

## **Fireworks**

**By Jen Huszcza**

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### **Characters**

Red, m, middle age. Wears camouflage.

Monica, f, middle age. Wears natural fabrics.

Irving, m, younger than Monica. Wears jeans and a T-shirt.

Barack Obama, m. Former president of the United States

Alexander Hamilton, m. First treasury secretary of the United States and author of the Federalist papers.

### **Setting**

2017. A ledge over-looking the Death of Democracy.

Boom, boom, boom  
Even brighter than the  
Moon, moon, moon.

Katy Perry

LIGHTS UP:

RED, MONICA, IRVING sit on the ledge overlooking the death of democracy. Their feet dangle over the side.

A happy pop song plays.

Red dances joyfully but badly while still sitting.

Monica sits with her hands on her ears. She's not smiling.

Irving sits with his hands over his mouth. He looks terrified.

MONICA

Stop! Stop! Stop!

The pop song stops.

RED

Hey! I was listening to that.

IRVING

It's crap.

RED

It's happy. And who are you to call it crap? What gives the right or the authority to call it crap?

IRVING

I produce pop music, asshole.

MONICA

Guys! We're on the ledge overlooking the death of democracy. We need more than pop music.

IRVING

(offended)  
Like what?

(suddenly on Irving's side)  
Yeah! Like what?

RED

Down there is the death of democracy.

MONICA

Doesn't look so bad.

RED

Beauty in chaos.

IRVING

(primal scream)  
AHHHHHHH!

MONICA

It's okay, it's okay.

IRVING

What's wrong with her?

RED

It's a female thing.

IRVING

Irving!

MONICA

Sorry, Monica.

IRVING

How did I ever end up on a ledge with you two?

RED

Irving and Monica turn to Red.

IRVING

I don't know. You tell us.

RED

I vote! Democracy is not dead.

RED

Yeah, and who won the popular vote?

IRVING

The system is rigged! RED & MONICA

Whoahhh. RED

Whatever. MONICA

Damn. IRVING

What do we do now? RED

We could phone a friend. IRVING

My friend Rob is hunting this weekend. RED

All my friends are in Canada. MONICA

I know who to call. IRVING

Not your mother. MONICA

Better. IRVING

Irving pulls out his cell phone and dials.

IRVING  
Damn! Voice mail. No one answers their phone anymore. (into phone) Miles, it's Irv. I'm at the death of democracy. Come over. Bye.

MONICA  
Miles? You called a dead jazz musician.

IRVING  
He can improvise.

Hey, can I use the phone?

RED

Irving passes the phone to Red.

IRVING

You're not gonna call Rambo, are you?

RED

(dialing) Better. (listens) Dagnamit, I got a menu. No! I don't speak Spanish.

As Red goes through the menu options, Monica and Irving converse.

MONICA

¿Podemos presionarlo?

IRVING

No, eso no es democracia.

RED

Hello, yes, I'm trying to reach Superman. No, I don't have an appointment. He's booked until 2019? Yes, this is an emergency. I'm stuck on a ledge over the death of democracy with two liberal elites. I don't know how much longer I can hold out. (pause) Talk with them? Look honey, you are not helpful. Send Superman!

MONICA

Did he just call her honey?

In a fit of anger, Red throws the phone away.

IRVING

No! Don't throw the phone away.

RED

Sorry! I lose my temper sometimes.

MONICA

So do I! Stupid! Stupid! Stupid!

IRVING

Excuse me! Voice of the highly educated next generation here. Now what are we supposed to do?

We need to work the problem.

RED

Sounds reasonable.

IRVING

I have my phone. I'll text someone.

MONICA

Monica pulls out her phone and texts.

RED

Please be a hero, please be a hero, please be a hero.

BARACK OBAMA enters holding a smartphone. A drone flies over his head.

BARACK OBAMA

Hey Monica, what's up?

RED

ACK!

IRVING

Barack Obama. Sweet.

RED

What's that drone doing?

BARACK OBAMA

(to drone) Come back later.

The drone flies away.

MONICA

Mr. President, we're on a ledge over the death of democracy. Will you help us?

BARACK OBAMA

I'm not your president anymore.

RED

He's not even American.

IRVING

Oh not this again.

MONICA

He was born in Hawaii. Hawaii's a state. He's American.

RED

Well it's all a conspiracy. Something fishy about it.

BARACK OBAMA

When I was president, I was much more polite. But I'm not president anymore. Look asshole, I am American. I was born in Hawaii. I spent eight years working for you. My hair went white. Now, you seem to need my help.

MONICA

Save us from the death of democracy.

BARACK OBAMA

Monica, you are an American. You are strong. You don't need a savior. You don't need a ruler. You don't even need me anymore. You have a constitution.

IRVING

So what do we do? Right there is the death of democracy.

BARACK OBAMA

Irving, be rational. Like he said, work the problem.

RED

How did you know I said that?

BARACK OBAMA

I know.

RED

I don't see what the big deal is. I mean, the current president hasn't done anything that bad.

IRVING

Excuse me?

MONICA

I can't believe this is happening. Do you want me to give you a list?

RED

He's gonna make America great again.

IRVING

That's all you've got?

BARACK OBAMA

America is already great.

MONICA

Why do we have to be great? Why can't we settle on good?

IRVING

Help us, Red. Help us impeach the son of a bitch.

RED

But he's done nothing wrong.

MONICA & IRVING

Russia. Travel bans. Repeal Affordable Care Act.

RED

Liberal conspiracy. National Security. Wait, he's gonna take my insurance away?

BARACK OBAMA

Please, all these one word tags are getting us nowhere. We have complex problems that go beyond rhythmic theatrical dialogue. Before we go any further on a talk of impeachment, let me bring in the expert.

IRVING

But you taught constitutional law. I thought you were the expert.

BARACK OBAMA

Someone smarter than me.

MONICA

Is that possible?

BARACK OBAMA

(holding up phone)  
I messaged Hamilton.

IRVING

Alexander Hamilton?

MONICA

You can't do that. He's already in another show.

RED

What show?

Hamilton.

MONICA & IRVING

Never heard of it.

RED

It's a musical.

BARACK OBAMA

Oh like Phantom. My wife likes Phantom.

RED

We need Hamilton. He wrote the Federalist paper on Impeachment.

BARACK OBAMA

ALEXANDER HAMILTON walks on briskly. He is annoyed.

HAMILTON

Alright, what is it now? Whatever it is, I do not have time for it.

BARACK OBAMA

Secretary Hamilton, I am Barack Obama, the forty-fourth president of the United States of America, and we need your expertise.

HAMILTON

Forty-fourth president? So slavery was abolished. Hah! I knew it would not last. And how is the central bank? I'm sure it's still going strong.

BARACK OBAMA

It's fine.

HAMILTON

Why do you all look at me strangely? Don't you know who I am? You must know who I am.

MONICA

You're on the ten dollar bill.

HAMILTON

I am??? Show me.

Irving passes him a twenty by mistake.

MONICA

No Irving, that's a twenty!

Hamilton looks at the bill.

HAMILTON

Thomas Jefferson! On the twenty! Who's on the hundred, James Madison?

IRVING

Uhm no. Ben Franklin.

HAMILTON

Have you all forgotten George Washington?

RED

He's on the one.

HAMILTON

Good. At least they got something right.

IRVING

Secretary Hamilton, we want to impeach the current president.

MONICA

Will you help us?

HAMILTON

I never could resist a woman in need.

MONICA

(swooning) Ahhhh.

IRVING

Jesus.

RED

We should've called him.

BARACK OBAMA

Impeachment, Hamilton.

HAMILTON

Yes, yes, yes. So does this current president's party control the two houses of congress?

ALL

Yes.

HAMILTON

Nothing you can do, I'm afraid. Impeachment is a political process, not a criminal one. There are always the midterm elections. Do you still have those?

BARACK OBAMA

Of course. Also, we have the twenty-fifth amendment which allows the cabinet to remove the president.

HAMILTON

Yes, that's a good one. What else have you all come up with? You must have fifty amendments by now.

BARACK OBAMA

No, only twenty-seven.

HAMILTON

And how many presidents have been impeached?

BARACK OBAMA

None.

IRVING

What about Nixon?

BARACK OBAMA

Resigned. Bill Clinton and Andrew Johnson were impeached by the House of Representatives but they were acquitted by the Senate.

HAMILTON

All after my time. Tell me, did all the states stay in the Union?

BARACK OBAMA

Yes, there are fifty states now.

HAMILTON

Fifty! How did you get to fifty?

BARACK OBAMA

I would be happy to explain, Secretary Hamilton, over some pints.

HAMILTON

You still drink pints these days?

BARACK OBAMA

Of course.

HAMILTON

Then all is not lost. Come, President Forty-four, I want to know everything about these fifty states.

Hamilton starts to lead Barack Obama off.

MONICA

No, don't go, Mr. President!

BARACK OBAMA

I'm not your president anymore, and even when I was, I can't tell you what to do. That's not the job. It's a hard job. I haven't stopped caring. I'm just not the president anymore. But this country has so much potential still. Don't you see it? You can do this. (to Hamilton) Come Secretary Hamilton, let me introduce you to micro-brews.

Barack Obama and Alexander Hamilton exit. The drone comes back and follows Obama off.

MONICA

Why do I feel more depressed?

IRVING

That was a whole lot of nothing.

RED

Although it's not every day you see a founding father. Didn't know he was so short. Didn't know Obama was so tall. I'm just average. Always been average. Average height, average weight. Not too much, not too little. Just wanted an average life. Wife, kids, a house with a yard, just like my old man. He worked a factory job for forty years and was able to raise all of us in a two storey house. I don't want a mansion in Beverly Hills or some fancy penthouse. I just want a nice house in a safe neighborhood. I wanted to work and take care of my own family. But I don't get any of that. My dad's factory closed. I worked in an auto garage for a few years until that folded. Then I tended bar. I heard a lot of sad stories tending bar. I'd work nights then sleep a few hours and get up with my kids. Some days I would just sleep, then walk around half-asleep. Then we lost the house. We now all live in an apartment. The neighborhood is sketchy, the kids stay inside and play on their tablets. My dad has a pension. I don't have none of that. I got nothing. And I hold onto what little I have. Now they say I gotta give that up. For what? When did my problems take a backseat? I don't want handouts. I want to work. I'm willing to work hard to get ahead. But someday I wonder, will I ever get there. Don't even know what there looks like anymore.

## MONICA

You're not the only one with problems. I came from where you are, Red. My folks worked factory jobs, but I got out. I got a scholarship to a college. Then I worked for a big regional theatre in the literary department. The funding dried up, and what went first? The literary department. No one cares about plays anymore. Everyone just wants to be entertained. But I've got rent to pay and theatrical ideas don't pay the bills. There's nothing elite about me. I work and pay my taxes just like you do. I go on unemployment. I find another job in an office. I meld my skills, I learn new skills. Theatre becomes a hobby, then I get a part time job directing kids. It's not what I wanted to do, but it's where I end up. Now I'm here looking at the world and I want to scream all the time, so I do yoga to keep my balance. But I'm not balanced. I'm screaming. I cut my caffeine. I'm still screaming. I cleanse and get massages. I'm still screaming. I march in a thousand marches and knit a bunch of stupid caps, and I'm still screaming. I could write a play, but all that comes out is screaming. I'm not going to wither up and die. I'm not going to sit quietly by the television. I'm screaming. My man makes me come a thousand different ways because he knows I can come a thousand different ways. I sleep and I wake up screaming and he doesn't understand. But I'm screaming. I'm screaming and I'm screaming and I'm screaming more and more. And I don't feel better when I scream. I don't feel better at all. I just know I don't want to feel this way anymore.

## IRVING

I just don't want to be shot. I don't want my friends and family to be shot. We have the potential for so much. It's like we do everything in extremes in this country. First black president. First reality show president. The pendulum swings back and forth. Back and forth. Back and forth. Then we all watch fireworks on the fourth of July. We seem to all like the fireworks.

## MONICA

They are pretty.

## RED

You know what? Enough of this. The time for talk is over.

## IRVING

Oh here we go.

Red stands up.

## RED

Okay Death of Democracy, you have caused my friends enough pain.

## MONICA

We're his friends?

RED

I'm coming down there, and one of us isn't going to make it out alive.

IRVING

We've gone to action movie rhetoric.

MONICA

Better than reality TV competitions.

RED

(gravely to Monica and Irving)

Tell my children, I love them very much.

IRVING

That's *Independence Day*. He's quoting *Independence Day*.

RED

Here I go!

Red jumps off the ledge.

Monica and Irving watch and shudder.

MONICA

That's gotta hurt.

IRVING

Look! There he is! He's wrestling the death of democracy.

MONICA

Go Red go!

IRVING

I can't believe I'm watching a man wrestle an idea. It's surreal.

MONICA

It's not surreal, it's just theatre.

Irving and Monica continue to look down.

BLACKOUT

END OF PLAY