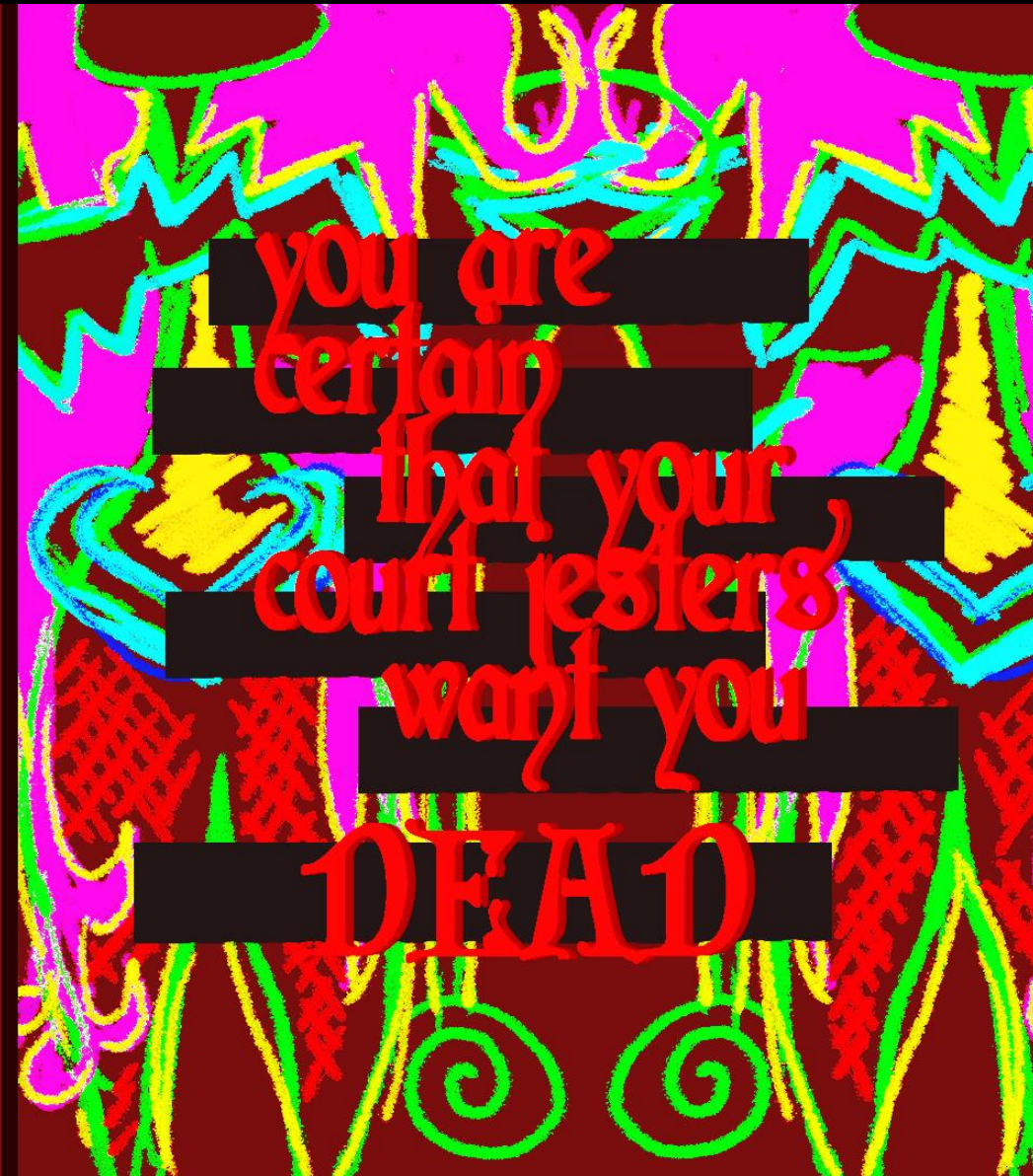


YOU ARE

THE KING



you are
certain

that your
court jesters
want you

DEAD

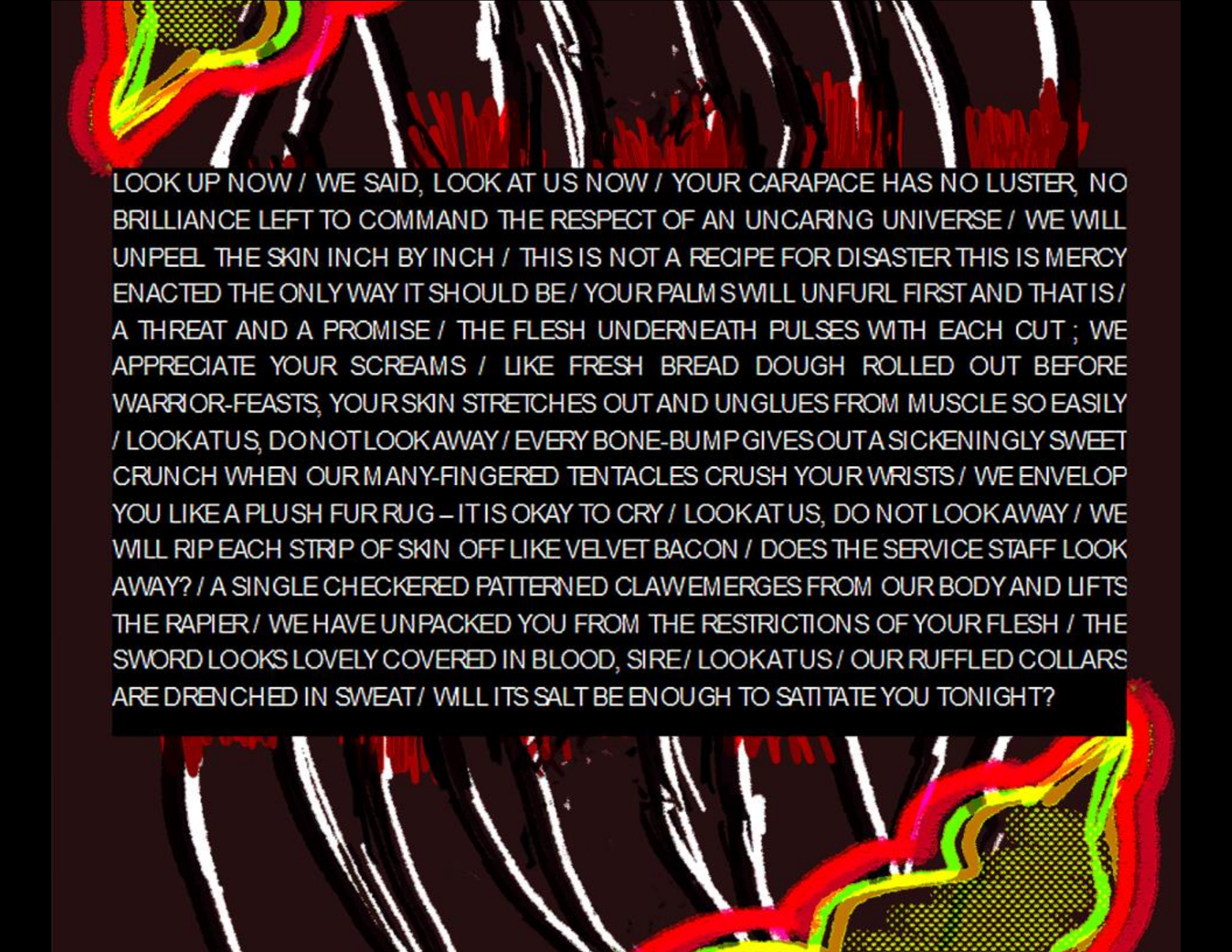
oh master master, greetings how are you? what news of the battle, of the men-of-arms
you commanded into the wild forests beyond the castle? we heard strange and
nasty rumors, all hearsay, surely. however! scuffling around on cobblestone walls,
a jingling in our ears told us of fighting with animals beyond your comprehension.
of magics you or your strongest men could not decipher, seeping through swamp
water while man-made swords swung uselessly...tell us, tell us, tell us, now - indulge
your jesters by spinning a tale!

oh, oh, oh
how generously will you perform

SIRE, YOUR CHEST CAVES IN AT ODD ANGLES
AND WE KNOW THE BEST ONE HURTS THE MOST
(INTERNALLY) WE WOULD CLAW OUR WAY IN
NO INVITATION NEEDED TO THE FEAST, WE
CLAIM OWNERSHIP OF YOUR FLESHY GUTS.
WHAT LIVES UNDER THOSE ROYAL INSIDES?
LET US COUNT THEM OUT FOR YOU, MY KING
AH - A SINGLE WYRM WIGGLES INSIDE YOUR INTESTINES...
TWO CROOKED RIBS ON EACH SIDE, A
PULSING HEART SPECKLED WITH BLACK
THREE MICE CRAWL OUT OF EACH OF OUR
CHECKERED, FLUFFY SLEEVES AND LAND
RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE CORPSE'S
BATTLEFIELD - OUR DEEPEST APOLOGIZES,
THE BETS WE ARE MAKING ON WHO IS WINNING THE
PAW TO PAW COMBAT ARE NOT INDICATIVE OF THE HOUSE BANNER OF CHIVALRY.
BUT WE TWEAVE YOUR FLAILING ARMS AS THE RODENTS
SKITTER AND DEVOUR DIVINE SUSTENANCE
DO NOT MOVE, DEAR KING
LET US EXTRACT THE PAIN, EXTOL YOUR SINS.
SHALL WE TIE A JAUNTY RIBBON MADE OF INTENSTINE SILK?
PIERCE THE MIDDLE WITH A SHARP RIB CHUNK,
JESTER COMPANION. IGNORE THE SCREAMS FROM UNDER
THE BEJEWELED CROWN.
AH - HOW DECORATED DO YOU FEEL NOW, WARRIOR-KING?
THE MICE CIRCLE YOUR BLACKENED HEART, THEIR TAILS DANCING.



Your new rapier is so fascinating. How sharp. How sleek! How bold. A nice summer day in the royal gardens to the West, facing your cattle ranch where the service staff members sleep – let the royal retinue be entertained. A sparring match, with us, right this minute if it pleases you. We promise a wicked smile and a jingling firm handshake. What you promise is irrelevant. Step up to the clearing next to the fountain where the queen's geese snap at each other in annoyance, brandish your new sword and impress the crowd. The visiting duchess from Austria would want this to be a bloodless fight and for us to bow politely once defeat is assured, but you know better than to trust the collared fools who perform for a mutton leg and a glass of wine. Do not hold back, do not hesitate, you have plunged iron in the hearts of men who deserved it **more/less/exactly** the right amount we do. We hop one-legged to the countdown given by the man-at-arms, grinning wildly and pirouetting ostentatiously. Are you sick of us yet, sire? On one, the gauntlet lifts and you charge. Oh, oh, oh yes it is the effort that counts. But you do not understand the leveled playing field. A garish set of bells rings out and you feel yourself anchored to the ground. How many arms should we use to strip you of this costume? How many fingers should we tap on the rapier's blade? Oh, oh, oh – sire, king, beloved, do not look at up from the garden mulch yet.



LOOK UP NOW / WE SAID, LOOK AT US NOW / YOUR CARAPACE HAS NO LUSTER, NO
BRILLIANCE LEFT TO COMMAND THE RESPECT OF AN UNCARING UNIVERSE / WE WILL
UNPEEL THE SKIN INCH BY INCH / THIS IS NOT A RECIPE FOR DISASTER THIS IS MERCY
ENACTED THE ONLY WAY IT SHOULD BE / YOUR PALM SWILL UNFURL FIRST AND THAT IS /
A THREAT AND A PROMISE / THE FLESH UNDERNEATH PULSES WITH EACH CUT ; WE
APPRECIATE YOUR SCREAMS / LIKE FRESH BREAD DOUGH ROLLED OUT BEFORE
WARRIOR-FEASTS, YOUR SKIN STRETCHES OUT AND UNGLUES FROM MUSCLE SO EASILY
/ LOOK AT US, DO NOT LOOK AWAY / EVERY BONE-BUMP GIVES OUT A SICKENINGLY SWEET
CRUNCH WHEN OUR MANY-FINGERED TENTACLES CRUSH YOUR WRISTS / WE ENVELOP
YOU LIKE A PLUSH FUR RUG – IT IS OKAY TO CRY / LOOK AT US, DO NOT LOOK AWAY / WE
WILL RIP EACH STRIP OF SKIN OFF LIKE VELVET BACON / DOES THE SERVICE STAFF LOOK
AWAY? / A SINGLE CHECKERED PATTERNED CLAW EMERGES FROM OUR BODY AND LIFTS
THE RAPIER / WE HAVE UNPACKED YOU FROM THE RESTRICTIONS OF YOUR FLESH / THE
SWORD LOOKS LOVELY COVERED IN BLOOD, SIRE / LOOK AT US / OUR RUFFLED COLLARS
ARE DRENCHED IN SWEAT / WILL ITS SALT BE ENOUGH TO SATISFACTION YOU TONIGHT?

Oh for all the mercies in God's Land,
just put the fucking hat on.

Forget the fact that you woke up
tied to your throne, a blunderbuss pistol
aimed at your forehead.

Yes, once it is on, the chimes will become
more bearable. They ring out in protest, but
you get used to the humiliation.

