

Spring 2021

## ...and other drugs i haven't told you about

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...and other drugs i haven't told you about



Senior Project Submitted to  
The Division of the Arts  
of Bard College

by  
Tatyana Monet Rozetta

Annandale-on-Hudson, NY  
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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**To Mommy**, thank you for genuinely everything. I love you so much and your words and encouragement throughout the years has shaped the way I look at the world. Thank you for leading me through dark spots and holding my hand when I needed you. Thank you for letting me fail and standing on my own. Thank you for showing me how to fight as a Black woman in this world and to get up when I'm down.

**To Taylor**, thank you for always being there. Thanks for always making me laugh and the late night Spongebob binges. I love you bud!

**To Max**, my beautiful little dog, you won't be able to read this, but I hope you know that I love you. Thanks for sticking around whenever I'm feeling down and watching trash tv with me!

**To Jake**, thank you so much for believing in me and this project. You're going to do amazing things in the future! I couldn't have asked for a better director and friend.

**To Gavin, Brianna, and Roman** thank you for staying. I love you three with my whole heart. I am so truly blessed to have each of you in my life. I can't thank you enough for just believing in me and sticking around even when I'm at my lowest.

**To Rudi and Hakima**, thank you both for your constant support whenever I need something filmed! I am so glad I met you both this year, and thank you for welcoming me into your home.

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## MEDITATIONS

*“The inner machinations of my mind are an enigma.”*

— Patrick Star

*“Just because you lost me as a friend doesn’t mean you gained me as an enemy. I’m bigger than that. I still wanna see you eat just not at my table.”*

— Tupac Shakur

*“You’ve got to learn to leave the table when love’s no longer being served.”*

— Nina Simone

*“Don’t mess up the future good  
because of the bad in your past...  
Total healing remains the bridge over troubled water  
Don’t be afraid to cross over...”*

— A.G. Rozetta (my mom);  
*Unfinished: Two Faces... One Story*



## INTRODUCTION

One year, one month, and a few days ago, I proposed a project about “fathers” in my life. I wanted to study Anna Deveare Smith’s work in the summer. From there, I would study her method in asking the right questions to get people talking and to simply tell stories. I wanted to interview different fathers and father figures in my family: my grandfather, my mother’s biological father, my uncle, my father with a surprise interview from my mom. The goal was to embody each of these characters on stage and have the piece go up in the Old Gym at the end of my second semester senior year.

*Oh, how times change.....*

Turns out the pandemic didn’t last two weeks like we all thought it would. Also, summer 2020 was truly a whirlwind. Since the summer, I have documented parts of my sproj process through a series of short “journal entries” for a select few to witness using the Instagram “Close Friends” story function. This was truly a journey of ups, downs, surprises, setbacks, roadblocks, and victories. That was your warning to buckle up and get ready for the bumpy ride that is the Creation of “...and other drugs i haven’t told you about”.

## INSPIRATIONS

I initially thought I would conduct interviews for my script throughout the summer of 2020. However, life truly got in the way of that. On May 25th 2020, George Floyd was murdered



in Minneapolis. Soon after Nilaja gathered as many students of color in the T&P department as she could over Zoom. We all just held space together and made each other feel safe. It was not lost on me how no one else from Bard even thought to ask the Black students if we were okay. There was no “how are you doing”, no “thinking of you”, not an email, not a text, absolutely nothing. To sit there, and feel the apathy of these people who’ve either known you, taught you, or worked with you for years, was truly heartbreaking. I remember feeling both defeated but fired up. Then, during a sproj meeting I had with Nilaja, she had said that it was totally okay to let my sproj evolve. She said that George Floyd was a father, so if the events of this summer found its way into the sproj, that would be okay. Then she capped the meeting off with a “Always remember you stand on the shoulders of greatness!”

“George Floyd was a father” rang in my head. I thought about fathers and their removal from their children’s lives. I thought about my own father and how our relationship shifted. I thought about everything at the same time. All of this while dealing with trying to make the Theater & Performance program safer for Black and Brown folks and editing my mother’s poetry book: *Unfinished: Two Faces... One Story*.

Spending summer break with my family having my one constant be editing my mom’s book truly reshaped how I looked at my sproj. I was able to see a different side of my mother through her words. One poem in particular that stuck out to me while editing was *Heart Attack* which goes as follows:

My baby is hurting how do I help her...

I can't save her...  
I'm afraid she's drifting away  
Who can we trust...where can we run  
I'm not ready to let go...  
Love her with every beat of my heart...  
This battle is too much...  
Feels like I'm losing the fight...  
Frustration fills my days...  
tears fill my nights  
I must protect her no matter the cost...  
God has a plan...somehow we win<sup>1</sup>

This poem was written in 2016 about my sister, actually. This was my mother's reaction to my sister's battle with depression. The lines "I can't save her", "I'm not ready to let go", and "I must protect her no matter the cost" particularly shaped my perception of my mother and my piece. It revealed a more vulnerable side of my mother that I hadn't seen before, especially in regards to how she felt about mental health. Despite some strong differences of opinion this summer in particular, reading how scared and broken my mother was over my sister's mental health brought up memories of how mine was handled. Specifically it made me understand what made my mother tick and come up with some explanations for why I am the way I am.

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<sup>1</sup> A.G. Rozetta, "Heart Attack," in *Unfinished: Two Faces... One Story*, ed. Tatyana Monet, 1st ed. (Seattle, WA: Kindle Direct Publishing, 2020), pp. 64-64.

I, then, became interested in people who've hurt me or caused me trauma especially in recent years. I started to ask myself several questions: *Who hurt me? Why do they do the things they do? What's beneath it all?* Maybe it was the former math major in me, but I was stuck on the *why*. I demanded explanations that I may never get. So I made them up.

## THE WRITING PROCESS

Initially, I thought that I would roast everyone, and this piece would be an outlet to vent all my pent up anger. But, honestly, who would that have served? I wouldn't have felt better. Also, knowing myself, I would've felt worse for putting everyone's business out there and vilifying them. Also, that narrative wasn't truthful. In these stories, I wasn't always the victim, and everything wasn't as black and white as it may seem. Some parts are fictionalized but not to the point where they stray far from reality. For the most part, everything I've written actually happened.

I organized each scene by the characters. The first scene establishes the world on zoom and the relationship between Taty and the Therapist. The second scene is about Taty's relationship with her Friend and friendship in general; this leads directly into the Dad scene in which Taty finds the connections to her general relationship with men. Then the fourth scene blends past and present and formally introduces Mom, and Taty discusses her comfort levels with sharing the truth. Finally in the last scene, the Therapist takes back control and allows Taty to almost freeze time and speak freely to these three major players in her life.

## CHARACTERS: TATY

Writing Taty was both the easiest and the hardest part of this process. Taty is truly the driving force of the play. In order to find her, I had to remove myself from, well, myself. Whenever I got inspired to write Taty's text, I was either feeling my highest high or my lowest low. Taty is a character of extremes. Her world is falling apart, and deep down, she wants to know why. She puts up a hard exterior in order to protect herself, but as the play goes along it slowly starts to break down.

As I wrote this fictionalized version of myself, I looked to inspirations such as Zendaya's Rue Bennett on *Euphoria*. Taty and Rue hold several similarities in that they're both struggling with severe mental illnesses to the point where they need help. They're both soft speakers with short fuses and big hearts.

Taty can transcend time, and she's constantly nostalgic for moments that both passed already or are still happening. She plays herself in the past and present while telling stories. There are several points where the timeline is blurred and she loses control of her own mind. She's unable to tell the difference between what is happening now and what already occurred in the past. She is laid out bare and at her most vulnerable.

I've spent a lot of time contemplating if Taty was the protagonist that we have to root for, or if she was the antagonist who purposely stirred the pot as a method of self destruction.

Thinking objectively Taty is not always a reliable narrator, but who in real life is? We all get hurt by people, and usually we don't stop to empathize with those who've caused us pain. Taty has moments where she lies to her Therapist, but never to the audience. She's always truthful with the audience even if she's lying to herself.

Taty in the end tries her best. She tries very hard to be happy and find peace. Sometimes she messes up but in the end she's 100% truthful. She's not perfect—very far from it. But that's what makes her so good. She isn't trying to be likeable; she shows the gritty side of mental illness. In the end she's beautifully human.

This may sound like I'm gassing myself up a bit, but it does take a lot to step outside yourself, write about yourself, and then analyze that version of yourself!

## **CHARACTERS: THERAPIST**

Therapist is very loosely based off of this therapist I had in the summer of 2019. My real life art therapist from that summer was super sweet, so if she happens to read this or see the piece, I hope she doesn't think I'm roasting her. She actually initially diagnosed me with MDD (Major Depressive Disorder) and GAD (Generalized Anxiety Disorder) because I begged her for a diagnosis. I will admit receiving the diagnosis was extremely underwhelming. There was no choir in my head, no church bells, and the heavens didn't open. That summer, I binge watched *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*, and when the main character got diagnosed with BPD (Borderline

Personality Disorder), there was an entire musical theatre number. Sure, this was in a fictional tv show, but still, I couldn't at least get a cookie or something!

The Therapist in "*...and other drugs i haven't told you about*" is calm and collected. There are brief moments where she'll lose her temper at Taty and tell her to stop. When I first shared the play with Jake Stiel, who would end up becoming my director, he asked "Why does the Therapist try to get Taty to stop?" I thought about this for weeks, and I think it wasn't until recently that I found an answer. The Therapist has more care for Taty than being her therapist, and she tries to mask it with the cold exterior. In therapy in real life, I would always quietly ask, *Why does this person care if I lived or died?* I truly was curious, and I think the answer comes from the investment in their patient. The Therapist sees the value and potential in Taty that Taty does not see in herself. This care and investment grows as the play progresses, hence the reason she asks if she wants to stop more and more. Her constant interruptions are moments of pause and breath both in the stories and for Taty.

The Therapist and Taty are present in a fold of reality that exists out of time. The Therapist and Taty are in polar opposite spaces, with the Therapist being in whiteness and Taty being in blackness. The choice to continue this piece as a solo performance was me sneakily blurring the lines between these two characters in particular. I wanted the audience to question the reality of this therapy session, and whether it was truly happening or just in Taty's head.

**CHARACTERS: FRIEND**

Friend is inspired by a few people who I've considered "best friends" throughout the years who've come and gone. Although in the present day Taty and Friend aren't friends anymore, his presence lingers in present friendships. The way she navigates other friendships is almost always impacted by how her friendship with Friend ended.

This is the point in Taty's life where she's done "hating" this person. Of course, she's upset that he left. However, she's finally acknowledging how she played a part in pushing him away.

Friend definitely tries his best to be there for Taty when things are getting bad for her. At a point it became too much for Friend, and he had to step away from her. Taty always wanted to know the why behind this. In the end she reaches that conclusion for herself. Some people simply need to leave to protect their peace and yours. Her making connections with Friend lead to her realizing this can be "tracked" back to her relationship with her father.

## **CHARACTERS: DAD**

Dad was Taty's first "best friend". He would always try to keep her spirits up whenever she was feeling down. The Yankees story in particular was truly heartbreaking and heartwarming to write as it truly did happen in real life. That's why right after sharing that story, Taty demands to stop as she knows what's going to happen next in the Dad story.

Dad is a fictionalized version of my own father. He's been sick dealing with chronic illness on and off my entire life. After my high school graduation, I lost touch with my father, and needed to step away. In the play when that story comes up, I purposefully leave it up to the audience to decide if he's telling the truth or not.

The initial inspiration for this piece being fathers was honestly my subconscious pushing me to reach out to my father again. However, while I was finishing the script in mid February of this year, my father got sick with Covid-19. This took a huge toll on my mental health as I had not truly spoken to my father since that phone call in 2017 when he told me he couldn't make it to my high school graduation. Hearing he was very sick and knowing that he is high risk for Covid, pushed me to reach out to him. As Taty says in the end, "...at the end of the day, if my world were ending, and I had to say goodbye. I have a short list of people I'd want to talk to one last time and you're one of them. I don't know what that means. In the end you're still my father. And I miss my dad."

## **CHARACTERS: MOM**

Mom is the one constant besides the Therapist and Taty. She's present in each of the scenes. As I was writing, I realized some similarities between Mom and the Therapist and ultimately Taty. Mom, like the Therapist, is the one other character that takes control from present day Taty and blurs time and reality.



Mom is a fictionalized version of my mother, whom, to this day, I still call “Mommy”. Mom in the play is calm and manages to always calm Taty down when she’s upset. She’s the one who stayed.

Second to Taty, Mom was hard to write as well. I had to separate Mom in the play from my mom in real life. Something that kept ringing in my head was something Nilaja said when I was writing a play in her Intermediate Playwriting class my second semester Junior year. I was writing a mom and daughter, and the mom was really angry. Nilaja told me to empathize more with the mom and not make her so angry especially considering she was a Black mother. In writing Mom, I began to empathize more with my own mom and have Taty’s relationship with Mom leak into reality a little.

### **REHEARSAL PROCESS: PICKING A DIRECTOR**

Man oh man, where do I start with Jake Stiel? I remember the Bard Class of 2021 Facebook page way back in May 2017. It had people posting pictures and fun facts about themselves in order to introduce themselves to the rest of our class. I was bored one day and decided to scroll through the page to see if there were any other people interested in theatre. That’s when I stumbled upon Jake Stiel who had posted a bunch of very fun and vibrant photos. In his introduction, he said how he was interested in majoring in math and theatre. To which I replied with something along the lines of, “OMG hey! I wanna do math and theatre too!” He

hearted it and sent me a friend request. The rest is history. (Fun fact: Neither Jake or I continued with math in the end, and it's a running joke whenever someone needs to do quick math.)

Throughout my time at Bard, I've always admired the work that Jake put into his craft whether it be on LUMA stage or in the Old Gym. The first time I got to work with him was on our Oedipus project in Theater History sophomore year, and that's when I learned we worked quite well together. There was a mutual respect and admiration for each other's art and ideas. The next year, I got to work with Jake again on multiple shows at the same time. The one in particular that I enjoyed was *Rocky Horror Show*. Jake directed, and I played Riff Raff. It was one of my favorite director/actor experiences at Bard.

When it came to picking a director that I trusted at Bard, I initially asked my best friend, Gavin McKenzie, but he said no. Then I asked Jake, who I trusted before as a director and collaborator. He immediately said yes without any hesitation, which I thought was weird at first. So me being the insecure but thoughtful human I am, tried to give him every reason to say no. Despite my own push back, he still said yes.

I received skepticism and several questions about this decision from my peers. I let their ideas about my piece and what I should do with it cloud my judgement. However, I didn't let this stop me from going with my heart!

This is the year that Jake and I grew much closer as friends. I've had very candid conversations with him about our journeys with mental health, and I always felt that we created a

mutual safe space to be open about it with each other. Since the piece at its heart is about my journey with mental health, Jake was the clearest option to handle that subject matter.

The actual rehearsals were fantastic! They were truly breaths of fresh air in really long days. Jake brought exercises that allowed me to think deeply about each character and properly switch on my actor brain with my playwright brain off. There was a point where I genuinely gave up and hated my own writing, but his encouragement and belief in my project brought me around to once again believing in myself. I truly can't thank him enough for everything he's done for me in this process.

## CONCLUSION

*"...and other drugs i haven't told you about"* has been my baby for a year now. I didn't know what to name her and I went through 15 possible titles. I settled on this one because there's so much left unsaid, and I'm constantly getting a new prescription for something that it's easy to forget what I'm taking.

I had to basically become a film major out of nowhere due to Covid-19, and my vision for the piece wasn't fully realized as the Old Gym was closed this semester. As of writing this, I don't know what the final piece looks like, but I know it's one from my heart.

In the end, I created something for myself and not for a grade. I want this piece to exist outside of Bard in some capacity, especially when covid is over. This piece is beautiful and you are getting every bit of my heart. I do ask that you're kind and gentle with it.

You're invited to a special presentation of Taty  
Rozetta's senior project!

*...and other drugs i  
haven't told you about*

May 16th  
at 7:00 pm EST

Full show followed by a brief talkback

Zoom Meeting ID:  
819 0625 4877

Passcode:  
766755



...and other drugs i haven't told you about



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**Characters**

Taty (past & present)

Therapist

Friend

Mom

Dad

## Scene 1

*Lights up on an empty chair center. The light isn't theatrical and spotlighty. It's more cold and clinical. Like a hospital. The colder the better. TATY enters and crosses to the chair. The sound of the chair scraping against the floor is piercing. She sits and opens a laptop. She logs into her therapy session.*

Therapist:

Hello Tatyana.

Taty:

Hi. Uh I'm having trouble seeing your image. Dr-/

Therapist:

Oh I'm sorry. Let me try to fix it.

*(The sound of loud fingers on keys. We see the image of the THERAPIST appear on the screen.)*

Therapist:

There. Is that better?

Taty:

Yeah I can see you now.



Therapist:

Fantastic. *(Pause.)* Tell me, how are you feeling today?

Taty:

I'm fine.

Therapist:

Have you been taking your medication?

Taty:

Yes.

*(Flash to pills being flushed down a toilet.)*

Therapist:

Alright. I have to ask; have you had any suicidal thoughts or thoughts of hurting yourself or others?

Taty:

Whoa... that's a loaded question. Don't most therapists save that for the end of the session?

Therapist:

I like to get right to the point. (*brief pause*) Now tell me, have you had any suicidal thoughts or tendencies?

Taty:

Recently?

Therapist:

Yes, have you recently wanted to kill yourself?

Taty:

How recent are we talking? Like since the last time I talked to you or since yesterday or in the last 10 minutes?

Therapist:

Have you wanted to die in the last 10 mins?

Taty:

Okay now that question is unfair. I could want to die but not necessarily want to kill myself.

Therapist:

Tatyana-

Taty:

I just feel like I've wanted to die for a long time. BUT I don't necessarily want to kill myself.

Those are two different questions. Like I could hope that a fire breaks out in my house, and I accidentally sleep through the fire alarm. Or I could hope that a car I'm in crashes unexpectedly.

This is all very different from me taking a knife and--

Therapist:

Tatyana this is all very concerning. STOP!

*(Silence. The THERAPIST takes an audible breath.)*

Taty:

.....

Therapist:

.....

Therapist:

Okay Tatyana. Do we wanna continue with where we left off last session?

Taty:

Do we?

Therapist:

I actually think it would be very helpful to track how you're feeling right now back and find the root of the issues.

Taty:

Okay.

Therapist:

So how are you feeling right now?

*Everything freezes. A shift. This is the most theatrical moment so far. TATY speaks directly to the audience.*

*Taty: (what she says here should reflect how she's actually feeling in that moment. This can be different every time or the same. It depends on how the actor playing TATY feels. I'll put in how I'm feeling as of writing this)*

[I'll be honest. I've had a rough day. A rough weekend. And a rough week. Externally I'm holding things together a little too well.]

*Taty: (a pause. No matter what the actor said above.)*

In all honesty, I don't think you've earned my honesty.

*Everything shifts back to normal.*

Therapist:

Did you hear me? I asked how you're feeling right now.

Taty:

I'm clinically depressed. How do you think I'm feeling?

Therapist:

Okay. Let's track it! What's bothering you? Friends, family, yourself?

Taty:

How about D. all of the above!

Therapist:

Tatyana you know that's not how the tracking works.

Taty:

Okay fine. My friendships are all fucked up so why not start there.

Therapist:

Okay. Close your eyes. Breathe.

*Blackout.*

## Scene 2

*TATY's eyes are still closed. This moment is quick. But long enough to feel like a breath.*

Therapist:

Just like last time. You're in control. No matter what happens, try your best to stay in. If you feel yourself drifting, you know what to do. We're going to jump around a bit which may feel weird, but remember you're in control. And don't forget to breathe.

Taty (*opening her eyes*):

The year is 2017. Senior year. I was still finding myself in theatre. When the idea of doing a senior project came up; the one thing I wanted to do was write my own play. And I definitely had something to prove.

Taty (cont.)

One of our directors was this old white woman, and she said to me one time...

Racist director woman:

"Toddy, you know I'd hate to see you end up living out of your car and wasting your time. I think you shouldn't continue with theatre in college. You don't really have a future in it."

Taty:

*(Pause)* Obviously I've spent the last few years trying to prove her wrong. But her words held a lot of weight back then.

Taty *(cont.)*:

Then my good friend at the time came up to me asking to write it with me.

Taty at 17:

“Yes! And over Spring Break we can go to coffee shops and brainstorm. And then in the semester we'll hold readings and get feedback. We're such a great team! A mini squad. A dynamic duo.”

Friend:

Yeah for sure.

Taty:

I basically bolted into my mom's car--so excited.

Taty at 17:

“Guess what...my friend and I are going to write a play together. And be a team. And before you ask, yes, it's that friend. The one who you think is shady and will eventually hurt me. *(Pause)* I think you two should get lunch. He wants to meet you, you know. Like 'officially meet' not just a 'Great job' after a show.”

Taty:

I do have to be honest here. It's important to know that I had the biggest crush on this guy since sophomore year. *(Pause)* I can tell you the exact moment my crush started... actually yeah let's jump to that memory. It's mad cute--it'll be quick, I promise. *(Quick pause as the lights shift into something more theatrical, but warm.)*

March 2015. The two of us were in this musical together. *Gypsy*. And we both were in charge of moving the curtain at the end for the big strip tease scene. *(as TATY is describing this; the music from that moment in Gypsy is underscoring)* We were about three feet apart and we had to stay focused on the music for the cue to open the curtain. Then he started swaying side to side. Me being a professional would not allow myself to be distracted from my important work.

Taty at 15:

Oh but his eyes are twinkling. And the music is nice and slow. But I have to stay focused. Wait  
oh god he's looking at me.

Friend *(whispered)*:

Do you wanna dance?

Taty at 15 *(whispered)*:

We can't. We'll be in the light.

Friend *(whispered)*:

No watch. Put your arms up like this. And just step side to side. *(Pause)* There you go.



Taty at 15 (*whispered*):

*(As the cue for the curtain comes)* Oh shit our cue!

Taty:

*(pause. The memory fades away but TATY lingers in it for a moment)* Yeah anyway back to 2017.

May. Senior year. A couple days into Spring Break go by and I get this email from the head senior project advisor saying:

Taty as head senior project guy:

“Dear Tatyana, We regret to inform you that due to your grades at the midterm, you will be unable to continue with a senior project as planned. We’re sorry this didn’t go the way you planned.

Taty at 17:

Oh my god! No! I have to call- *(sound of a phone ringing)*

Hey...I’m sorry...I just got this email...and...we can’t do the project...I know you were really excited about it and us getting to hang out...and...I’m just really sorry...I let you down.

Taty as friend:

No. Taty listen. You didn’t let me down. They emailed me too and said that I can still do the project. I figured you can still help but in smaller ways. The main focus is getting your grades up.

Taty at 17:

Okay. Yeah it's a deal.

Taty:

Spoiler alert: None of that happened.

Taty (*cont.*):

I'm gonna save us all the drag of having to dive into the exposition. But long story short, I wasn't included in the creative process at all. In the end, I got my feelings hurt and I didn't want to be his friend anymore.

Therapist:

Are you still his friend now?

Taty:

Well no but not because of that. I think that was the beginning of the end; although, it was strangely the beginning. Our friendship was doomed from the start, and yeah partly that was on me.

Taty (*cont.*):

I suppressed my crush on him because I very much prioritized being his friend over anything. I think I loved him but not romantically. (*Pause.*) He was my best friend and I think I was his. He

actually said it first: that I was his best friend. And I'm very picky with my friends so I don't have a lot of them, but as soon as someone claims me as their best friend and I reciprocate, something bad happens. And they don't choose me anymore. I stop being their best friend and I lose them. They leave me. And I never get control over that. I hate the term "best friend".

Therapist:

Do you have a best friend now?

Taty:

Yes. They're different though. But I'm so scared. No, I'm utterly terrified. I don't think I can be their friend, and I don't know what to do with that information. *(Pause)* I hurt people. They should leave me, and get as far away from me as possible. That's why I'm here right? I'm scared and broken and it's because of him!

Therapist:

Who? Your friend?

Taty:

No. My old friend. My oldest friend. My first "best friend".

Taty *(cont.; taking a deep reluctant breath)*:

*(beat)* My father.

## Scene 3:

*We're already in the memory tracking. We're eavesdropping and it's up to TATY to let us in. Is she aware of us? Or is this just another coping mechanism?*

Taty:

When I was 5, my dad would take my sister and I on walks every morning. We'd walk a little bit down the street and run into the post office. My dad would say

Taty as dad:

“Tiny...”.

Taty:

That's what my dad would call me because when I was born I was, well, tiny, so the name kinda stuck. *(TATY sits in that memory for a hot sec then snaps herself back to reality.)* Anyway he'd say

Dad:

Tiny, come here! Look in the trucks' mirrors.

Taty at 5 *(jumping up to try to see her reflection)*:

I can't...I can't reach it. It's too high.

Dad:

No it's okay Tiny! Here I gotcha. *(He lifts her up to the mirror.)* Now look! It makes your face all funny looking.

Taty:

My dad would always make sure I didn't get too upset, and he'd find a way to make me laugh. This one time in first grade, my dad came to pick me up from school and I was bawling my eyes out.

Dad:

Tiny what happened? Are you okay?

Taty at 6 *(struggling to get words out because she's sobbing)*:

Daddy I'm so sorry. I'm sorry. I failed a test. I'm so stupid.

Dad:

Hey don't say that. Look at me. Look at me. Did you try your best?

Taty at 6:

Mhm

Dad:

That's all I care about! As long as you tried your best that's all that matters. Do you think the Yankees win every game?

Taty at 6:

No.

Dad:

Do you think they try their hardest to win every game?

Taty at 6:

Mhm

Dad:

And if they lose a game, does that make them a bad team?

Taty at 6:

No?

Dad:

Right. So you're not a bad student just because you got one bad grade.

Taty at 6:

Yeah I guess so.

Dad:

*(kisses the top of her forehead. Quick beat.)* Alright, Tiny, let's see that test.

*TATY AT 6 hands him the test which she was holding behind her back the whole time.*

Dad:

Tin— *(beginning to chuckle)* Tiny.

Taty as 6:

I told you it was bad!

Dad:

No Tiny. This is a 99%. That's nowhere near terrible! You had me thinking that this was gonna be an F. *(beat.)* Look you don't have to get the perfect 100 all the time. No one can do that. Just try your best...like the Yankees.

*Taty at 6 morphs into present day Taty as she lingers in the memory for a moment.*

Taty at 6:

Just like—

Taty:

—the Yankees. (beat. beat. beat.) Um... can we stop here? It's about to get sad and I really don't wanna go there. So I really think we should stop here please. I know you can hear me! Say something please. So I know you're listening. I want to stop.

Therapist:

We can't stop Tatyana. We have to keep going. If we stop now then we'll never get to the root of things. I know this is tough but you have to keep going. Breathe through it. You're safe. Nothing can happen to you in your own mind.

Taty:

*(to herself)* That's not necessarily true. *(TATY takes a deep cleansing breath. She takes a moment and continues.)* Okay. Summer 2010. My parents separated when I was 6, so my sister and I had to go on weekend visits with our dad. Although for some reason in 2010 the visits became less and less frequent and we'd have to settle for phone calls. However, this time my mom planned for us to stay the whole summer.

Mom:

You girls got all your stuff? Your dad's here.

Taty at 10:

Yes! Bye Mommy!

Taty:



I ran so fast out the door! I was so excited to see my dad in the flesh. Not some phone call or text message. There he was, arms wide open, but there was someone else in the car.

Dad:

Hey babies! C'mon get in the car; there's someone I want y'all to meet.

Dad (cont.):

This is my friend.

Taty:

My dad had plenty of friends that he'd introduce us to so I thought nothing of it. This did feel weird though because it was so quick. I was shook to see my dad again and then 2 seconds later he's introducing us to his friend. (Beat.) Anyway, we go to her house and meet her kids at dinner that night.....

Dad's friend's daughter:

Your dad has such weird friends. Like he's friends with all these old church folks.

Taty at 10:

Oooooooooooh you're making fun of my dad's friends right in front of one of his friends.

Taty:

Then my dad's friend turns to me and goes "Oh sweetie, I'm not his friend." (*Beat. Beat. Beat.*)

Then my brain started racing and putting 2 and 2 together. Because

Taty at 10:

I'm not stupid. Why would he lie to me? He's supposed to tell me everything. He's my best friend and my dad. I'm not a little kid anymore; I can handle the truth. And that car ride and then dinner-- (*Pause.*) They both made me look stupid so I have to break them up; that's only fair right?

Taty:

I didn't know what to do exactly because I was 10 and nothing was actually accessible to me. So I started doing little things that eventually escalated into big things. The worst thing I did was on a Sunday before church.

*Flash to a bible being thrown across the room. Not even Taty can bring herself to tell the full story because it was that awful.*

Taty:

My dad couldn't even look at me. He's a minister you know. And a gospel singer. When my sister and I were younger, much younger than this. He would always do a set with his group and then call my sister and me up to sing with him.

*Dad does a call and response to the first verse of "Jesus is on the mainline" with Taty at 6. Taty (present day) doesn't want to leave the memory that interrupted the bad one.*

*Beat. beat. be--*

Therapist:

How did your dad react to the Bible throwing?

Taty:

He didn't. He just laid my clothes out for church and didn't say a word. That's scarier than yelling. Because when someone yells you know that they're angry. That what you did affected them. That it had some sort of impact. But silence. It's so much louder than yelling.

After everybody got ready, we went to church and I looked up at my dad as he was holding my hand as we crossed the street. I said,

Taty at 10:

Daddy do you hate me?

Taty:

And he didn't say a word and he didn't even look at me.

Therapist:

I'm sorry Taty--

Taty:

No no no no let me keep going.

Therapist:

I fear that you're using this as a method of self har--

Taty:

No! I want to keep going now. And if I stop you don't get your check. So we all win if I keep going.

Taty:

*(Takes a deep breath to push herself through)* My sister and I went home early that summer. The next time I talked to my dad was when he was telling us he was getting married. It's funny because if you look at all the pictures from the wedding I'm scratching my arm because I made myself breakout in hives.

Therapist:

What do you mean "made yourself"?

Taty:

Well when I was little, I discovered this super power that I called “thinking myself sick”. If I didn’t wanna go to school, I would imagine that I had a stomach ache, so I wouldn’t be lying when I said to my mom “My tummy hurts.”

My super power actually recently evolved. Whenever I think that someone is going to try to hurt me, I just retreat inside myself. Like if someone is yelling at me, I just retreat inside a little corner in my brain, and my body goes on autopilot. *(Pause.)*

Even when I was little, I remember that corner in my mind. I think I’ve always gone there. I don’t remember the last time it felt like I was in control. I think my body’s on autopilot right now.

Therapist:

There was a lot there. Do you want to break that down?

Taty:

Yeah I talk a lot-- *(Switch)* You know my dad knew that I was hurting that day. He saw me scratching my arm and crying in a corner. But that didn’t pull him away from her. He just sent some random church lady to give me itch cream. *(Pause.)* Then my mom showed up and we went home.

Therapist:

Tatyana I’m sensing a lot of anger. Do you want to stop now?

Taty:

No. I'm fine. I just never said most of that stuff out loud to anyone. Not even a therapist. But I think I should finish the dad story. I'm not sure how it ends. I thought I did but now I'm not so sure.

Therapist:

What do you mean?

Taty:

I spent the next five years or so of my life only hearing my dad's voice. It was like we went backwards. We were back to phone calls and text messages, but I was totally fine with that.

(Pause.) I think that's why my relationship with men now, whether platonic or romantic, is completely fucked up. I'll accept the bare minimum because that's what I got from him. *(Beat.)*

Fast forward to my senior year of high school. The day before graduation. I was having a rough day and school sucked. But thank God I was graduating in less than 24hrs and--oh wait sorry my dad is calling. *(TATY shifts into her 17 year old self, and it's as though this is happening all over again. She's fully in the memory.)*

Taty at 17:

Hi dad! I gotta tell you abou--.....You what?.....You're sick.....You can't go tomorrow. But it's my--.....D-dad I'm so sorry I have to go. I have to go. I'm sorry. *(TATY hangs up the phone and tries to calm herself down. But whatever she's feeling just happens.)*

Scene 4:

*This picks up pretty much exactly where the last scene ended. Time folds in on itself as never before. TATY is still feeling the pain of the memory she left behind. An unseen voice breaks the silence.*

Therapist:

Tatyana.

Taty:

...

Therapist:

Tatyana.

Taty:

...

Mom:

Taty!

Taty:

Why do you sound like--?

Mom:

Tatyana Monet! C'mere!

*TATY morphs into her 17 year old self again.*

Taty at 17 (*gathering herself*):

Coming Mom!

*TATY makes her way to her Mom's room holding in tears the whole time.*

Taty at 17:

Yes.

Mom:

What's going on?

Taty:

...

Mom:

Taty what's wrong?



Taty (*finally allowing herself to breakdown and feel the total weight of everything she's been feeling*):

Dad can't make it to graduation tomorrow. He told me he was sick. And that he was sorry. But this is a pattern you know. He couldn't make it to my 5th grade graduation or my 8th grade graduation. But neither of those were big deals! This one though--this was the big one. The last time it mattered. It's the last time you're in school that you *have* to go to. This is the culmination of the last 12 years of my life and my dad couldn't even show up for any of it!

Mom:

Shh shh c'mere. (*MOM holds TATY in her arms as she cries. MOM begins to pet her hair.*) You're not even upset about him not coming. (*Pause.*) It's the award earlier. That's what's really upsetting you. It's not him.

Taty:

She was right, you know. She always is. I left out this part earlier. (*Beat. Beat.*) Earlier that day my school had this award ceremony called "Prize Day" and there was this specific award for theatre. All the freshmen and sophomores came up to me that day saying, "Oh Taty you're 1000% gonna get that theatre award. There's no way you won't!" It kinda gassed me up a bit not gonna lie. Because I did so much for my high school theatre program. I directed shows, I stage managed, I painted sets, but what I was most proud of was mentoring the freshmen and sophomores. I knew that when I was their age all I was for the older kids to just say hi in the hallways. So when I became a senior, I got to know all their names and I'd be that person they could wave to in the halls. I just wanted them to feel welcomed.

Taty (cont.):

That morning on the way to school I said,

Taty at 17:

You know if you got an email telling me to dress up for an award, no need to worry about that because I'm wearing my best dress!

Mom:

Alright

Taty at 17:

Also don't forget to take lots of pictures *if* you got an email.

Mom:

...

Taty at 17:

Of course if you got an email you shouldn't tell me. I want it to be a surprise.

Mom:

Trust me I'll be on the lookout.

Taty:

I searched so hard for my mom in the crowd. Everyone and everything was moving so quickly, I must have missed her right? Then as my friends and I walked to our seats, I heard, “Hey hey! Look I’m over here. Surprised to see me?” I looked-- (*Beat.*) --and it was my friend’s dad calling for him. He definitely got an award. But still, I couldn’t find my mom.

Taty at 17:

It’s fine. Maybe she forgot. Or had work. (*Pause*) But she took this week off for graduation--

Announcer:

Okay everyone please be seated! Our first award goes to a senior in the theatre program. This senior has been working nonstop in the program for years.

Taty at 17:

Oh God, everyone’s looking at me. This has to be me right??

Announcer:

They’ve acted in and directed shows, stage managed, and painted sets.

Taty at 17:

This is me. This is so me!

Announcer:

But I think their greatest accomplishment is mentoring the underclassmen in the program, learning every last one of their names, and creating a beautiful community of theatre people.

Taty at 17:

Me. Me. Me.

Announcer:

That's why the 2017 Theatre Award goes to.....

Taty at 17:

It's most definitely me!

Announcer:

"Not Taty"! This award is for "Not Taty". "Not Taty" get on up here!

Taty at 17:

Not me. I didn't get it. *(Pause.)* Oh God, everyone's looking at me. I can't react negatively; I have to act happy for them.

Therapist:

So you didn't get the theatre award and that upset you?

Taty:

It wasn't even about the stupid award. That meant absolutely nothing to me. It just would have been nice to be the one people are clapping for for once. *(Beat.)* Later that day I was waiting for my mom to pick me up.

Taty at 17:

Oh my mom's here now actually. *(To offstage)* Bye guys! In less than 24hrs, we'll officially be graduates! See y'all! *(to Mom)* Hi mom. *(Pause. Beat. Pause. Pause. Beat.)* I didn't get the award.

Mom:

I know.

Taty at 17:

...

Mom:

I kept refreshing my email all week. Scrolling through every folder hoping that it got misplaced. When I didn't get one this morning, I just wanted to take you somewhere else. Take you out to breakfast or something. Let you not have to go to school today.

Taty at 17:

...

Mom:

You know who you are and what you've done for them in that theater. Don't let this award get you down. Just remember who you are. You don't need an award for that.

Taty at 17:

...

Mom:

And tomorrow you'll be a graduate! You're getting old.

Taty at 17:

...

Mom:

Let's get home.

Therapist:

Your relationship with your mom sounds great.

Taty:

Yeah I guess we're closer now, but it wasn't always like that.

Therapist:

What do you mean?

Taty:

I just mean there are some things that I feel like I can't tell her about.

Therapist:

Like what?

Taty:

Like my mental state. All the things that are flooding my head, making my head heavy.

Therapist:

Have you ever tried to tell your mom any of that stuff?

Taty:

No. *(A quick flash of TATY AT 13 smashing a window and taking in her bloody hands. Beat.)*  
Actually yes. I tried once in middle school and it didn't end well. Let's just say mental health wasn't a topic our family was ready for back then. But then a few years later... *(Another quick flash this time of complete darkness. The sound of heavy jagged breathing--a panic attack. Quickly followed by the sound of sirens.)* We were on our way to the hospital when my mom

turned to me and said,

Mom:

I'm so glad you found theatre. You found something to put yourself into. When you were 13 you were going down the same path that your sister is on. *(Pause.)* I just wish that she found something that could help her like you did.

Therapist:

She knew about your depression. You just found a healthy coping mechanism.

Taty:

Yeah it worked in high school. But when I got to college, theatre stopped being fun. *(A quick flash to shots of a cold, white theater)* It was colder, clique-ier, and way more “academic” than I was used to. Everyone really stuck to their cliques. I had a good group of friends, but then my sophomore year everyone started to drift apart. Remember my friend from earlier? I think he was the toughest loss that year. *(Pause)* He's not dead by the way! He's just, not my friend anymore. *(Pause. Sound cue: “If I were you I'd get as far away from Taty as possible. She's just too much.”)* Some fucked up things were done on both ends. *(Pause: Quick flash to TATY AT 19 laying in a parking lot at night. The faint sound of people yelling for her. TATY AT 19 giggles to herself.)*

Therapist:

And how does this connect back to your mother?

Taty:



One day it all became too much, I couldn't handle it. *(Pause. Breathe through this.)* I tried to kill myself out of complete and utter fear of being alone.

Therapist:

How were you going to do it?

Taty:

...

*The rushing noise of a waterfall. Followed by a flash of TATY AT 19 sitting on the edge of the rocks.*

Therapist:

What stopped you?

Taty:

I thought about my sister first. I didn't want her to lose me. I don't know how important I am in her life, but she's known me for her entire life, and I've known her since I was 3. She doesn't cry, you know, it's like her thing. But I didn't wanna be the reason for her tears. *(Pause. Breathe.)* Then I thought about my mom. She is probably the strongest woman I know, let me tell you! *(Pause. Breathe!)* She had to bury her mother too soon. Her own mother! And I have only seen her cry probably once in my life before. *(Pause. Breathe!!)* I just didn't want her to have to bury her child. No parent should have to do that. *(Pause. Beat. Pause.)* That's what stopped me.

*(Pause. Pause. Beat.)* I actually called my mom right after I walked away from the water that day.

Mom:

Hello?

Taty at 19:

Mommy?

Mom:

What's wrong?

Taty at 19:

Mommy I-

Mom:

Taty what's going on?

Taty at 19:

Mommy I'm really sick and I need help.

Mom:

Okay let me know what's wrong. Okay?

Taty at 19:

I can't. It's--It's in my head. I can't tell you what's wrong because I don't know.

Mom:

I wanna help you. Just please tell me what I can do.

Taty at 19:

...

Mom:

Taty?

Taty at 19:

...

Mom:

Taty!

Taty at 19:

I want to go home.

Mom:

Alright.

Therapist:

That's progress! You ended up telling your mother everything.

Taty:

Some things. *(Pause.)* I only told her the important parts. The parts that mattered. Kinda like what I'm doing here.

Therapist:

Are you leaving parts of the stories out?

Taty:

Of course.

Therapist:

Why?

Taty:

You gave me a time limit.

*Blackout.*

Scene 5:

*No more tracking we're in it, and so is Taty.*

Therapist:

Okay Tatyana, we're nearing the end of our time together.

Taty:

...

Therapist:

How did it feel?

Taty:

How did what feel?

Therapist:

The tracking! The experience!

Taty:

You mean expelling all my trauma for someone I don't even know?

Therapist:

Tatyana--

Taty:

It was exhausting. A tad humiliating. And (*brief pause*) kinda relieving.

Therapist:

That's good! (*Pause.*) I want to try one last thing before we part ways.

Taty:

Alright. Go off.

Therapist:

I want you to close your eyes. Breathe for a second.

Taty:

...

Therapist:

Now imagine three empty chairs in front of you. And I want you to imagine each of these significant people in your life in each one of the chairs. There's one for your friend, your father, and your mother. When you open your eyes in a second, I want you to go down the line of chairs and say something you've never said to that person before.

Taty:

And then we'll be done?

Therapist:

And then we'll be done.

*Flashes of FRIEND from earlier in the play flash by. It's quick like a blink--maybe two. Maybe a breath or a dream. Then there he is. Sitting in the imaginary.*

Taty:

This is kinda weird. They won't respond right?

Therapist:

Only if you don't want them to. Like I said earlier, you are totally in control of your own mind.

And try your best to talk to them directly. Not to me. That'll be most effective.

Taty:

Okay. *(to Friend)* I used to imagine you in front of me as though nothing happened. As though me being missing from your life didn't change you in any way. I think back then when I did all those things two years ago, and I think that question most definitely played a part in it. Like did I affect you? Did my presence or lack thereof have an impact on you? And I don't know the answer to that--I don't think I ever will. I actually don't think I need to know. *(Brief pause)* Because let's say you did miss me too, then what am I supposed to do with that information? But let's say you don't, and hearing that would be hard, I'm not gonna lie. I think I used to get a rush

knowing something I did affected you so much, but then there was a point where I couldn't tell anymore. I do miss the good times though. Every time I see you it's like a walking you're a walking memory bank. The only thing I have left of a time I don't really wanna forget. I do wish  
you the best.

*(to Dad)* Dad... Our relationship has shifted, and that truly broke my heart. I think back then I had convinced myself that you didn't care. Rather that you never did. I of course don't know the full story. I hope that one day I will. I think I need to know that. Because of you, I take love that ends up burning me in the end. Or when I receive love that I truly deserve, I can't accept it because I become so scared that it's fake. That one day that person will stop showing up for me and call me as though nothing happened. I think I'm still hurt. By you. I need time. But I don't have that time. I've needed to make a lot of adult decisions very fast whereas other people my age get to chill. I have so much anger, resentment, and confusion. But at the end of the day, if my world were ending, and I had to say goodbye. I have a short list of people I'd want to talk to one last time and you're one of them. I don't know what that means. In the end you're still my father.

And I miss my dad.

*(to Mom)* Mommy. I think this is the hardest one. Our relationship is interesting. Of everyone here you've been around the longest. I think we've hurt each other a lot. And there's so much I haven't said to you that it's hard to narrow it down. I felt like I couldn't open up to you about being sick at first. I didn't want you to think I was "crazy", but I was sick and I needed help. Then when Taylor got sick too, I-- I just didn't want you to think you failed as a mom. Both of your kids are struggling with mental illness and I just didn't want you to think that it was your



fault. *(Beat. Beat. Beat.)* You know, I actually wrote you a letter a few years ago. That I never gave to you. I think it's time for you to hear it.

*(voiceover: As this is happening flashes of memories from so many different times flood the letter and it's overpowering. In the end TATY waves goodbye to her therapist and says "see you next week" She turns off her light and closes her laptop.)*

[Dear Mommy,

I just wanted to let you know that school's going fine. I have this one class that's been a little slow but my professor's cool though! I hope my other professors are good. I'm having a rough time socially. Sure, everyone is nice for the most part, but it's hard being Black in a predominantly white school. I guess I got lucky in high school, because everyone was nice and approachable. Even if they were unconsciously racist, they weren't in your face about it. I a few friends which is great, but it's really hard to make friends since I'm shy and sensitive. One girl made me cry the other day because of how rude she was to me. Thank God I had a few people there to comfort me. I don't know, maybe I'll only have one or two friends. I miss home a lot. Whenever I see pictures of Max, I want to cry because I know he's not as young as he thinks he is, and he may pass when I'm up here. I'll be sad that I wasn't with him, because he's always been my best bud. Then when I'm bored and alone, I miss my sister more. We never got to finish watching her favorite movie together before I left which I regret a lot. I hope her sophomore year goes great; that was one of the best years for me. It's also hard to call you because it just reminds me that I'm not home. We talk all the time which is great, but when you tell me stories of things

that happened, I get a bit sad. I feel like I'm missing so much. I know I'm at school getting a great education, but I miss home more than anything. I especially miss your hugs and advice whenever

I'm sad; it's not the same over the phone.

I'll talk to you later. Love you,

Taty]

*Blackout. End of Play.*