

## WITH NO IMMEDIATE CAUSE

Ntosake Shange

every 3 minutes a woman is beaten  
every five minutes a  
woman is raped/every ten minutes  
a lil girl is molested  
yet I rode on the subway today  
i sat next to an old man who  
may have beaten his old wife  
3 minutes ago or 3 days/30 years ago  
he might have sodomized his  
daughter but i sat there  
cuz the young men on the train  
might beat some young women  
later in the day or tomorrow  
i might not shut my door fast  
enuf/push hard enuf  
every 3 minutes it happens  
some woman's innocence  
rushes to her cheeks/pours from her mouth  
like the betsy wetsy dolls have been torn  
apart/their mouths  
menses red & split/every  
three minutes a shoulder  
is jammed through plaster and the oven door/  
chairs push thru the rib cage/hot water or  
boiling sperm decorate her body  
i rode the subway today  
& bought a paper from a  
man who might  
have held his old lady onto  
a hot pressing iron/i don't know  
maybe he catches lil girls in the  
park & rips open their behinds  
with steel rods/i can't decide  
what he might have done i only  
know every 3 minutes  
every 5 minutes every 10 minutes/so  
i bought the paper  
looking for the announcement  
the discovery/of the dismembered  
woman's body/the  
victims have not all been  
identified/today they are  
naked and dead/refuse to  
testify/one girl out of 10's not  
coherent/i took the coffee  
& spit it up/i found an  
announcement/not the woman's  
bloated body in the river/floating

not the child bleeding in the  
59th street corridor/not the baby  
broken on the floor/  
"there is some concern  
that alleged battered women  
might start to murder  
their husbands & lovers with no  
immediate cause"  
i spit up i vomit i am screaming  
we all have immediate cause  
every 3 minutes  
every 5 minutes  
every 10 minutes  
every day  
women's bodies are found  
in alleys & bedrooms/at the top of the stairs  
before i ride the subway/buy a paper/drink  
coffee/i must know/  
have you hurt a woman today  
did you beat a woman today  
throw a child across a room  
are the lil girl's panties  
in yr pocket  
did you hurt a woman today

i have to ask these obscene questions  
the authorities require me to  
establish  
immediate cause

every three minutes  
every five minutes  
every ten minutes  
every day.

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