just need to smear it on his skin and, hoopla, Caligula will die within two days.

ASINIUS:

And the world will be saved!

OKRAINIA:

And my country will be free!

CASSIUS:

And I will take over Rome with the military and hand the power to the senate!

MILONIA:

But I will probably die! How on earth can I smear this deadly poison on his skin without getting anything on my own fingers?

CASSIUS:

Admittedly there is a minor technical problem regarding the transferring of the poison. Hm.

CALIGULA:

Cassius! My dear general! I hear you are speaking about poison. How interesting! Good evening Milonia and senator Asinius. You are all standing here in the darkness discussing poison together with this rebellious woman from one of the external Roman provinces... I don't remember the name of that province, but there seem to be some problems there. Apparently, the inhabitants of this province are doing bad things against the peaceful Romans living there. Bad, really bad things. So, who did you want to poison, Cassius?

CASSIUS:

As a general I choose to be honest. We wanted to poison you Caligula, but you already know that don't you?

CALIGULA:

Of course, I knew. You all want to kill me. Apart from the Roman population that is watching the national TV and is manipulated to love me, the whole world probably wants to kill me.

ASINIUS:

Yes, probably the whole world wants to kill you.

CALIGULA:

And you, my dear Milonia, you also want to kill me? I thought you loved me.

MILONIA:

Yes, Caligula. Every time I kiss your lips, every time I give you my body, I want to kill you. Come on, you have known it for a long time. You heard me talking in my sleep. I think it is a token of love. The best thing I could give you in this present situation is a quick and painless death.

CALIGULA:

But I totally agree, Milonia. The best thing that could happen for me, Caligula is that I am killed by a conspiracy. The best thing that could ever happen for me is that I am killed by my lover and my general and my senator and a victim of my imperial military operation. This will for sure make me a part of history! Forever! The tyrant that was killed after having inflamed the world fire! Caligula the tyrant that ignited Armageddon! By killing me now, you'll make me into one of the glorious figures of history. In some generations from now angry young men with short hair will shout my

name while marching for fascism, for terror and nationalism and for the final apocalypse! And it will be the end of the world! You, subversive traitors, make me into an eternal victim of perverse decadent treason! You make me into a historical victim of godforsaken aggression. I will be just like Rome: the eternal timeless victim

CASSIUS:

This makes no sense. He is totally insane! I think the dagger will do!

(Cassius stabs Caligula in the breast.)

MEDEA

CALIGULA:

(While holding his hands on to his breast. Blood is pumping out during his monologue. At the end of his monologue blood is also coming from his mouth.)

I was Medea

I sacrificed my own two sons with a knife

I cooked deadly poison in my kitchen

And served it to my enemies and friends and to people I didn't even know

I sacrificed a whole generation of young men

I mutilated them I killed them

I ate their souls and spat them out again as dead insects

I ejaculated my toxic sperm on hospitals and schools and housing blocks

I watched pregnant women die

And I had no tears to give them

Because my eyes were blinded by my own greatness

My cold blue eyes didn't reflect the outside light

They just absorbed my inner darkness

And this darkness was dry like a desert

And cold like a winter in Siberia

My inner darkness smelled like lethal chemicals

And my words were wrapped in toxic breath

My words were senseless, and people were dying

And I just didn't care

Because I was Medea or Caligula or Beria or Molotov

Or I was Electra screaming for revenge

Because my Mother Russia had planned the killing of my father the tyrant

And married the cold-blooded killer

Come brother Orestes let's avenge our beloved father

With whom I had an incestuous relation

In a malfunctioning atomic power plant

In a Siberian labor camp

In a KGB torture cell

While 5 million Ukrainian farmers were dying from hunger

Orestes, brother, let's kill Mother Russia

Let's isolate her hold her tight and gag her

Wrap her in transparent plastic

Let's deprive her of oxygen for the time of two generations

While the world is watching

While the world closes their doors to a breathless Mother Russia wrapped in plastic

And the world bolts all the doors with economic sanctions

Because Mother Russia has sinned, and her sins are unforgivable

And I Caligula was the origin of her sins because I couldn't let go of my hatred

Because I was born of the original sin of terror and tyranny

Of death camps and torture and summary executions

Because in my veins ran the cold red blood of the tyrant Josef Stalin

My father, my lover, my hero

And now finally I had the courage to do what he did

I crushed a civilization with my own two hands

Dipped them in blood

And I am still scrubbing my bloody hands like Pontius Pilatus

With a disinfectant called Novichok

The toxic poison mix with the blood of the victims

It dissolves and evaporates as lethal gas

I watch the mirror, but I do not see my image

But I don't care

My indifference is my religion

I am the onion dome of the Russian Orthodox Church bathed in blood

And I am still Medea, and my hatred is without any limits

Because I have no soul

(Light out.)

THE END