

## NOTES ON THE PLAY

All characters except Dance Teacher Pat and The Moms are between the ages of eleven and fourteen years old. However, they should be played by adult actors (for the most part) and should range in age from twelve to seventy-five and over. Please go for a spectrum. There is no need for any of the actors to resemble teenagers. (In fact, please resist this impulse!) And the more diverse the cast in terms of race, sexuality, backgrounds, bodies, souls, etc. the better.

Think of it as a ghost play: the actors' older bodies are haunting these thirteen-year-old characters. (We're getting to see who they grow up to be!) And these thirteen-year-old characters are haunted by the specters of what they will become. At times we should be fully in "thirteen-year-old land" with all its ridiculousness, pain, and pleasure. And at times we should be palpably aware of the actors' real ages and their distance from this moment in their lives.

The chants should be terrifying rituals that conjure real power.

The dances should take up time and space and be fully and gorgeously embodied performative events, even if the actors possess no real dance talent. (In fact, better if the actors possess no real dance talent.)

Cuteness is death. Pagan feral-ness and ferocity are key.

Everyone is nice.

Everyone is vulnerable.

And everyone is trying their hardest.

### On notation...

A slash (/) indicates interruption.

Brackets shaped like < > indicate language that's hushed or spoken under the breath.

Punctuation is rhythmic and capricious – not grammatical.

And the character heading "ALL THE GIRLS" includes Luke.

## PRODUCTION NOTES

The "Gandhi dance" is a social justice dance in the lyrical style. (Google "Dance Moms Voices in My Head" for one very arbitrary example.) Please don't make it a dance that appropriates Indian culture or makes fun of Gandhi. It should be serious and heartfelt. Also, the role of Gandhi should be meaningful – even if the movements are really simple. We should feel Gandhi as the center of the dance at the same time that we understand twelve-year-old Connie's disappointment at not being the "cool part," i.e. the more virtuosic (flips! turns!) Spirit of Gandhi that is the dance's climax. In other words, you should honor the spirit of the text's suggestion that all Gandhi does is "sit on the floor," but you don't have to take it too literally.

Additionally, (to state the obvious) you cannot do this play if you do not have a South Asian actress in the role of Connie. And of the roles of Zuzu, Amina, and Ashlee, two of the three must be played by women of color.

I haven't specified which character should be played by the oldest actor and which character should be played by the youngest, but I will say in both productions Maeve was the most senior member of our cast, and I think that choice is right.

Also, in Scene One, one of the girls who doesn't speak can simply stay backstage and play Minda. The God Mic can be played by Dance Teacher Pat.

There is full nudity written into the play in Scene 4 when the girls change clothes. In the script, the nudity is presented as very frank, but it's really about the process of going from dance clothes to street clothes – it's quotidian and practical. The nudity stems from the tremendous intimacy between the girls and their sort of unabashed feral-ness. It's also an exploration of non-sexual female nudity onstage, something I feel passionately about. I think it does something to the play's alchemy that's important. All that said, nudity is 100% optional based on the feelings of the actors, and the play can be performed without it. In both New York and London, each actor decided for themselves whether or not they wanted to participate in it and how (i.e. I'll take my pants off but leave my T-shirt on, or I'll stay covered, or I'll get completely naked), and in New York, they even adjusted their choices on a night-to-night basis.

### On fangs and blood...

I'm in favor of lots of blood whenever possible. Please really go for the period. Fangs are for you to figure out

when they're real and when they're psychic, but I'd say they're particularly helpful during the "Baby Sexy Robot" portion of the play (Scene 8) and not necessary anywhere else – although, I'm curious what would happen if you tried them!

I'm also in favor of having a moon.

**On the ending...**

In both New York and London, we found that stillness was really crucial for Amina's final monologue, despite the stage directions about her dancing. Feel free to experiment, but the most important thing to protect is the emotional resonance of that text. If you do choose stillness, which I recommend, the play should still end with some kind of gesture or dance sequence that stems from her anger and voracious desire. (In other words, "I was alone" is not the final beat of the play.)

**A final word on tone...**

Play it like adults. The actors should be sincere and grounded. And the stakes should feel real – like "adult problems."

**Special Thanks**

I made this play over the course of two-and-a-half years with Lee Sunday Evans, and her instincts and insight were absolutely invaluable in shaping it. Thank you also to our incredible cast and team of designers and stage managers, and to all the artists who helped develop this play, of which there were many. And thank you to Playwrights Horizons for your support and advocacy, and for immediately believing in us. I would also like to thank: Clubbed Thumb, Maria Striar, Michael Walkup, the Atlantic, Page 73, New Dramatists, Margot Bordelon, David Herskovits, Alex Borinsky, Chiara Atik, Paul Hardy, Rachel Viola, RESCHAA, and the Barron family.

## PLAYWRIGHT'S PERSPECTIVE

It can be kind of paralyzing to make work about gender in a moment like this. And worse to have to talk about it. But I'm going to try.

This is a play about thirteen-year-old girls. It's also a play about women, ambition, and desire. I wanted to write this play because I wanted to present a different picture of teenage girls onstage. One where trauma wasn't the central narrative. One where "being the best" was.

The girls are played by women ranging from their twenties to their sixties because I was tired of the casting convention of hiring petite twenty-five-year-olds to play thirteen. I didn't want the characters in the play to look like what you think teenage girls should look like – because teenage girls don't really look like that! Also, because the play is really about how we carry what happens to us when we're thirteen through the rest of our lives.

I, for one, am still struggling with a lot of the same things. For example:

I remember standing in a press line to talk about a play I had written. The journalist asked me if I was an actor. I said, "No. I wrote the play." He gasped in surprise. "All by yourself?" Instead of rolling my eyes or telling him off, I laughed, shyly, and smiled back at him: "Oh, well, you know. I had lots and lots of help."

In that moment, making him feel comfortable with his actions, with his words and his perspective – making sure that he didn't think he had done anything wrong – was more important to me than standing up for myself and my work. And I do think that that is a pattern that has haunted me.

Sometimes I think that the subtitle of my professional and my personal life could be "Clare Barron Makes Mediocre Men Feel Good About Themselves."

That's something I have to change. And I want to be clear that I think that all of this is as much about the world's expectation that I be palatable to other people, well-behaved, sweet, helpless, and unassuming, as it is about my own failure to take real responsibility for myself as an agent for change in the world – as each of us are.

And also, in my case, sometimes that "helplessness" or seeming helplessness has enabled me to work within the system and succeed.

We participate in corrupt currencies all the time.

I feel a lot of shame when I receive any kind of recognition. In part, because I'm not comfortable taking up too much space. In part, because I'm aware that I've had it relatively easy. That there's something precarious about being palatable to gatekeepers in a world that is so deeply unfair.

That's the tricky thing about rewarding excellence: How can we celebrate a few when there are so many without the platform, without the access and who are met with deep institutional bias?

Or even, something more psychological:

I remember when I first started out in playwriting, my playwright guy friends would get really angry when they applied for something (a residency, a writer's group) and didn't get it. I was confused – I didn't feel angry. Then I realized the difference: they thought they deserved it; I had convinced myself I didn't.

The girls in the play are dealing with all these questions of who's the best, who deserves to be recognized, what to do when the system (aka Dance Teacher Pat) is unfair, how to be friends and compete at the same time, how to stand up for yourself when you've been trained not to...

The difference is they're only thirteen.

The difference is they're still a little naïve. They still think anything is possible.

In the play, the girls audition for a "special part" in one of their competition dances. After the audition, one of the girls, Amina, runs up to her best friend, Zuzu. They both congratulate each other on their auditions, ignoring the fact that one of them will inevitably be disappointed. Then Amina gets an idea: "Maybe we'll both just get it!"

Zuzu lights up. The thought hadn't occurred to her. "Oh my god! That would be perfect!"

Why not.

# 1

*Blinding white lights. Thirty little bodies dressed like sailors are tap dancing. They are flapping their feet and kicking their legs. They are perfectly in sync. Their faces are beaming. They live for this shit. It's the end of the number - they strike a pose.*

*Thunderous applause. A curtain drops.*

**THE GOD MIC.**

Alright girls. That's it. Good show. Let's clear the stage.

*Thirty little bodies run in all directions.*

*A Crumpled Sailor is left behind. She is bleeding profusely and her femur is sticking out of her skin.*

**CRUMPLED SAILOR AKA VANESSA.**

I can't get up

*A tiny dancer dashes back across the stage without stopping.*

**CRUMPLED SAILOR AKA VANESSA.**

I can't get up

*Another tiny dancer comes back onstage. She sees the Crumpled Sailor and slowly backs off the way she came.*

*Suddenly, a voice from the God Mic.*

**THE GOD MIC.**

Hey. You in the sailor suit. Let's go

**CRUMPLED SAILOR AKA VANESSA.**

I think there's something wrong with my knee

**THE GOD MIC.**

Hey Minda? We've got a sailor down. Can you come get her off the stage please?

**MINDA.** *(Yelling from somewhere far offstage.)*

Coming!!

*A long moment of the Crumpled Sailor alone on the stage, bleeding.*

*One by one the tiny dancers come back onstage and stand in horror around the Crumpled Sailor.*

**SOFIA.**

Oh my god

**MAEVE.**

Oh my god

**ASHLEE.**

Oh my god! Vanessa! What happened?

**CRUMPLED SAILOR AKA VANESSA.**

I landed funny

**MAEVE.**

Wow. That's really bad

*The Girls try not to cry.*

**THE GOD MIC.**

Hey Minda? Can you bring some paper towels? And maybe some-

**MINDA.** *(Yelling from somewhere offstage.)*

Sorry! Just a minute!

**CONNIE.**

Does it hurt?

*One of the stage lights comes undone. It falls to the stage and lands with an enormous BANG like a cannon going off.*

*The tiny dancers scream and run in all directions.*

*The Crumpled Sailor - once again all alone onstage and bleeding. A long moment of silence, and then...*

**THE GOD MIC.**

Just sit tight, honey. Someone's calling an ambulance.

2

*Dance Teacher Pat stands in front of an army of little Girls and Luke – the one male dancer in the group.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Alright girls  
We've got a lot of work to do  
Nationals is a month away  
And we're a mess.  
Maeve. Get that hair out of your face

*Maeve pushes her hair back. It falls back into her eyes.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Where's your hair tie?

**MAEVE.**

In the dressing room

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Run and get it

*Maeve runs out of the studio to get a hair tie.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Now we all get to wait for Maeve...

*They wait for Maeve.*

...  
...  
...  
...  
...  
...

*Maeve comes running back, her bangs awkwardly pinned back with butterfly clips. Dance Teacher Pat clears his throat.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Alright. Where was I?

**MAEVE.**

*...sorry*

*Dance Teacher Pat holds up a thumb.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

This week? We're off to the Legacy National Talent Competition in Philadelphia

*He adds a finger.*

*id lands with an  
bleeding. A long*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Next week? We take the bus to Akron, Ohio, for StarPower USA

*And a third finger...*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Then it's Lanoka Harbor, New Jersey, for The Boogie Down Grand Prix

*He starts with his thumb again and counts up.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

If we win in Philadelphia...

If we win in Akron, Ohio...

And if we win in Lanoka Harbor, New Jersey, at The Boogie Down Grand Prix  
(And I'm talking Overall First Place finishes or nothing)

We will pack our bags...

And we will get on a plane...

And we will fly all the way to TAMPA BAY,

**FLORIDAAAAAAAAAAAAA**

**ALL THE GIRLS.**

Yes!

**Yes!**

**Yesss!**

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

**FOR NATIONALSSSSSSSSSS**

**ALL THE GIRLS.**

Yes!

**Yes!**

**Yesss!**

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

**IN FLORIDAAAAAAAAAAAAA**

*They start to shout: "Yes!" He silences them.*

*They hush.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Now some of you are bumpin' at the top of the pre-teen division, and next year I'm gonna have to bump you up to teens. (Connie. Ashlee. Zuzu. I'm talking to you.) You're gonna be at the bottom of the pile again and you're gonna have to crawl your way back to the top...

**ALL THE GIRLS.**

...

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

But right now you're Big Dogs...

How're you gonna cap off your prepubescent years?  
Will you be winners?  
Like the Elite Pre-Teen Competition Squad of 1992?

*He raps a framed photograph of the Elite Pre-Teen Competition Squad of 1992. They are in sequins and face paint and grasping a four-foot-tall trophy - vicious, victorious.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Or '95

*He raps another photo on the wall.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Or '97

*And another.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Or two-thousand-thirteen. *Fourteen. Fifteen!*

Three years in a row

Boom, boom, boom

...

...

Or will you not even make it to The Wall...

**ALL THE GIRLS.**

...

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Who were the girls in 1996?

We don't know...

It's like they never even existed

**ALL THE GIRLS.**

...

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

But the girls in 1997.....

You remember who they were, don't you????

*All the Girls whisper, mesmerized by the memory of..*

**ALL THE GIRLS. (Whispering.)**

*Sabinaaaaaaaaaaaaa*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Yes, Sabina

**ALL THE GIRLS.**

*Sabinaaaaaaaaaaaaa*

*The Girls gaze admiringly at a portrait of Sabina - beautiful, gracious, wearing an enormous crown.*

id Prix

A

next year I'm gonna  
u.) You're gonna be  
back to the top...





**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Why don't you girls know this? He went on a hunger strike and stopped eating.

*Dance Teacher Pat looks at them menacingly.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

It's going to be a really beautiful number about resistance. You'll all be playing Citizens of the World. And one of you will play the role of Gandhi.

*They all look at Connie - the only Indian-American student in the class. Sofia raises her hand.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Yes Sofia

**SOFIA.**

I don't think it's fair that Gandhi is the star

*They all look at Connie.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

I don't know which one of you will play the role of Gandhi yet.

It could be anyone.

*Zuzu raises her hand.*

**ZUZU.**

I'd really like to play the role of Gandhi.

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

You're all going to learn the part and then we'll see who does it best.

*Luke raises his hand.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Yes Luke?

**LUKE.**

Is Vanessa okay?

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Vanessa's in the hospital. Vanessa's doing fine.

**LUKE.**

Is she coming back?

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Vanessa won't be dancing with us for awhile.

*They all look at the floor.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

That's what happens when you don't roll through your feet properly when you land.

Alright. Spread apart!

*The Girls get into formation.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

I want you to learn it as if it's your solo to lose

t Sabina Maratzi was  
ork City and six years

e moment, this is the

shley, PA, but it's not

e judges have never  
there's a revolution  
*NG THE FUTURE!!*  
*HEIR COLD, DEAD,*

n tell me who that is?

## 3

*Drumroll! The Girls and Luke audition for the part of Gandhi.*

**ASHLEE.**

I hope I get it!

*They do the dance as if we could only see a close-up on their faces. They are perfectly still except for their eyebrows, their nostrils, their mouths, etc. and the occasional dramatic arm movement. At the moment in the dance where they would leap, they breathe in deeply through their nostrils. At the moment in the dance where they would do a series of turns, they breathe out through their mouths. They furrow their brows as the music swells\* and then break into a radiant look of surprise. Everything is perfectly choreographed. It is a complex and exquisitely rendered ballet of the face.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Alright. Good stuff

*The Girls disperse. He calls after them...*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

**REMEMBER TO CLOSE YOUR MOUTH WHEN YOU TURN, ASHLEE!** Everybody needs to work on their faces

*He claps on each word.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Sadness, Surprise, Fierce

Sadness, Surprise, Fierce

I want you to practice in front of the mirror

No limp arms, or I'll cut them off!

*Almost all the Girls are gone now. Zuzu catches up to Amina.*

**ZUZU.**

Hey

**AMINA.**

Hey

**ZUZU.**

Good job!

**AMINA.**

You, too!

**ZUZU.**

You were awesome

**AMINA.**

Oh my god. *You* were awesome

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**ZUZU.**

Your turns were crazy. You went so fast

**AMINA.**

I loved your chest roll. You were so *intense*

**ZUZU.**

Really?????

**AMINA.**

You're such a diva

**ZUZU.**

Was my side aerial okay?

**AMINA.**

Yeah it was good

**ZUZU.**

It felt a little lopsided

**AMINA.**

Maybe a little but you caught it

**ZUZU.**

But a little?

**AMINA.**

Maybe a little but I didn't really notice, I feel like you pulled it off

**ZUZU.**

Okay good

**AMINA.**

What about mine?

**ZUZU.**

It was perfect

**AMINA.**

Are you sure?

**ZUZU.**

It was totally perfect

**AMINA.**

Okay cool

**ZUZU.**

Your turns were perfect, too

**AMINA.**

I'm always worried that I go too fast

**ZUZU.**

No, / no it's cool

**AMINA.**

And lose control. It's not good to lose control

hi.

ir faces. They are  
ouths, etc. and the  
dance where they  
At the moment in  
out through their  
then break into a  
ed. It is a complex

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main. For further informa-

**ZUZU.**  
I like it

*They smile at each other.*

**AMINA.**  
I hope we both just get it

**ZUZU.**  
Yeah! I hope we're both just Gandhi!

**AMINA.**

**OH MY GOD**

**ZUZU.**  
What?!

**AMINA.**  
That would be *perfect!*

*Connie's still there, drinking from her water bottle. She waves at them.*

**CONNIE.**  
Hey

## 4

*The dressing room post-auditions. The Girls are changing into their street clothes. They get completely, uninhibitedly butt-ass naked in front of each other as they talk. Luke is separated from them by a little curtain.*

**ASHLEE.**

If I get a dog, it's gonna be a wolf dog

**CONNIE.**

A what?

**ASHLEE.**

A wolf dog

**CONNIE.**

That's bad for the wolves

**ASHLEE.**

No it's not

**CONNIE.**

Ask Maeve. She's really into wolf preservation

**ASHLEE.**

Maeve

**CONNIE.**

Wolf preservation

**MAEVE.**

Oh. Yeah

**ASHLEE.**

I wanna get a wolf dog

**MAEVE.**

That's bad

**CONNIE.**

See

**ASHLEE.**

Why is that bad? / They're beautiful

**MAEVE.**

It's bad for the wolves. They're not pets. / They're wild animals

**SOFIA.**

I'm not into wolf preservation. I'm into wolf extinction

**CONNIE.**

Okay, you freak

**SOFIA.**

I'm not really into wolf extinction. I just think they're scary

**ASHLEE.**

They're not scary

**SOFIA.**

What's a wolf dog?

**AMINA.**

Half-dog, half-wolf

**MAEVE.**

I'm really into what?

**ASHLEE.**

Wait. Are you serious?

aves at them.

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**ASHLEE.**

Maeve

**CONNIE.**

Wolf preservation

**MAEVE.**

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**ASHLEE.**

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**CONNIE.**

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**ASHLEE.**

They're not scary

s at them.

**MAEVE.**

I want to walk to school with wolves

**CONNIE.**

No you don't

**MAEVE.**

Yes I do! I want to walk to school with the wolves howling / in the mountains

**SOFIA.**

Hey Amina. Did you do it?

**AMINA.**

Huh?

*Sofia makes a gesture like she's thwacking a pussy.*

**AMINA.**

I tried

**SOFIA.**

You *tried*?

**AMINA.**

Nothing happened

**SOFIA.**

*Nothing happened????!!*

**AMINA.**

I don't know why. I really tried!

**SOFIA.**

What did you do?

**CONNIE.** *(To Ashlee.)*

She's teaching Amina how to masturbate

**SOFIA.** *(To Connie.)*

Shut up

**ASHLEE.**

To masturbate?

**SOFIA.**

Wait, so. What did you do?

**AMINA.**

I don't know. I just did what you told me

**SOFIA.**

Uh-huh

**AMINA.**

For like a long time

**SOFIA.**

What did you think about?

**ASHLEE.**

Wait. What's happening?

**CONNIE.**

What? I think it's cool!

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**AMINA.**

You're supposed to think about something?

**SOFIA.**

Amina! That's like--

The whole thing

Is mostly / just thinking

**CONNIE.**

Yeah, it's mostly just thinking

**AMINA.**

What do you think about?

**SOFIA.**

I don't know I'll tell you later

**CONNIE.**

Swimsuits

*Connie laughs.*

**CONNIE.**

I don't know why. I mostly think about like... *Luke???*

**LUKE.** (*From behind the curtain.*)

Yeah?

**CONNIE.**

*Don't listen!* .....taking off swimsuits

**ASHLEE.**

I mostly think about someone being really mad at me. And pinning me to the ground. And like. Yelling

*Sofia pulls up her pants.*

**SOFIA.**

My sister says there's this thing called your *pica*?

**CONNIE.**

Uh-huh

**SOFIA.**

And it's between your asshole and your privates

**ASHLEE.**

Oh, wow

*Luke parts the curtain and joins the Girls.*

**MAEVE.**

Hi Luke

**ASHLEE.**

Hi Luke

**LUKE.**

Hey

untains

**SOFIA.**

And it's where dance originated from. Like the first humans. They all danced from their *pica*. Instead of their core. Everything came from their *pica*.

**MAEVE.**

I wish we got to dance from our *picas*!

**ASHLEE.**

Where is it again?

**SOFIA.**

The little stretch of land between your asshole and your privates...

**ASHLEE.**

...

...

...

**SOFIA. (Laughing.)**

What're you doing?!

**ASHLEE.**

I'm just- Finding it

**AMINA.**

Who do you guys think is going to be Gandhi?

**MAEVE.**

You

**LUKE.**

You

**ASHLEE.**

It's always you

**AMINA.**

Not always. Last time it was Maeve

**SOFIA.**

That's just 'cause Maeve makes the best sailor

**MAEVE.**

ARGGG

**AMINA.**

I don't know. I hope I'm not losing my spark

**CONNIE.**

I think I should be Gandhi

**ASHLEE.**

I think Connie should be Gandhi too

**ALL THE GIRLS.**

...

ll danced from their

**CONNIE.**

I think it's weird if Amina's Gandhi

*(To Amina.)*

I think you don't really *fit*

**SOFIA.**

I think anyone can play Gandhi because Gandhi was about loving and accepting all people

**CONNIE.**

...

**LUKE.**

Maybe Zuzu will be Gandhi

**SOFIA.**

Zuzu's not going to be Gandhi

**LUKE.**

Why not?

**SOFIA.**

Because she's not as good as Amina

**LUKE.**

I think Zuzu would make a good Gandhi

**CONNIE.**

Where's Zuzu?

**ASHLEE.**

Where's Zuzu?

**MAEVE.**

She's talking to her mom

*Zuzu just outside the dressing room, talking to her Mom.*

**ZUZU'S MOM.**

Did you get intimidated?

**ZUZU.**

No?

**ZUZU'S MOM.**

It's intimidating, isn't it?

**ZUZU.**

...

**ZUZU'S MOM.**

You did great, honey

**ZUZU.**

I know...

**ZUZU'S MOM.**

You'll get it next time. Just don't psych yourself out, okay?

**ZUZU.**

I won't

**ZUZU'S MOM.**

You're better than Amina. You just have to not psych yourself out

**ZUZU.**

I'm not psyching myself out

**ZUZU'S MOM.**

She may be more technically skilled than you, you know, but it doesn't matter. It's the heart that matters, you know. She may be flawless but it doesn't matter because she doesn't dance with any *heart*, you know what I'm saying. You have heart. That's why she'll never really beat you even if she wins

**ZUZU.**

I win sometimes

**ZUZU'S MOM.**

I know

**ZUZU.**

...

**ZUZU'S MOM.**

You forgot about the pli , huh?

**ZUZU.**

I don't know

**ZUZU'S MOM.**

During the bridge, you forgot to do the little pli . That's why you stumbled in the transition.

**ZUZU.**

I don't remember

**ZUZU'S MOM.**

Other than that it was a really, really good audition.

*Maev and Luke walk past Zuzu and her mom on their way out of the dressing room.*

**MAEVE.**

Oh hey Zuzu

**LUKE.**

Oh hey Zuzu

**MAEVE.**

Good job

**LUKE.**

Really really good job, Zuzu

*He smiles at her.*

**LUKE.**

You were really great

## 5

*Zuzu alone.*

**ZUZU.**

People say I dance with a lot of *grace* and that I'm beautiful and above-average and stuff.

Here's what they don't say.

They don't say I'm sensational.

They don't say I take their breath away.

They don't say they could watch me forever.

They don't say they cry when they watch me dance.

When they watch Amina dance, they cry.

I know. Because I cry when I watch Amina dance.

My Mom asked me to dance for her cancer. She saw a documentary about this woman who did a dance and it cured her cancer and so she asked me if I would do a dance for her and my Mom is not normally like that but she was feeling really emotional at the time and she kept breaking down all the time so I did this solo at the year-end recital for my Mom and her cancer. And I tried to make it the best dance I had ever done. I tried to like *feel things* with my arms and my legs. I tried to make people feel things with my arms and my legs. But it was just an ordinary dance, really. A lot of people didn't know it was about my Mom's cancer at all. They thought it was about whatever our dances are usually about. Flowers. Or sailors, you know. Not cancer. I didn't make them cry. I didn't make myself cry. I don't even think I made my Mom cry. She told me that she liked it. But she didn't cry. And it didn't cure her cancer, so. Her cancer actually got worse after that, so. It was just an ordinary dance.

Luke says I'm a genius dancer but he's lying to me because he's in love with me. Luke has dandruff. I know because I was playing with his hair the other day and at the base of his hair near his scalp were all these flakes of scalp sitting in his hair like dead ants that had just crawled out of a hole and died.

*Petals fall from the sky like flakes of dandruff as Zuzu dances the audition piece for Gandhi. She's not that great. Connie appears and dances the part of Gandhi with her.*

*The stars come out.*

*Luke and his Mom driving home from dance.*

**LUKE'S MOM.**

You sleepy?

**LUKE.**

...

**LUKE'S MOM.**

You look sleepy

**LUKE.**

Yeah

t matter. It's the heart  
use she doesn't dance  
she'll never really beat

bled in the transition.

r way out of the

**LUKE'S MOM.**

It takes it out of you, doesn't it?

**LUKE.**

Yeah

**LUKE'S MOM.**

...

**LUKE.**

...

**LUKE'S MOM.**

...

**LUKE.**

...

**LUKE'S MOM.**

...

**LUKE.**

How was your day?

**LUKE'S MOM.**

Oh you know

**LUKE.**

...

...

...

**LUKE'S MOM.**

I think that new priest candidate is coming

From California

So that's good

**LUKE.**

...

**LUKE'S MOM.**

Apparently it's some kind of secret

She's not telling her congregation that she's thinking of leaving, so

We have to be all secretive about it

...

...

She's flying cross-country on a *Tuesday* so she won't be missed, so

I don't know

It sounds kind of crazy to me but

Who knows

She's our only candidate, so

Hopefully she's not too crazy

LUKE.

She's flying cross-country?

LUKE'S MOM.

Yeah

LUKE.

And she's not telling anybody?

LUKE'S MOM.

Apparently

LUKE.

That's cool

LUKE'S MOM.

It's stressful... It's more stressful than it's cool

...

...

...

...

...

I just hope this lady from California does more than give good sermons. Good sermons don't bring in crowds. We need someone who's a go-getter. She's fifty-two, so. I don't know. I was hoping for someone younger.

LUKE.

Yeah

...

...

...

...

LUKE.

*All I want*

*Is someone to drive me*

*Driving in cars.....*

*Driving in cars at night...*

*Driving in cars at night with the rain spraying the dashboard and a seat warmer that makes my butt hot. Hot like when I used to sit my naked ass on the radiator at home growing up. A hot butt makes me sleepy. And I'd get so sleepy. Riding in cars at night. But it's the delicious kind of sleepy. Where you wish you could stay in that liminal state forever watching the raindrops on the windshield and the world blurring by.....and my Mom...listening to my*

*Mom... remembering listening to my Mom....  
all I want is to be in a car at night, sleepy  
and listening to my Mom*

...  
...  
.....

**LUKE'S MOM.**

How's dance?

**LUKE.**

Huh?

**LUKE'S MOM.**

How was dance? Did you learn something?

**LUKE.**

It was fine

**LUKE'S MOM.**

What are you working on now? Are you still doing that sailor-

**LUKE.**

No we switched. We're doing Citizens

...

...

...

We're doing this whole thing with Gandhi

**LUKE'S MOM.**

That sounds fun

...

...

And you're liking it?

*He shrugs.*

**LUKE'S MOM.**

Because you don't have to keep doing it if you're not liking it. You could do ice skating / or music

**LUKE.**

No I like it!

**LUKE'S MOM.**

Just as long as you're liking it

**LUKE.**

I like it

**LUKE'S MOM.**

Okay

...

...

...



*Listening to my Mom....  
in the car at night, sleepy  
listening to my Mom*

That's good

...  
...

**LUKE.**

...  
...  
...  
...  
...

**LUKE'S MOM.**

...  
...  
...  
...  
...

*Somewhere,  
under the moon, window, etc.*

**CONNIE.**

Dear God

Please

*Please*

Please give me

the part of

Gandhi

I promise I'll do

a good job,

please Lord

Please let it be

me, just this one

time, please, just

this once,

let it

be

*me*

...

...

..

.

*listening to ice skating / or music*

## 6

*The Girls and Luke are lined up in leotards and spandex - ready for class. A little army.*

**ALL THE GIRLS.**

If I could change the world through dance  
 If I could change the world by dancing with my body  
 If I could dance away my mom's cancer  
 And my friend Alyssa's depression  
 And the way she won't stop eating Skittles when she's hungry  
 Instead of eating proper food  
 If I could dance away world hunger  
 And all violence against women  
 And all pets without a home  
 And all the sadness  
*Alllll the sadness*  
 All the sadness and the meanness  
 If I could dance and nobody would ever want to kill another person again  
 Or be racist again  
 Or feel alone at night again  
 Or abandon their pets without a home again  
 That's what I would do  
 That's what I would do  
 That's what I want to do with my LIFE

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Alright girls  
 Great auditions  
 It wasn't easy but I've made my decision  
*They all hold hands - nervous, expectant.*

**ALL THE GIRLS.**

I want to dance  
 I want to dance  
 I want to heal the world through DANCE  
 I want to dance  
 I want to dance  
 I want to feel alive through DANCE  
 I want to dance  
 I want to dance  
 I want to dance

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

And the role of Gandhi will be played by...

**ALL THE GIRLS.**

I want to dance

I want to dance

I want to dance

I want to dance

I want to dance

I want to dance

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Connie!

*All the Girls gasp and grunt. They gather supportively around Connie, who is beaming.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

But there's a twist...

*The Girls freeze - terrified.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

In addition to the role of Gandhi, I have created another role. The role of *the spirit of Gandhi*.

*(Oh my god! Another chance at a featured part!)*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

And the role of *the spirit of Gandhi* will be played by.....

.....

.....

.....**ZUZU!**

*The Girls scream bloodcurdling screams. They gather around Zuzu supportively; she is on the verge of tears. Luke throws his arms around her. All genuine.*

**MAEVE.**

Congratulations!

**LUKE.**

Congratulations!

**AMINA.**

Congratulations, Zuzu, you're gonna be great!

**ASHLEE.**

That's so exciting

**ZUZU.**

Thanks guys

**DANCE TEACHER PAT. (To Zuzu.)**

Are you happy?

**ZUZU. (Barely able to speak.)**

Yes

- ready for class. A

again

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

It's a big responsibility, Zuzu. Think of all the people the spirit of Gandhi has inspired. Martin Luther King... John Lennon... That's *you*. You have to show us that.

*She nods.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Alright, Citizens spread apart. Connie, sit on the floor.

*He points to the floor.*

*Dance Teacher Pat teaches the Girls the chorus part. Connie reluctantly sits on the floor as "Gandhi."*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

We're going to start with a nice sternum expansion...

*He demonstrates - his arms extended, his chest open...*

*The Girls copy him.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Let your heart go out - out - out - - - - -

## 7

*Later. Sofia and Amina are huddled outside the dance studio with their dance bags hung over their shoulders.*

**SOFIA.**

It's not that big of a deal. The Gandhi dance is lame anyway

**AMINA.**

Yeah

**SOFIA.**

Gandhi doesn't even do anything. Connie just sits on the floor

**AMINA.**

But the *spirit* of Gandhi...

**SOFIA.**

Whatever. Zuzu's going to mess it up

**AMINA.**

...

**SOFIA.**

You know she's going to mess it up. Dance Teacher Pat's just trying to be nice. He can't give you the solo *every time*

**AMINA.**

You don't think he's mad at me?

**SOFIA.**

Nah. The dance is lame so he gave it to Zuzu

**AMINA.**

You think so?

**SOFIA.**

Oh yeah. I know so

*Zuzu in the other room working on the Spirit of Gandhi solo with Dance Teacher Pat. We hear him as we've never heard him before – mean, vicious, punishing...*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Are you an idiot?

**ZUZU.**

I don't know

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Then why are you acting like one?

**ZUZU.**

I don't know

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

You don't know?

**ZUZU.**

I don't know what you're asking me!

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

I'm asking you to do it again. And do it right this time.

...

And don't try so hard. It's embarrassing.

*Sofia and Amina listening to Zuzu and Dance Teacher Pat in the other room...*

**SOFIA.**

<Should we wait for her?>

**AMINA.**

<I don't know>

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

No. Again

**SOFIA. (Calling out.)**

Bye, Zu...

**AMINA. (Calling out.)**

Bye, Zu...

*They listen, a little terrified...*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Again

**SOFIA. (Not unkind.)**

Bet you fifty dollars she has a nervous breakdown by the end of the week

**AMINA. (To Sofia.)**

Zuzu's a good dancer

**SOFIA.**

I know

**AMINA.**

She's really talented

**SOFIA.**

She is!

*Zuzu left alone in the studio, working with Dance Teacher Pat.*

## 8

*The next day. Zuzu's Mom has come to the studio to speak with Dance Teacher Pat. Zuzu is sitting on the toilet in her tights and leotard, mortified.*

*The Girls are at the barre, warming up.*

**AMINA.**

Alright so assume first position and then we're just going to go through the pliés

*Classical music plays...\**

**AMINA.**

Demi plié and...

...

...

Demi plié and...

...

**ZUZU'S MOM.**

Zuzu is not allowed to be the best dancer she can be. You don't let her

...

...

Grand plié...

...

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

I don't let her?

...

...

**ZUZU'S MOM.**

You purposely intimidate her!

...

...

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

That's my job!

...

...

**ZUZU'S MOM.**

You put her down. You make her think she can't do it!

...

...

**DANCE TEACHER PAT**

I teach! I correct! It's up to her whether or not she thinks she can do it!

...

...

**ZUZU'S MOM.**

Listen to me.....

There's no such thing as talent

People plant it in their minds

Whether they're good at this

Or bad at that

And they become whatever *you tell them they are*

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Grand plié...

...

...

...

**ASHLEE.** (*Whispering.*)

*Pussy*

**AMINA.**

Bend at the waist...

...

...

...

**ASHLEE.** (*Whispering.*)

*Pussy*

**SOFIA.** (*Whispering.*)

*Pussy*

**AMINA.**

And...come...up...

Fourth position

Demi plié

**CONNIE.** (*Whispering.*)

*Pussy*

**ASHLEE.** (*Whispering.*)

*Pussy*

**MAEVE & SOFIA.** (*Whispering.*)

*Pussy*

**CONNIE.** (*Whispering.*)

*Pussy*

**ASHLEE.** (*Whispering.*)

*Pussy*

**LUKE.** (*Whispering.*)

*Pussy*

**AMINA.**

Bend and...

...

...

Come...up...

**ASHLEE, CONNIE, MAEVE, SOFIA & LUKE.** (*Whispering.*)

...

...

*Pusssyyyyy*



**AMINA.** *(Devilish, but with a normal speaking voice.)*

And move your pussy into fifth position

*(Victory!!!!!!!!!!)*

**AMINA.**

Demi plié and...

...

Demi plié and...

...

Grand plié

...

...

Bend at the pussy...and...bring your pussy back up....

*Dance Teacher Pat comes back into the room.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

How's it going, girls?

**AMINA.**

Good. We're almost done with warm-up

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Where's Zuzu?

*Blank stares.*

*(Zuzu, still alone on the toilet. Somehow, some way she's grown little sharp teeth. Like fangs. She bites her forearm hard. Harder. Blood spurts out. She chews off a chunk of her arm.)*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

ZUUUZUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUU

**ZUZU.**

YESSSS??

*(She jumps up off the toilet and dashes out of the bathroom into the studio, her arm still pulsing blood.)*

**ZUZU.** *(Still with her fangs.)*

I'm here

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

We're going to run through the number

Everybody ready?

*They nod.*

**LUKE.** (To Zuzu.)

You okay?

**ZUZU.**

I'm fine

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

**5-6-7-8!**

*They dance.*

*Except it's not really like Gandhi.*

*It's more like baby sexy robots. Bloodsucking robots who want to destroy the world and then fuck it after it's dead.*

*They are barely wearing any clothes. They are touching their bodies. They are gnashing their teeth - all of them have fangs now. Sharp, pointy teeth.*

*Music plays. Something perverse and sexual. Music-video goddesses meet humping gremlins.\**

*They are climbing up the walls. Maeve is chewing on the light bulbs - glass in her mouth. Glass is crushed beneath their feet. Zuzu does her special part. She's awesome.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Alright girls. I don't know what **THE FUCK** this is. But it's not Gandhi.

*Zzzzzzz. The lights go out with an electric hiss except for one bright light shining down from Heaven on.....Ashlee...panting, still baby sex robot power, etc. Half-dressed, her hair sticking to her forehead.*

*The buzz of the music beneath her. She talks to us. Not vain, not bragging. Just genuinely pondering the possibility...*

**ASHLEE.**

I think I might be frickin' gorgeous

My ass, especially

Might be frickin' gorgeous

I wish I could show you my ass but I'm only thirteen

My ass has been described as "epic"

An "Epic Bottom"

Someone said that to me once. He said: "You have an Epic Bottom"

It sounds a little creepy now, but it didn't sound creepy when he said it

Men like to stroke my ass when they see it

They pull me over their laps

And they stroke my ass

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Like it were a talisman  
 Or a worry stone  
 Worn perfectly smooth and round  
 By time  
 Except it's the opposite of time  
 I'm young  
 I just got popped out like this  
 Me and my perfect ass  
 Like two little deer droppings  
 Smooshed together  
 Frickin' epic  
 Also I have a pretty face  
 I have a really nice face, I think  
 I really like my face  
 And I have great tits, so  
 I feel really lucky  
 I feel really *blessed* or whatever  
 Let's just admit it  
 I'm a frickin' catch  
 I walk down the street and I feel everybody looking at me, you know  
 I'm not trying to brag  
 I'm serious. I promise. I'm not  
 I'm just trying to figure this out  
 I'm just trying to be real for a moment  
 I think it's important to be real about things like this  
 Like sometimes people post pictures online  
 And all of their friends are like  
 Whoa. Gorgeous  
 Look at you girl. You could be a model. KaBOOM!!  
 Why do people lie to people like that?  
 I'm serious  
 I don't get it  
 Just say: That's a great picture of you! Nice shot! You look great!  
 Not: "You're gorgeous"  
 Not: "KaBOOM"  
 It's like what exploded? Nothing exploded. I don't see anything explosive about that picture.  
 Why are you pretending that something exploded?  
 I don't get it  
 Just tell the truth

*She's off-track, she catches herself, she starts again...*

**ASHLEE.**

Here's the other thing

*want to destroy the*

*ir bodies. They are  
vinty teeth.*

*'eo goddesses meet*

*ght bulbs - glass in  
special part. She's*

*ndhi.*

*right light shining  
ot power, etc. Half-*

*not bragging. Just*

*it*

third-party or copyrighted  
main. For further informa-

I'm really frickin' smart  
 I am. I'm smarter than most people I meet  
 I'm probably smarter than you  
 And not just liberal arts bullshit  
 I'm good at math  
 People are always like lollllllllll  
 I'm bad at math wahhh  
 Like that makes them cool  
 No it doesn't  
 You suck at math  
 That doesn't make you cool  
 Math makes you cool  
 It's not that hard to be good at math  
 Math is actually the easiest section of the SAT to get a perfect score on, so  
 If you just study  
 It's the most "study-able" section  
 So I guess you didn't study  
 That doesn't make you cool  
 That just makes you lazy and shortsighted about your future  
 Seriously people, it's not that hard to be good at math if you frickin' try  
 Are you even trying people??  
 "Wahhhh I'm bad at math"  
 Shut the fuck up and stop whining and just think about the problem for a minute  
 It's not that hard  
 It's not like you have to write a fucking poem  
 There are like *rules*  
 There's like *an answer*  
 I don't even have parents who can help me and I *still* ace it  
 Because I'm not a moron

*She collects herself. A little nervous from saying all this out loud.*

**ASHLEE.**

Anyway. So I never say this stuff to anybody because I'm afraid they're going to hate me.  
 But I think about it sometimes. And sometimes it makes me feel ashamed. Like I'm a  
 bad person. And I want to bury it down deep. Never acknowledge it. Keep my eyes on the  
 pavement when I feel men looking at me and just pretend I don't exist.

...

Like every time someone has ever told me that I'm beautiful I say: "No."

...

This guy, he said to me, "You're really beautiful" and I just said: "No." It's like a reflex

...

You're beautiful. *No.* You're smart. *No.* You're funny. *No.* You're beautiful.

*She shakes her head, no.*

ASHLEE.

But sometimes I wonder what would happen, if I really went for it

...

I mean, I'm a little afraid of what would happen if I really went for it

...

...

*Over the course of the following, Ashlee grows taller. Her shadow become twelve-foot long. Her eyes turn red. Her fangs lengthen. Her voice becomes the voice of some vengeful, ancient pagan god. The Girls stare at her in awe. The baby sexy robot music still humming...*

ASHLEE.

Like if I tried. If I really, really tried. Like if I acknowledged it. Just embraced it. Like if I walked down the street and looked those men straight in the eyes and said: "Yes, I'm beautiful and I'm gonna get a perfect score on the SAT, Math, Reading *and* Writing, motherfucker, and yes I'm only thirteen years old now but just wait ten more years because one day I'm going to be a **FUCKING SURGEON**, one day I'm going to be a **FUCKING GENIUS POET** *and* running my own company, one day I'm going to be even more ridiculously attractive than I am now *and* **GREAT AT SEX** and I'm going to cut people open like it's my fucking job because *it is my fucking job* and I'm going to make you my bitch, you motherfucking cunt-munching piece of shit prick. I *am* your god. I *am* your second coming. I *am* your mother and I'm smarter than you and more attractive than you and better than you at everything that you love and you're going to get down on your knees and worship my mind, my mind *and my body* and I'm gonna be the motherfucking **KING** of your motherfucking world, I'm going to be the **KING OF EVERYBODY'S MOTHERFUCKING WORLD**, and you're going to cum just by eating my cunt, the taste of my cum is going to make you cum because it'll be the greatest sexual pleasure you have

ever known *just tasting me* and the words I say are going to be the greatest fucking words that you've ever heard and the things I do are going to be the greatest fucking things you've ever witnessed. That's what I've got inside this tiny fucking body of mine and I don't have to deny it I don't have to disown it I don't have to be ashamed of it I can shout it from the rooftops because you are all my

**motherfucking BITCH**

*She shrinks.*

*The lights snap back to fluorescents. The light of Heaven is gone.*

*Ashlee stands alone, a little scared. A little exhausted. A little perplexed.*

ASHLEE. (*A genuine question, she asks us.*)

What am I going to do with all this power?

...

What am I going to do with all this power?

...

Huh?

...

...

I don't know.

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

I hope I don't pussy out.

*Maeve howls like a wolf.*

*The Girls gnash their fangs and strike a final pose - Zuzu, fabulous as the "Spirit of Gandhi" and in the middle of the pack.*

## 9

*Amina catches Zuzu after the run-through.*

**AMINA.**

Hey Zu

**ZUZU.**

Yeah?

**AMINA.**

You looked really good out there

**ZUZU.**

Oh. Thanks

**AMINA.**

You totally killed that solo

**ZUZU.**

Really?

**AMINA.**

Yeah your turns were really good. They were really centered

**ZUZU.**

Yeah they felt good. I felt on top of myself

**AMINA.**

You were really, really on top of yourself. And you looked clean

**ZUZU.**

Okay good. I was worried

**AMINA.**

Don't be worried. You're doing awesome

**ZUZU.**

Thanks I need to work on my side aerial but-

**AMINA.**

You'll get it

**ZUZU.**

Yeah

**AMINA.**

It took me like two years to get my side aerial

**ZUZU.**

Yeah

**AMINA.**

You'll definitely get it

**ZUZU.**

I hope so

, fabulous as the

**AMINA.**

For sure

*They smile at each other.*

**ZUZU.**

Hey. You wanna come over? My mom's making pizza

**AMINA.**

Oh... I don't think I can

**ZUZU.**

Oh

**AMINA.**

I just- I wanna get to bed early

**ZUZU.**

Okay

**AMINA.**

Sorry. I just-

I hate not sleeping before competitions

**ZUZU.**

No, I get it. I hate not sleeping, too

*They smile at each other.*

**ZUZU.**

Have you thought about what you're doing for the summer?

**AMINA.**

Oh!

**ZUZU.**

I was thinking about maybe applying for the ballet fellowship at Pittsburgh Ballet?

**AMINA.**

That'd be cool

**ZUZU.**

Yeah I don't know if I'll get in. But it'd be so cool

...

...

I need to focus on my ballet

**AMINA.**

Yeah Dance Teacher Pat wants to send me to Russia

**ZUZU.**

To Russia?

**AMINA.**

Yeah, he wants me to go and train with this ballet company in Russia. I don't know. It sounds kinda intense



**ZUZU.**

Intense is good, though

**AMINA.**

I'm kinda scared

**ZUZU.**

That's how you get better

**AMINA.**

...

...

Yeah I think Sabina went

**ZUZU.**

Oh?

**AMINA.**

Yeah like when she was in high school

**ZUZU.**

Cool.

...

...

**AMINA.**

Pittsburgh Ballet is supposed to be really good, though.

**ZUZU.**

Yeah I don't know

**AMINA.**

I know this girl Eliza who went, and she really loved it. She made a lot of really great friends

...

Maybe you could also apply for the Philly program? That's supposed to be good, too.

**ZUZU.**

It's expensive, though

**AMINA.**

I bet there are like scholarships and things

**ZUZU.**

Yeah I should probably look into that

**AMINA.**

...

**ZUZU.**

...

**AMINA.**

...

**ZUZU.**

Is Russia expensive?

burgh Ballet?

ssia. I don't know. It

**AMINA.**

I don't know. I'm not paying

*They smile at each other.*

**AMINA.**

I think Pittsburgh will be awesome

**ZUZU.**

Hey Amina?

**AMINA.**

Yeah

**ZUZU.**

Don't be mad at me

But I think I need to stop talking to you about dance for awhile

Like I still love you a lot

You're still my best friend

But I just might not be able to talk to you about some things

**AMINA.**

...

**ZUZU.**

And I may have to close my eyes, sometimes, when you dance

But it's not because I don't love you

It's just because I might need to take a break from watching you

And from talking to you

For awhile

...

...

...

Sorry

**AMINA.**

Uh

**ZUZU.**

Is that mean?

**AMINA.**

Uh. No I don't think so

**ZUZU.**

I still really really really love you

**AMINA.**

I know

I just-

**ZUZU.**

...

**AMINA.**

I don't know

...

I don't know what to say

**ZUZU.**

...

**AMINA.**

That's fine

**ZUZU.**

Yeah?

**AMINA.**

I totally get it

**ZUZU.**

You do?

**AMINA.**

Yeah

**ZUZU.**

Thanks

**AMINA.**

...

**ZUZU.**

...

**AMINA.**

...

**ZUZU.**

...

**AMINA.**

...

**ZUZU.**

...

**AMINA.**

What kind of pizza are you having?

**ZUZU.**

I don't know

...

Canadian bacon and olives. That's what my mom likes

**AMINA.**

Cool

**ZUZU.**

...

AMINA.

...

ZUZU.

...

AMINA.

Sorry

ZUZU.

What?

AMINA.

I just don't really have anything to say

*Dance Teacher Pat appears. He's locking up.*

DANCE TEACHER PAT.

Hey girls

ZUZU & AMINA.

Hiii

DANCE TEACHER PAT.

You're still here?

ZUZU.

I'm going home. Goodnight, Amina

AMINA.

Goodnight

*Zuzu bolts.*

*Amina stands there watching Dance Teacher Pat lock up.*

AMINA.

Are you mad at me?

*He looks at her.*

DANCE TEACHER PAT.

I'm not mad at you

AMINA.

...

DANCE TEACHER PAT. (*Crouching down to her height to look her straight in the eye.*)  
But Amina

AMINA.

Yes?

DANCE TEACHER PAT.

Next time you audition for me I want you to remember that *I can tell* how much you want it

AMINA.

...

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Understood?

*She nods.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Don't get lazy

*He sort of swats her butt. It's not sexual????????? But also weird and uncomfortable for a grown-ass man to be swatting a thirteen-year-old's butt. Amina is horrified. And also, she loves it.*

**AMINA.**

I won't

*She scampers off.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.** *(Calling after her.)*

SHOW ME YOU WANT IT

*Amina scampering, from a distance...*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.** *(Half-hearted down the hallway.)*

I WANNA SEE THAT YOU WANT IT...

*She's gone.*

*Dance Teacher Pat alone in his studio. It's late. He should pack up his things and head out for the night. But he doesn't feel like moving.*

*He sighs a world-weary sigh.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

I guess I should go home

*t in the eye.)*

how much you want it

## 10

*Philadelphia. The day of the competition.*

*All the Girls in a different dressing room getting ready. They curl their hair, paint their faces elaborate colors, apply fake eyelashes. Connie is dressed like an Isadora Duncan-style Gandhi. Zuzu is in a brilliant gold Spirit of Gandhi costume distinct from the Citizens.*

*All the Girls still have their fangs.*

**SOFIA.**

If I have a child he is *not* getting circumcised

**AMINA.**

Really?

**SOFIA.**

Yeah

**AMINA.**

Why?

**SOFIA.**

Because it's barbaric to cut off a piece of your baby's penis

**CONNIE.**

My dad is circumcised

**SOFIA.**

I'm not judging. Just not my kid.

*Ashlee sneezes.*

**CONNIE.**

Luke are you circumcised?

**ASHLEE.**

<sorry!>

**LUKE.**

Um

*Ashlee sneezes.*

**AMINA.**

Everyone is circumcised

**ASHLEE.**

<sorry!>

**SOFIA.**

Everyone is not circumcised!

**ASHLEE.**

My kid's going to be circumcised because my mom is Jewish so I sorta have to\*

**CONNIE.**

I'm not Jewish and my kid's going to be circumcised too

**MAEVE.**

What about you Luke?

---

\*This line could also be read by Maeve. You can decide based on the make-up of your cast - choose whatever feels right and comfortable.

**LUKE.**

Um

**ASHLEE.**

The thing is – you have to think about the locker room. Because my dad says that boys who are uncircumcised get made fun of a lot in the locker room. And that's really not something you want to do to your thirteen-year-old kid, you know

**SOFIA.**

Yeah but sex is better with an uncircumcised penis

**ALL THE GIRLS.**

...

**SOFIA.**

It's true

**MAEVE.**

How do you know that?

**SOFIA.**

Everybody knows it. It's like a fact.

**CONNIE.**

I bet you're circumcised, Luke, aren't you?

**SOFIA.**

It's like I will never, ever, ever, ever, ever marry a man who's going to make me circumcise my kid. That's just a deal-breaker, you know?

**MAEVE.**

Maybe Amina was circumcised when she was a baby and nobody told her and *that's* why she can't masturbate

**CONNIE.**

What are you talking / about?

**ASHLEE.**

No!

**CONNIE.**

Maeve!

**ASHLEE.**

That's just wrong!

**CONNIE.**

You're crazy

**AMINA. (Despondent.)**

Do you think there's something wrong with me?

**SOFIA.**

Nah, you're probably just slow

**ASHLEE.**

Yeah you're probably just developmentally delayed or something. Don't worry about it

**SOFIA.**

Yeah, you're probably just a late bloomer, Amina

*They curl their hair,  
mine is dressed like  
d Spirit of Gandhi*

a have to

ast – choose whatever feels

**ASHLEE.**

Yeah. Everyone's on a different time frame

**ZUZU.**

Hey Luke? Can you sew this into my head?

**LUKE.**

Sure

*Luke sews a flower into Zuzu's hair.*

**SOFIA.**

I bet you're not going to have any sex until you're like thirty-five and then one day you'll just explode with all these sexual feelings and you'll be like way more sexual than the rest of us and we'll all be married and you'll be like a sexy, older woman with all these lovers

**CONNIE.**

Totally. That's totally you, Amina

**AMINA.** *(Even more despondent.)*

But I don't want to wait until I'm thirty-five

**MAEVE.**

Maybe it's already happened

Maybe it just feels different for you

And you've already felt it

And you didn't even know

**LUKE.**

Connie, did you bring your lucky horse?

**CONNIE.**

Yeah, it's over there

*There's a beautiful Appaloosa amidst the carnage of the table.*

*Sofia hands it to Luke.*

**LUKE.**

Okay, *phew!*

**AMINA.**

I need to touch it, too

**ASHLEE.**

What about you, Zu? When do you think you'll have sex?

**ZUZU.**

I don't care

**ASHLEE.**

What do you mean you don't care?!

**ZUZU.**

As long as I can dance, then I don't care

**SOFIA.**

She's lying



**ZUZU.**

I've wanted to be a dancer since I was two years old. That's all I want

**SOFIA.**

Two-year-olds don't even have wants

**ZUZU.**

Yes they do

I was two

And I wanted to be a dancer

The best dancer

In the entire world

I wanted to be a professional dancer when I was two

**CONNIE.**

Me too

**MAEVE.**

I don't know what I wanted when I was two

I think I just wanted

You know

Water

And stuff like that

*Their faces are painted now - bright, freakish colors. They look like monster aliens with their little fangs.*

**CONNIE.** *(Applying her eyelashes.)*

I remember this dude from Germany who used to visit my parents

I don't even remember why he was there...

He was my parents' friend?

He was German?

He was only in town for a short while

This was like three years ago

I don't know

He would come and he would put his belly against my back and he would put his hand on my shoulder and he would sing along when I played the piano

Like is that normal?

I got very nervous that it wasn't okay

But no one said anything about it

My parents saw him do it and everything

So I guess it was okay?

**ASHLEE.**

Did you see his penis?

**CONNIE.**

No!

When one day you'll just  
equal than the rest of us  
all these lovers

2.

**ASHLEE.**

Then it's fine

**AMINA.**

I don't know, I find it all very confusing

**SOFIA.**

What's confusing?

**AMINA.**

I don't know

**MAEVE.**

I saw this penis once

**ASHLEE.**

What?

**SOFIA.**

Was it romantic?

**MAEVE.**

No

**CONNIE.**

Was it your brother's penis?

**MAEVE.**

Never mind

**SOFIA.**

Was it your dad's penis?

**MAEVE.**

I SAID NEVER MIND!

**DANCE TEACHER PAT. (Entering.)**

Hey girls how's it going

**ALL THE GIRLS.**

Good! Hi Dance Teacher Pat! (Etc.)

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Are you ready to go?

**ALL THE GIRLS.**

Yeah we're ready! Pretty much! Yup! (Etc.)

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Let me see what you look like

*They line up in their costumes, face paint, etc. They look good.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

You look good. Alright. Circle up

*They do.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Now I know there's a lot of pressure on you

But I want to take a minute

And I want you to close your eyes

*They do.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

And I want you to forget about all the steps...  
 Everything we've worked on...  
 I want you to forget about being in Philadelphia, away from your families...  
 And Nationals and going to Tampa Bay...  
 It doesn't exist

...

...

Just breathe in

*They do.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

And let it all go

*They exhale.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Now I want you to take a moment  
 And I want you to think about *alllll* the people in the world  
 People who are struggling  
 People who aren't as fortunate as you  
 People who don't have parents like you do  
 Who pay for them to go to dance class  
 Who buy things for them  
 I want you to think about children  
 Who don't get to go to school  
 They have to go to *work*

*Maeve suppresses a giggle.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

I'll wait

**MAEVE.**

Sorry! I just get nervous when *<I have to close my eyes...>*

*He glares at her.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT. (To Maeve.)**

You ready?

*Maeve nods.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

I want you to think about children  
 Who don't have anyone to turn to  
 Who don't have anyone they can trust  
 Or they can talk to  
*Who are being abused*

Who are living in garbage, sometimes, *literal garbage*

Their beds, their houses

And no one touches them, no one loves them, no one wonders when they're coming home at night or asks them how their day was

*The Girls are somber now. Sofia gives a quiet sniffle.*

*Amina and Connie have their eyes cracked open, a little skeptical. They catch each other's eyes and smile.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

You girls don't realize how lucky you are

You don't realize that the problems you struggle with

Are not real problems

That the world is full of suffering

And you're tasting only a tiny part of it

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

You breathe in.....Someone dies.....

*He snaps his fingers, quietly.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Another person just died

*\*snaps\**

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Another person just died

*\*snaps\**

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Another person just died

*\*snaps\**

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Another person is on their knees...

In their closet...

Crying, in so much pain...

Right *now*, right in this instant

**ALL THE GIRLS.**

...

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

I want you to think about all the people in the world who are suffering...

...

...

And I want you to go out there

...

...

And I want you to *dance for them*

*They open their eyes. They all smile at each other - full of purpose, very powerful.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

You ready?

*They are.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Knock 'em dead

**ALL THE GIRLS.** (*This is their studio chant; they bark it.*)

LIVERPOOL DANCE WORKS

EAT

SLEEP

DANCE

EAT

SLEEP

DANCE

EAT

SLEEP

**WIN!**

*The Girls and Luke run out the door in an impassioned fury.*

*Dance Teacher Pat calls after Zuzu.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Hey Zuzu

**ZUZU.** (*Mumbling, dying.*)

Yeah???

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Come here for a second

*She does.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

I took a big chance on you, you know that, right?

*She nods.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Prove me right. Okay?

they're coming home at

optical. They catch

quiet, internal...

she's saying  
world, right now,

*He puts a hand on her shoulder. It's intimate. Almost kind.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

I like to be right

*(It's almost a joke.)*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Philly. Akron. Lanoka. It all starts here.

*He points to her heart.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

*The moment you decide to win is the moment you win. A new chapter for Zuzu.*

*She nods.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

You can do it

*Zuzu blinks and then bolts to catch up with the other kids.*

## 11

*Backstage. The Girls are nervous - shaking out their feet and hands.  
Amina holds Zuzu by the neck, nose-to-nose. She coaches her.*

**AMINA.**

Just focus on your breath  
Your breath and your feet  
And remember to use your face

**ZUZU.**

I know

**AMINA.**

I know that you know. I'm just reminding you

**SOFIA.**

Guys

**AMINA.** *(To Zuzu.)*

You've totally got this

**ASHLEE.** *(To Connie.)*

Are you nervous?

**CONNIE.**

No

**ASHLEE.**

You're gonna be great!

**SOFIA.**

*Guys*

**CONNIE.**

All I do is sit on the floor

**AMINA.**

Come on guys, let's pray. *(Indicating.)* Connie.

*They circle up and pray. Connie leads them.*

**CONNIE.**

Dear God

Please help us to do our best

And please help us to win

**SOFIA.**

Guys

**AMINA.**

Shhh!

**CONNIE.**

It's been a hard week

And we've been working really hard-

for Zuzu.

**SOFIA.**

*guysss*

**LUKE.**

Shhh!

**CONNIE.**

And we deserve this

So please anoint each girl and bring us to victory.

**ASHLEE.**

Amen!

**EVERYBODY.**

AMEN!

**SOFIA.**

Guys. I think there's something wrong

*Sofia pulls down her tights. There's blood everywhere.*

**SOFIA.**

Oh no, oh no

**ASHLEE.**

You're fine! You're fine!

**THE GOD MIC.**

Girls, you're on deck! This is your two-minute warning

**CONNIE.**

Oh my god, / we're doing it

**ZUZU.**

I'm going to throw up

**SOFIA.**

I can't go out there!

**ASHLEE.**

Sofia! Look at me! It's two minutes and thirty seconds. You're going to be fine

**LUKE.**

Where's Maeve?

**CONNIE.** (*Shaking out her hands, in the zone, under her breath.*)

Fuzz, fuzz, fuzz, fu-fuzz, fuzz, fuzz

**LUKE.**

Guys?! Where's Maeve???????

**AMINA.** (*Calling.*)

Maeve!

*Maeve comes sprinting around the corner.*

**AMINA.**

It's two minutes, Maeve!! Get in line!



**MAEVE.**

You guys, you guys! I just got wind of our competition

**ZUZU.**

And?

**MAEVE.**

They have boys

**AMINA.**

We have boys

**MAEVE.**

We have Luke

But they have like *advanced-level* boys

They have boys that do turns

*The Girls gasp.*

**LUKE.**

(I do turns sometimes.)

**MAEVE.**

And flips

*The Girls gasp.*

**MAEVE.**

They have like: *dancing boys*

*Boys who can do fouettés*

**BOYS DRESSED UP AS NEWSIES**

**WHO ARE DOING LIFTS**

**WITH OTHER GIRLS!!**

**THEY ARE LIFTING THEM OVER THEIR HEADS**

**AND SELLING THEIR NEWSPAPERS**

**AND SPINNING SO FAST**

**AS FAST AS AMINA.**

**SOFIA.**

No!

**MAEVE.**

**YES!**

**SOFIA.**

<Fuck!>

**ZUZU.**

We're going to be eliminated / in the first round!!!!

**SOFIA.**

This is so humiliating

**AMINA.**

What are we going to do???????



LUKE, CONNIE & ASHLEE.  
GANDHI!

ALL THE GIRLS.  
GANDHIS UNITE! GANDHIS DESTROY!

ASHLEE.  
WE ARE YOUR WORST NIGHTMARES AND WE'RE COMING FOR YOU  
PHILADELPHIA

ALL THE GIRLS.  
ARGGGGGHHHHHH

ASHLEE.  
WE'RE COMING FOR YOU AKRON, OHIO

ALL THE GIRLS.  
ARGGGGGGGGGGGHHHHHHH

ASHLEE.  
WE'RE COMING FOR YOU LANOKA HARBOR, NEW JERSEY!

ALL THE GIRLS.

TAMPA

TAMPA

TAMPA

TAMPA

TAMPA

TAMPA

TAMPA

TAMPA

TAMPA

TAMPA

TAMPA

TAMPA

TAMPA

TAMPA

TAMPAAAAAAAAAARRRGHHHH

CONNIE.

Luke. You coming with us?

LUKE.

Yup!

SOFIA.

It's showtime

MAKE THEM EAT

MAKE THEM LICK

RS FALL OFF AND  
R FACES!!!!!!

EN WE'RE GONNA  
N THE ROCKS and  
*ose babies up*

CKIN' HEADS AND  
UE ONCE WAS

*Sofia reaches down into her tights, digs around, and gets a glob of period blood. She wipes it across her face like war paint, Braveheart-style.*

**ASHLEE.**

You better frickin' kill that solo, Zu

**ZUZU.**

I will

**THE GOD MIC.**

Girls you're up

**ZUZU. (To herself.)**

*I will. Or die.*

*Music! (Think "World on Fire" by Wynter Gordon.) The Girls strut onstage in their Citizen costumes – a weird, robotic little strut – bellies sucked in, beads of sweat on their foreheads, stiff smiles across their faces.*

*It begins. The Gandhi dance. Connie sits gracefully on the floor. The Girls dance as Citizens of the World around her. Everything seems to be going well – The Girls are in sync, smiling. Connie looks radiant. Sofia is slowly bleeding through her tights... It's almost time for the Spirit of Gandhi to break out and do her solo. Zuzu is pale and sweating. She gets slightly out of step with the Citizens. Amina watches her out of the corner of her eye, concerned. Zuzu steps forward, determined, ready to launch into the frenzied fever dream that is her "special part."*

*She goes into her first twirl sequence and executes it brilliantly. She smiles.*

*She flips across the stage – backward aerial. She nails it. She's feeling good. She's feeling really good. She's dancing. She's not dancing – she's existing. She's in it. She's grooving. She is possessed. She kicks her leg with great force – it sails up above her head and slices past her ear. But something's off. She's off-balance. She's kicked her leg too hard. And her other leg – her supporting leg – slips out from under her like a bad leg on a chair. Zuzu falls. She bounces on her ass. She is stunned. She sits there for a half-second, totally overwhelmed.*

**ZUZU'S MOM. (From the audience.)**

Get up, get up, get up!

*Everything slows down. We're watching the scene from outer space.*

*Zuzu looks up. Her face very pale. Her eyes glassy. Like a little wounded fawn that knows it's about to die and is too stunned to move.*

**ZUZU'S MOM. (From the audience.)**

She forgot it. Oh god, she forgot it

*Zuzu is breathing so hard that we can see her ribcage go in-and-out, in-and-out.*

---

\*A license to produce *Dance Nation* does not include a performance license for "World on Fire." The publisher and author suggest that the licensee contact ASCAP or BMI to ascertain the music publisher and contact such music publisher to license or acquire permission for performance of the song. If a license or permission is unattainable for "World on Fire," the licensee may not use the song in *Dance Nation* but should create an original composition in a similar style or use a similar song in the public domain. For further information, please see Music Use Note on page 3.

**ZUZU'S MOM.** (*Willing it.*)

Keep going!

*Thunderous applause from the audience.*

**ZUZU'S MOM.** (*Slow-mo.*)

*Keeeeeeep gooooooooooing!!!!!!!!!!*

*The entire audience joins in - huge, muffed, booming, slow-mo, space alien...is this even happening... They start chanting her name.*

**ZUZU'S MOM & THE AUDIENCE.**

**ZUZU! ZUZU! ZUZU! ZUZU! ZUZU! ZUZU! ZUZU!**

*Zuzu looks at the Girls. She's failed them. Their dreams of Tampa are dying...*

*Amina looks at Zuzu frozen on the floor. She leaps out of line with the Citizens. The dance resumes like clockwork.*

*Zuzu lies there like she's dead. Like she has died. As if this were all part of the piece. Zuzu is death. And Amina is God incarnate.*

*Amina dances the part of the Spirit of Gandhi, dressed like a lowly Citizen. She is spectacular.*

*The dance is genuinely moving. Strong and in sync and full of emotion and life. It makes the audience cry.*

*The dance ends. There is rapturous applause. The Girls exit, walking offstage - their chests heaving, ribcages showing...*

*Connie grabs Amina by the arm.*

**CONNIE.**

*What were you doing??????*

**AMINA.**

*What're you talking about?!*

**CONNIE.**

*You should've given her a chance!*

**AMINA.**

*She choked!*

**CONNIE.**

*For a split second! She would have made it*

**AMINA.**

*She choked, Connie, she choked*

**CONNIE.**

*You didn't even give her a second / to recover-*

**AMINA.**

*She needed / help! I was saving the dance-*

**CONNIE.**

*You just jumped in front of her*

*b of period blood.*

*strut onstage in  
icked in, beads of*

*floor. The Girls  
to be going well  
s slowly bleeding  
to break out and  
of step with the  
rned. Zuzu steps  
ream that is her*

*1. She smiles.*

*ie's feeling good.  
e's existing. She's  
at force - it sails  
She's off-balance.  
ng leg - slips out  
s on her ass. She  
d.*

*pace.*

*e wounded fawn*

*-out, in-and-out.*

*d on Fire." The publisher  
blisher and contact such  
se or permission is unat-  
should create an original  
information, please see*

**AMINA.**

No, I-

**CONNIE.**

And she didn't / even have a second to recover

**AMINA.**

*She fell down!*

**CONNIE.**

To catch her breath

**AMINA.**

You don't have a second

You don't

A second is too long

You hesitate. You're dead

**CONNIE.**

...

...

*You're such a jerk*

**AMINA.**

Connie, no, I-

**CONNIE.**

IT WAS NOT YOUR PART!!!!

**AMINA.**

I didn't do anything wrong!

I was just trying to help!

I just went off my instincts

I'm not going to apologize

For just *reacting*

I just-

I did it

**CONNIE.**

...

**AMINA.**

My body just-

I'm sorry

I would've waited for her

I would've waited for her forever

But

My body just-

...

It just *went*

## 12

*In some forgotten corner of the auditorium...*

*Zuzu is lying facedown on nasty-ass carpet like she is dead. Maeve sits beside her, holding her wolf cards.*

**MAEVE.**

Wanna see my wolf pack?

*Zuzu doesn't respond.*

**MAEVE.**

They're called the Druids, that's their pack name

My mom paid twenty-five dollars and now I get their pictures in the mail

...

...

I can track them online, too, it's pretty cool

**ZUZU.** (*Into the carpet.*)

Cool

**MAEVE.**

Yeah it's pretty cool

**ZUZU.**

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

Hey Maeve

**MAEVE.**

Yeah

**ZUZU.**

What do you want to do with your life?

**MAEVE.**

I don't know

Maybe astrophysics or something like that

**ZUZU.**

Not dance?

**MAEVE.**

Nah, I don't think so

...

...

I want to do something cosmic, you know

...

...

I mean, I know that dance can be kind of cosmic

But I mean like *actually* cosmic

Like stars or volcanoes or something

...

...

...

**ZUZU.**

Yeah I want to do something cosmic, too

**MAEVE.**

Like black holes

Are so scary

And cool

**ZUZU.**

Yeah

**MAEVE.**

Hey Zuzu

**ZUZU.**

Yeah

**MAEVE.**

Can I ask you a question?

**ZUZU.** (*Still into the carpet.*)

Yeah

**MAEVE.**

Have you ever flown?

**ZUZU.**

...

...

...

In a plane?

**MAEVE.**

No

Like

...

...

In a room



**ZUZU.**

I don't think so

**MAEVE.**

Oh

**ZUZU.**

Have you?

**MAEVE.**

I think I *have*

...

...

Like sometimes I concentrate on it

Really hard

And all of a sudden

I'm flying

**ZUZU.**

In a room

**MAEVE.**

Yeah

**ZUZU.**

Like this one

**MAEVE.**

It doesn't have to be like / this one

**ZUZU.**

But any room

**MAEVE.**

Yes

**ZUZU.**

...

**MAEVE.**

...

...

...

It sort of washes over me. Like sleep. Like all of a sudden I notice my leg is falling asleep. And I feel it crawling up from the bottom of my feet and I'm like: Uh-oh. I'm about to fly again.

...

...

And then I hold my breath and let my eyes go soft focus and I try to concentrate on it but also I can't concentrate on it too hard or else it goes away. I have to sort of concentrate on it sideways, you know?

...

...

**ZUZU.**

...

**MAEVE.**

And then I just sort of float away. And I'm constantly in danger of crashing to the ground if I don't keep my mind in the right place. But if I *do*, if I do keep my mind in the right place then I just sort of float to the top of the room and sit there

**ZUZU.**

That's amazing

[**MAEVE.**

And sometimes when I'm at the top of stairs

My body just takes off

And I just glide down

Like I'm a ghost

And I always think

Oh my god

This is the end

I'm about to fall down the stairs and break my neck

But then I just float down and I'm fine

**ZUZU.**

...]\*

**MAEVE.**

And one time I flew over the Great Lakes and then up into Canada and over the Rocky Mountains? Maybe I was dreaming. But I just went out the window. And I was flying belly down over the mountains. Like right over the face of them. And I saw all their crags and crevices and pockmarks like I was looking into their faces. I don't know how I could've seen the mountains' faces if I hadn't been actually flying like that.

**ZUZU.**

I've never flown before. Not even in my dreams. The only thing like that that's ever happened to me is sometimes I wake up and it feels like I'm falling through the bed.

*Amina appears in the doorway, a giant crown on her head.*

**AMINA.**

Hey

**MAEVE.**

Hey

**ZUZU.**

...

**MAEVE.**

Nice crown

---

\*Feel free to cut this section for pacing purposes. We cut it in the New York premiere.

AMINA.

Oh, thanks

*Amina reaches up and tries to take it off. But it won't budge.*

AMINA.

It's stuck in my hair, I can't get it off

MAEVE.

What's it for?

AMINA.

I won the MVP Miss Dance of Tomorrow?

MAEVE.

Really????

AMINA.

Yeah.....

*Amina stops struggling with her crown.*

MAEVE.

What does that even mean?

*Amina shrugs.*

AMINA. (*Apologizing.*)

It's a special award. For potential. Or something.

I guess I like...get to be fast-tracked to Tampa. I don't know...

(for the solo division)

MAEVE.

You're going to Tampa?

*Amina nods.*

MAEVE.

No matter what?

AMINA.

I guess so

MAEVE.

Cool

*Amina looks at Zuzu lying facedown on the carpet.*

AMINA.

Is she okay?

*Maeve shrugs.*

MAEVE.

We're just talking

*Amina looks at Zuzu - a little scared. She lifts up the hood of her dance jacket and puts it over her head so that it covers her crown. She approaches Zuzu on the carpet.*

**AMINA.**

...

...

...

Zuzu?

...

...

...

I just wanted to check on you and make sure that you were okay

...

And make sure you knew

That everyone's so happy we won the group dance!

We're going to Akron!!!!!! *Yayyy!*

No one even cares that you fell down

They all thought it was supposed to happen

They thought it was *cool*

They thought it was really cool

...

...

Zu?

...

...

...

Are you mad at me?

**ZUZU.** *(Still with her face in the carpet.)*

I'm not mad I just can't really look at you right now...

**AMINA.**

Um. That's okay...

Do you want me to like- sit with you? Or, I can get you some water??

**ZUZU.**

...

...

...

**MAEVE.**

I think she just needs some time and space

**AMINA.** *(Smiling weakly.)*

Okay. No prob

...

...

...

Um, I guess I should...

...

...

*She gives Maeve a little wave.*

**AMINA.**

Bye Maeve

**MAEVE.**

Bye

**AMINA.**

Bye Zu

...

...

Nobody's mad, okay?

**ZUZU.**

...

**MAEVE.**

...

**AMINA.**

...

*Amina exits.*

**ZUZU.**

...

...

...

...

...

...

Is she gone?

**MAEVE.**

Yeah

*Zuzu gets up. She looks like death. Her eyes are bloodshot. She wipes her eyes, the snot off her face. She splashes water on her face.*

**MAEVE.** *(Suddenly self-conscious.)*

Hey Zu. Don't tell anyone I told you that.

**ZUZU.**

Huh?

**MAEVE.**

About the flying

**ZUZU.**

Oh. I won't

**MAEVE.**

I don't want people asking me questions

**ZUZU.**

I won't tell, I promise

...

...

...

*Zuzu looks in the mirror. She plays with her lips, her fangs.*

**MAEVE.**

*And one day I'll forget that I ever  
used to fly. Because the truth is -  
I did. I did actually have the power  
to fly. Or to float, or whatever.*

*But somehow, along the way I  
forgot about it. I forgot all about  
it. It was the coolest thing I ever  
did. And I forgot it. I forgot it ever  
happened. On multiple occasions.*

*It happened. And I forgot.*

**ZUZU.** *(Looking in the mirror.)*

.....Ugh. I wish I could throw up but I don't think I can do it.....

...

...

...

...

...

Maeve?

**MAEVE.**

Yeah?

**ZUZU.**

You wanna know something?

**MAEVE.**

Yes

**ZUZU.**

I knew I was gonna fall before I fell

I don't know why

My leg just didn't work

And I knew it

Before it even stopped working

It's like I dreamed it

I don't know  
 ...from past lives...  
 .....or future lives....  
 or something

**MAEVE.** (*Smiling apologetically.*)

I'm sorry

**ZUZU.**

It's fine

**MAEVE.**

...

...

Hey Zuzu?

**ZUZU.**

Yeah

**MAEVE.**

I think I have to go find my mom now

**ZUZU.**

That's fine

**MAEVE.**

It's getting pretty late

...

...

Are you okay?

**ZUZU.**

Yeah I'm fine.

**MAEVE.**

Do you want me to find your mom?

**ZUZU.**

No it's fine

*She smiles at Maeve.*

**ZUZU.**

I'm just gonna stay here for a minute and-

**MAEVE.**

Okay

*Maeve runs out of the room and goes to find her mom. We see her run into her Mother's arms.*

**MAEVE.**

Mom! We won!

**MAEVE'S MOM.**

Yay!

get that I ever  
 he truth is -  
 have the power  
 or whatever.  
 ng the way I  
 rgot all about  
 st thing I ever  
 I forgot it ever  
 iple occasions.  
 id I forgot.

*Zuzu stands there - still smeared with face paint and blood from her arm. She closes her eyes. She holds her breath. She concentrates.*

*She throws herself into the wall. She throws herself into the wall again.*

ZUZU.

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

Ow



## 13

*Night. The moon is out. Ashlee and Connie are waiting outside to be picked up. They have coats on over their tights and leotards. Their faces are still painted bright, freakish colors.*

*Headlights. Ashlee notices something...*

**ASHLEE.**

Connie

**CONNIE.**

What?

**ASHLEE.**

That man is looking at us

*Connie looks. Then waves...*

**ASHLEE.**

Oh my god, he's waving back

**CONNIE.** *(Calling out.)*

We're just waiting for her mom-

**ASHLEE.**

Shh!

**CONNIE.** *(Laughing.)*

He's probably wondering why we're not wearing any pants

**ASHLEE.**

...

**CONNIE.**

...

**ASHLEE.**

Should I show him my leotard?

*Ashlee starts to unzip her jacket.*

**ASHLEE.**

Show him your horse

*Connie pulls out her lucky horse. They show the man their horse and leotard.*

*Then...*

**ASHLEE.**

Oh my god, he's coming over! Connie, Run! Connie, RUNNNNNN!

*They run away, shrieking.*

...

...

...

*The moon shines down...*

...

...

..

*A knock at the door.*

**SOFIA.**

Just a minute

*Sofia alone in the bathroom,  
scrubbing the blood out of her  
tights.*

*Another tentative knock.*

**SOFIA.**

**I said, JUST A  
MINUTE. CAN I NOT  
HAVE TWO MINUTES'  
PEACE WITHOUT  
SOMEONE INVADING  
ME???!!!!!!!  
JESUS CHRIST!**

*She feels deeply ashamed for  
yelling.*

**SOFIA'S MOM.**

Sofia, hunny, do you need help in there?

**SOFIA.**

...

...

...

...

...

...

Sorry, Mom. I'll be out in a minute

**SOFIA'S MOM.**

Because I can come in and help you, if you want?

**SOFIA.**

...

**SOFIA'S MOM.**

There are tampons under the sink, and-

**SOFIA.**

Mom!

**SOFIA'S MOM.**

Pads. If you want them

It might be easier to use a pad...

Just to start

...

...

Or you can use a tampon, if you want to...

Do you know how to do it

**SOFIA.**

Mom, no. Stop

**SOFIA'S MOM.**

Okay, I'm not trying to-

...

...

Just sometimes it helps if you get up on the counter and look in the mirror

**SOFIA.**

Mom, no

**SOFIA'S MOM.**

Just so you can see where it goes

**SOFIA.**

I'm not going to look at it

*Sofia is quietly weeping over her tights.*

**SOFIA.**

*I don't want to look at it*

*I'm never going to look at it*

**SOFIA'S MOM.**

Okay, then don't look

Don't look then, hunny

Just put it in

It's just like you're giving yourself a shot

*Sofia still weeping over her tights...*

*Connie appears in front of the moon, safe and sound...*

**CONNIE.**

Mom, I'm home!

*She goes into her bedroom and gets a box down off a shelf. She slowly starts to unpack it. It's full of horses. (This can take some time.)*

*Amina on her stomach. A pillow between her legs. She prepares herself - almost like she's talking herself through a number.*

**AMINA.**

And I'm walking down a beach

...

...

And they've got their thumb tucked inside the back of my jeans  
And I can feel the weight of their arm kind of pulling my jeans *down*

...

...

And then they lay me down  
Onto the sand  
And they take off my jeans...

...

...

... *(She looks at the door for a second...)* Mom?

...

... *(Then gets up and locks it. She returns to her position  
on the floor and starts to gently rock herself  
back and forth.)*

...

And then they start to kiss my ankle

...

And then my calf.....

...

And then my knee.....

...

And then they start to pull my swimsuit *down*....

....

....

...

..

.

*Amina masturbates.*

*Connie with her horses under the moon.*

*Sofia in the bathroom, still weeping and scrubbing her bloody tights.*

*(A triptych of girlhood.)*

## 14

*Afternoon. The Girls climbing up the stairs to the dance studio...*

*Sofia and Ashlee sit in the dressing room drinking afternoon coffee. They're wearing sunglasses and avoiding putting on their dance clothes. They pass one cup between them - taking dainty sips, taking turns...*

*The trophy from Philadelphia is there in a corner. It's four feet tall.*

*Amina enters. The Girls look at each other - a little wary and tentative but ultimately everyone wanting to be supportive and kind...*

**AMINA.**

Hey

**SOFIA & ASHLEE.**

Hey

**AMINA.**

*...We're going to Akron!...*

**SOFIA.**

*...We're going to Akron!...*

**AMINA.**

*Yayyyyy!*

**ASHLEE.**

We totally did it!

*Amina strokes the trophy.*

**AMINA.**

It's so big

**SOFIA.**

They only get bigger...

**AMINA.**

How are you guys doing?

**SOFIA.**

Fine

**ASHLEE.**

Fine

**SOFIA.**

That's so cool about your thing, p.s.

**AMINA.**

Oh thanks

**ASHLEE.**

Yeah, Tampa! That's so cool

**AMINA.**

Thanks, Ashlee

**ASHLEE.**

I didn't even know that could happen!

**AMINA.**

Me either

**SOFIA.**

You're like *a star*, Amina

**AMINA.**

Haha not really

**SOFIA.**

No that's what everyone was saying. They were like: Wow. She's such *a star*

**AMINA.**

I don't know, I feel like I didn't even do that good, to be honest...

I was so rattled...

**ASHLEE.**

No you were *really* good, Amina. It was amazing.

...

...

Are you going to do the special Gandhi part in Akron?

**AMINA.**

I don't know

**SOFIA.**

...

**ASHLEE.**

...

**AMINA.**

...

**SOFIA.**

It's not *bad*. It's not a *bad thing* to be the star

**AMINA.**

I know

**ASHLEE.**

She's not "the star." Dance Teacher Pat just likes her the best

**SOFIA.**

And the judges! And all of western / Pennsylvania

**AMINA.**

No, he doesn't!

**ASHLEE.**

Yes, he does, Amina

**SOFIA.**

Um, yeah, Amina, he totally does

**AMINA.**

...

SOFIA.

You don't have to lie about it

AMINA.

I'm not lying

SOFIA.

At least don't lie about it

At least *be honest*

AMINA.

I still lose sometimes

SOFIA.

Sometimes

AMINA.

And it really sucks when I lose because there's a lot of pressure on me  
And it's really embarrassing

...

Like you guys lose all the time. Whatever  
But if I lose, I'm like a perfectionist / and

ASHLEE.

That's really mean

AMINA.

What?

ASHLEE.

You're being really mean

AMINA.

I'm just being honest

SOFIA.

No, actually, now you're being mean

AMINA.

I'm just saying...

That the stakes *are higher* / for me

ASHLEE.

Okay

AMINA.

What? You said to be honest. I'm not allowed to be honest???

ASHLEE.

Have fun with all your crowns

AMINA.

What?

ASHLEE.

I said: HAVE FUN WITH ALL YOUR CROWNS

tar

Teacher Pat just

...

...

...

INSTEAD OF FRIENDS

...

...

...

ALL YOU HAVE IS CROWNS

...

...

SO HAVE FUN WITH THEM

*Amina exits toward the dance studio. Zuzu is climbing up the stairs. She walks straight into the studio and approaches Dance Teacher Pat.*

**ZUZU.**

I think I'm quitting dance

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

...

...

...

You know, if you quit, you can never come back

**ZUZU.**

I know

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

I'm not just talking about logistics, Zuzu

I'm talking about *your body*

You are training your body right now

And if you quit

Your body will go through puberty and change

And it will be *impossible* for you

To get it back

You won't be able to change your mind

**ZUZU.**

...

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Look at your mom

She was a really special dancer once

She could've done whatever she wanted

And now...

*He shrugs.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Is that what you want?



*Amina pokes her head into the studio.*

**AMINA.**

*Oh, sorry!*

*She makes a beeline for the corner.*

**AMINA.**

I'm just warming up

*Dance Teacher Pat leans down so he's eye level with Zuzu.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Just don't make a decision you'll regret for the rest of your life

*The Girls sipping coffee in the dressing room...*

**SOFIA.**

Drinking black coffee makes me feel like a Mom

**ASHLEE.**

Drinking black coffee makes me feel like a Cowboy

*Sofia looks at Ashlee and grins.*

**SOFIA.**

Wanna make it magic?

*She pulls out a fistful of sugar packets from her tracksuit and very carefully, almost ritualistically, empties them one by one into the coffee and stirs.*

*Luke enters.*

**LUKE.**

Hey

**SOFIA & ASHLEE.**

Hey

*Connie enters.*

**CONNIE.**

Hey

**SOFIA & ASHLEE.**

Hey

**CONNIE.**

Have you guys seen Zuzu?

**SOFIA.**

No

**ASHLEE.**

No

**CONNIE.**

Is she doing okay?

*Zuzu comes in from the studio.*

*airs. She walks*

**ZUZU.**

See you later

**CONNIE.**

Where are you going?

**SOFIA.**

Hi Zuzu

**ASHLEE.**

Hi Zuzu

**ZUZU.**

I'm taking the day off

**LUKE.**

Wait. I'm coming with you

*Luke grabs his dance bag and scrambles after her.*

**ASHLEE.**

Bye Zu!

*Connie watches Sofia stirring the coffee.*

**CONNIE.**

What are you doing?

*Sofia grins at her.*

**SOFIA.**

I'm making it magic

*Amina dancing in the studio. Dance Teacher Pat watches her.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Amina

**AMINA.**

What?

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

You're holding back

**AMINA.**

No I'm not

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Don't worry about what's going on in the dressing room

Just dance

Unleash

**AMINA.**

I *am* unleashing

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

No you're not.

...

Where are your shoes?!

**AMINA.**

I forgot my dance bag

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Amina

**AMINA.**

What???

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

What's going on with you?

**AMINA.**

Nothing

*She dances.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Stop

*She does.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Look at me

*She does.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Where's the girl I saw this weekend, huh?

**AMINA.**

...

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

You forget her at home, too?

*The Girls still in the dressing room, drinking coffee, not getting dressed. Ashlee puts her feet on top of the trophy.*

**ASHLEE.**

Life is weird. And hard

**CONNIE.**

Yeah

**ASHLEE.**

I know I should be excited that we won and stuff but I'm in such a bad mood

**CONNIE.**

Yeah I don't even really wanna go to Akron

**ASHLEE.**

Is it always going to be like this?

**SOFIA.**

Like what?

**ASHLEE.**

I don't know. Just...

...

I feel all this pain

Inside my chest

Like all these things are hurting me  
 And I'm like turning into this giant *scar*, you know what I'm saying?  
 But also I feel bad about everything I ever say and everything I ever do...

**SOFIA.**

Don't feel bad!

**ASHLEE.**

I don't know why! I just do...

**CONNIE.**

That's because you're a sensitive person, Ash  
 You're a thoughtful, sensitive person

**ASHLEE.**

..

..

..

..

no

**SOFIA.**

I love Amina

**ASHLEE.**

I love Amina, too

*In the studio.*

**AMINA.** *(To Dance Teacher Pat.)*

Sometimes I think I want to lose  
 Like I actually think I want to lose  
 Like I close my eyes and I say:  
 God. It's okay, if I lose  
 I don't mind this time  
 Like I feel like I hurt people  
 Just by existing  
 Like just by me, just I- *living*  
 It hurts everyone else  
 And I think: Okay, *pleasssse*, just let me lose.....  
 But then I get up on that stage  
 And they take the trophies out  
 And when they take the trophies out  
 It's like I get the taste of metal in my mouth  
 And all of a sudden, all I want is to win  
 I want to win so bad  
 I just like, *pray for it*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

I don't think you have to feel bad about that

**AMINA.**

...

...

...

Dance Teacher Pat?

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Yes, Amina?

**AMINA.**

I don't want to do the special Gandhi part in Akron. I want Zuzu to do it

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

...

...

...

Okay

**AMINA.**

Are you mad at me?

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

I'm not *mad*...

**AMINA.**

...

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

But if Zuzu has the solo in Akron, she's going to take it all the way to Nationals

**AMINA.**

That's fine

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

And that's where all the casting directors are going to be, and where we're gonna wanna put our best foot forward as a team

*She nods.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

This is bigger than one dance, Amina. You girls are building your legacy. Who do you trust with that legacy? Anyone? Or the strongest dancer on the team

**AMINA.**

The strongest dancer on the team

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

And who is that?

**AMINA.**

...

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Who is the strongest dancer on the team?

**AMINA.**

I don't know

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

You don't know?

**AMINA.**

I think I probably am, I just— the other girls are really...

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

If you were an impartial judge who didn't know anything about anyone, who came in here and watched you all dance. Who would you say deserved it?

**AMINA.**

I don't know. I think Zuzu can / do it

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Why do you pretend not to know things you know?

**AMINA.**

**I don't know!!!**

...

...

I think it's me

...

..

.

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Good. You'll do the solo, then

*Amina stands there, bereft.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

There's a thousand other girls out there just as talented as you, Amina, and they're *owning* it.

*Zuzu and Luke climbing up a hill, afternoon sunshine.*

**LUKE.**

Zuzu?

**ZUZU.**

Yeah?

**LUKE.**

Can I ask you a question?

**ZUZU.**

Is it about dance?

**LUKE.**

No

**ZUZU.**

Then, shoot.

**LUKE.**

How do you want to lose your virginity?

**ZUZU.**

Uh-

**LUKE.**

Like how do you want it to happen

**ZUZU.**

Oh

**LUKE.**

Do you know?

**ZUZU.**

Oh. Yeah

**LUKE.**

You do?

**ZUZU.**

Oh yeah

**LUKE.**

Will you tell me?

*She looks at him.*

**ZUZU.**

Well there's two versions of the story.

**LUKE.**

...

**ZUZU.**

In one version I'm an enchantress. Like an enchantress, enchantress. Like I'm actually an enchantress. (Don't tell anyone this.) Like Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe style. Like somebody comes and gets me through the cupboard and is like: Dude! You're an enchantress. And I go off into this magical world. And I get to live whole lifetimes there as a queen and an enchantress but then I can come back to Earth and no time has passed.

**LUKE.**

...

**ZUZU.**

So that's one version.

**LUKE.**

Uh-huh

**ZUZU.**

And the other is that I'm an enchantress in a movie

**LUKE.**

Oh

**ZUZU.**

And he's my

**LUKE.**

Co-star

who came in here

they're *owning* it.

**ZUZU.**

Leading man

**LUKE.**

Cool

**ZUZU.**

He's Canadian

I don't know why he's Canadian he's just always been Canadian

...

Theodore

**LUKE.**

That's his name?

**ZUZU.**

Yup. Theodore. I don't know why. I don't even like that name. It just came to me

**LUKE.**

In a dream?

**ZUZU.**

I don't know. It just came.

And we fall in love

**LUKE.**

How do you fall in love?

**ZUZU.**

What?

**LUKE.**

How does that happen? How do you fall in love?

**ZUZU.**

We just are

**LUKE.**

Automatically

**ZUZU.**

Well not automatically...

**LUKE.**

Both of you?

**ZUZU.**

I think so?

**LUKE.**

At the same time?

**ZUZU.**

Yes

**LUKE.**

But how do you *know*?



**ZUZU.**

Um

**LUKE.**

That you're in love. Like how does it *actually* happen?

*Zuzu thinks.*

**ZUZU.**

I think it's just like we meet each other. And we feel like we've known each other before. Like in past lives. Like we're old souls when we're together and he's known me forever so falling in love is really just like remembering or like catching up to what we already were... you know?

...

Does that make sense?

*Luke shrugs.*

**LUKE.**

So what happens next in your story?

**ZUZU.**

So anyway we fall in love and we get engaged and we buy an apartment. In New York City! And after we've bought our apartment-

**LUKE.**

How old are you?

**ZUZU.**

I don't know. Twenty-three?

So we go there one day - during the day, before we've moved in - just to you know plan out how we're going to lay out all the furniture in the house. And it's just a big empty apartment. And we get to decide where all the chairs go. And all the tables. And all the cups. And it's just like *bliss*. And he leads me through the apartment by my hands. And sunlight is streaming through the windows. And he lays me down on the floor - and it's a hardwood floor. And it's kinda warm because of all the sunlight. And my back is on the warm, hardwood floor. And we lose our virginities to each other. And as he, um, enters me. I open my eyes. And *he* opens *his* eyes. And this sounds *crazy* but our souls kind of touch through our eyes and like. Just for a moment. We become one being.

*They sit on the grass.*

**LUKE.**

Are you guys married?

*She shakes her head.*

**ZUZU.**

No, we're engaged

...

...

...

But then you know what's funny

Sometimes-

And not all the time  
 But sometimes--  
 I keep thinking for a little bit  
 And do you know what happens? In my mind?

**LUKE.**

No

**ZUZU.**

It's like five years later  
 (This is crazy)  
 But it's like five years later  
 And I have these two beautiful children  
 Two beautiful daughters  
 And he dies

**LUKE.**

He dies?

**ZUZU.**

Yeah. I don't know exactly how. Maybe a car crash. But he dies. And we're like living in the country. The country outside of New York City. With a trellis. And he dies. And I'm like this dancer slash astrophysicist *widow* with these two beautiful babies. And then one day someone comes to visit me. *This man*. He drives all the way to visit me. And when his car pulls up into my driveway, I go outside to welcome him. And I've got like one baby on my hip. And one baby by the hand. And I'm standing under the trellis. Just saying: hello. And then I take him inside. And I make him just the most beautiful lunch. Just the most beautiful lunch you've ever seen. With like cheese. And olives. And beautiful salads and things like that. And we sit on the floor. And the babies fall asleep. And afterwards we drink coffee.

**LUKE.**

That sounds nice

**ZUZU.**

And do you know who that someone is????

**LUKE.**

No?

**ZUZU.**

It's Dance Teacher Pat.

*She laughs and laughs.*

**ZUZU.**

Isn't that weird!

...

...

I don't know why it's him. But it is. It is.

*Zuzu lies back in the grass. The sky, the breeze, the trees...*

**ZUZU.**

OH MY GOD

**LUKE.**

What?

**ZUZU.**

I just decided something

**LUKE.**

What

**ZUZU.**

**THIS IS MY LAST DAY OF DANCE ON EARTH!!!!!!!**

*The Girls in the dressing room. Sofia has (finally) finished making the magic coffee.*

**SOFIA.**

Alright, it's ready. Who wants a sip?

**CONNIE.**

I do

**SOFIA.**

If you take a sip, you pledge your eternal allegiance to CZALMSA [*Pronounced z-alm-sah.*]

**CONNIE.**

Zalm-wahhhh?

**SOFIA.**

Our group! Connie, Zuzu, Ashlee, Luke, Maeve, Sofia and Amina.

*(Sounding it out.)* C - Z - A - L - M - S - A

**CONNIE.**

But there's no "c" in ZALMSA!

**SOFIA.**

The "c" is silent. Like in czar

**CONNIE.**

Oh.

**ASHLEE.**

We could be Zalm-sakkkkkkk

**SOFIA.**

CZALMSA's cooler

**CONNIE.**

...

**SOFIA.**

Trust me, Connie. It's cool to be the silent "c"

**CONNIE.**

Yeah...

**SOFIA.**

You're like our secret weapon

**CONNIE.**

I think I'm just tired of being a secret...

re like living in  
e dies. And I'm  
i. And then one  
s. And when his  
ke one baby on  
st saying: hello.  
t. Just the most  
tiful salads and  
wards we drink

**SOFIA.**

How are you a secret?

**ASHLEE.**

No!

**CONNIE.**

I don't know. I just feel like I am

**ASHLEE.**

You're not a / secret

**SOFIA.**

We can be Zalmsakkk, then. We can totally be ZALMSAC

*Sofia gives them a devilish look, then takes a sip of the magic coffee.*

**SOFIA.**

*I solemnly swear my eternal allegiance.....to ZALMSAC*

*She hands the coffee to Connie. Connie takes a sip. It's really sweet.*

**CONNIE.**

*Oof*

...

...

To ZALMSAC

*Ashlee takes a sip.*

**ASHLEE.**

ZALMSAC

...

...

...

It kind of sounds like an antidepressant

**SOFIA.**

Huh?

**ASHLEE.**

Like those commercials? Feeling worthless? Take Zalmsac

**SOFIA.**

That's Zoloft

**ASHLEE.**

No but in general. It sounds like that

**CONNIE.**

My mom takes antidepressants and she says I'm probably going to have to, too

**ASHLEE.**

Well, now you won't have to because you can just take Zalmsac

**CONNIE.**

Thanks

**ASHLEE.**

Here I'm going to give you a little bit of Zalmsac right now

*She sticks her fingers under her armpit to collect sweat.*

**ASHLEE.**

Sofia?

*Ashlee sticks her fingers under Sofia's armpit, too.*

**ASHLEE.**

Okay. Then you just apply the Zalmsac to the upper lip...

*Ashlee dabs the sweat on Connie's upper lip.*

**CONNIE.**

Thank you.

*Ashlee blows on Connie's upper lip. She kisses her on the mouth.*

**ASHLEE.**

And then you'll feel better, soon.

*Connie takes Ashlee's hand.*

**CONNIE.**

*And in twenty years, you will sit in my apartment while you're on a business trip in New York City, and I will tell you that I've spent the fall trying not to kill myself, and you will tell me that you spent all of high school trying not to kill yourself. You will tell me how you got on a bus, and found a doctor, and rode the bus to the doctor, and begged the doctor not to call your parents, and went on antidepressants at the age of fourteen, and all this time, I was walking by you, all this time our bodies were sharing spaces, and I had no idea. And we will sit on the floor and drink wine and cry the same way we cry in banks and on airplanes and in all sorts of public places - quietly and full of shame but grateful to be quiet and shameful together - and we will talk about our jobs and the people we are dating, and suddenly, for the first time in years, I will believe in fate. That somehow all of this was pre-determined. You and me sitting here now. You and me sitting there then.*

*I always knew there was something about us that was the same.*

**SOFIA.**

I want some, too.

*Ashlee dabs a little sweat on Sofia's upper lip.*

*Maeve enters.*

**MAEVE.**

Hey guys!

**ASHLEE & CONNIE.**

Hey!

**MAEVE.**

I'm late!

**SOFIA.**

It doesn't matter. Sit down.

*She does.*

**SOFIA.**

Drink this

*Sofia hands Maeve the coffee.*

**MAEVE.**

What is it?

**SOFIA.**

It's a potion

**ASHLEE.**

It's just coffee

**MAEVE.**

It hurts my teeth

**CONNIE.**

Guys, it's 4:07. Should we go in?

*They all look toward the door.*

**ASHLEE.**

Let him come and get us

*They huddle in a circle - the magic coffee in the middle like a cauldron.*

**SOFIA.**

Girls? I have to tell you something that happened to me yesterday but you have to swear yourselves to secrecy.

**ASHLEE.**

*Zalmsac*

**CONNIE.**

*Zalmsac*

**MAEVE.** *(Whispering.)*

I can feel it working on me

**ASHLEE.** *(Whispering.)*

What?

**MAEVE.** (*Whispering.*)

The potion

**SOFIA.**

Late last night, in my bathroom...

After my mom went to sleep

I climbed up on the counter

And I pulled up my nightgown

And I *looked*

**CONNIE.**

At what?

**SOFIA.**

*Everything*

*The earth starts to shake.*

**SOFIA.**

And even though

It was the first pussy

That I ever, ever saw

**SOFIA & ASHLEE.**

I knew *in my bones*

That no one could have

A pussy as perfect as mine

**SOFIA, ASHLEE, MAEVE & CONNIE.**

And surely a person

With such perfect genitals

Is destined for greatness

It's written in the stars

*Zuzu joins the chant from her spot on the hill.*

**SOFIA, ASHLEE, MAEVE, CONNIE & ZUZU.**

And here's the thing about pussies

That they never, ever tell you

They're ageless! They're ageless!

Don't listen to their lies

*Luke joins the chant from his spot on the hill.*

**SOFIA, ASHLEE, MAEVE, CONNIE, ZUZU & LUKE.**

My pussy is perfect

And it'll stay that way **FOREVER**

*The Moms appears and chants with them.*

ron.

have to swear

SOFIA, ASHLEE, MAEVE, CONNIE, ZUZU, LUKE & THE MOMS. (*Ecstatic!*)

I'll never forget  
The day I first saw it  
My perfect, perfect pussy

*And Dance Teacher Pat!*

SOFIA, ASHLEE, MAEVE, CONNIE, ZUZU, LUKE, THE MOMS & DANCE TEACHER PAT. (*Utter ecstasy!*)

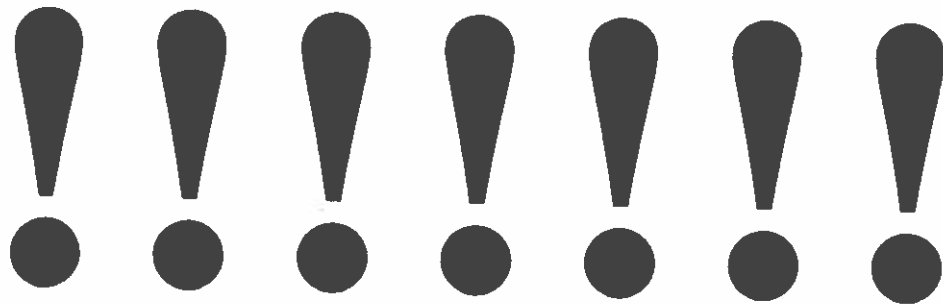
I knew *in my bones*  
That no one could have  
A pussy as perfect as mine  
And surely a person  
With such perfect genitals  
Is destined for greatness  
It's written in the stars  
I wish that my *body*  
Were as perfect as my pussy  
I wish that my *face*  
Were as perfect as my pussy  
I wish that my *soul*  
Were as perfect as my pussy  
I wish that my *soul!*  
Were as perfect as my pussy!  
I wish that my *soul!*  
Were as perfect as my pussy!





rrrrrrrr

ruhuh!



*Amina dances, she dances, she dances. She is a tiny whirling dot.*

**AMINA.**

I'm gonna win  
I'm gonna win  
I'm gonna win  
Not because of *you*  
I am going to do it myself  
Over the years  
I will watch  
As others fall away  
Give up  
Lose courage  
I will keep going  
Something will tell me to keep going  
I will fail at first  
But I will keep going

People won't like me  
 And other people will be better than me  
 But I will keep going  
 And then one day  
 The tide will start to turn  
 Inevitable  
 Unstoppable  
 Like the leaves falling off the trees  
 Winter is coming  
 And I am The Winter  
 You cannot deny me  
 My entire life will be a victory  
 And when they ask me how I did it I will say:  
 That I didn't listen to anyone  
 I had no teachers  
 No mentors  
 No parents  
 I am thankful for *nothing*  
 But myself  
 I rode the wave -  
 For eleven years  
 ...twelve years  
 ...thirteen years  
 I rode the wave -  
 For twenty years  
 ...twenty-one years  
 ...twenty-five years  
 I rode the wave -  
 For thirty years  
 ...forty years  
 ...fifty...  
 I rode the wave  
 Like I always knew how to ride the wave  
 And others kept falling along the way  
 But I kept riding  
 'Til I was alone

...

I was alone

...

I was alone

...

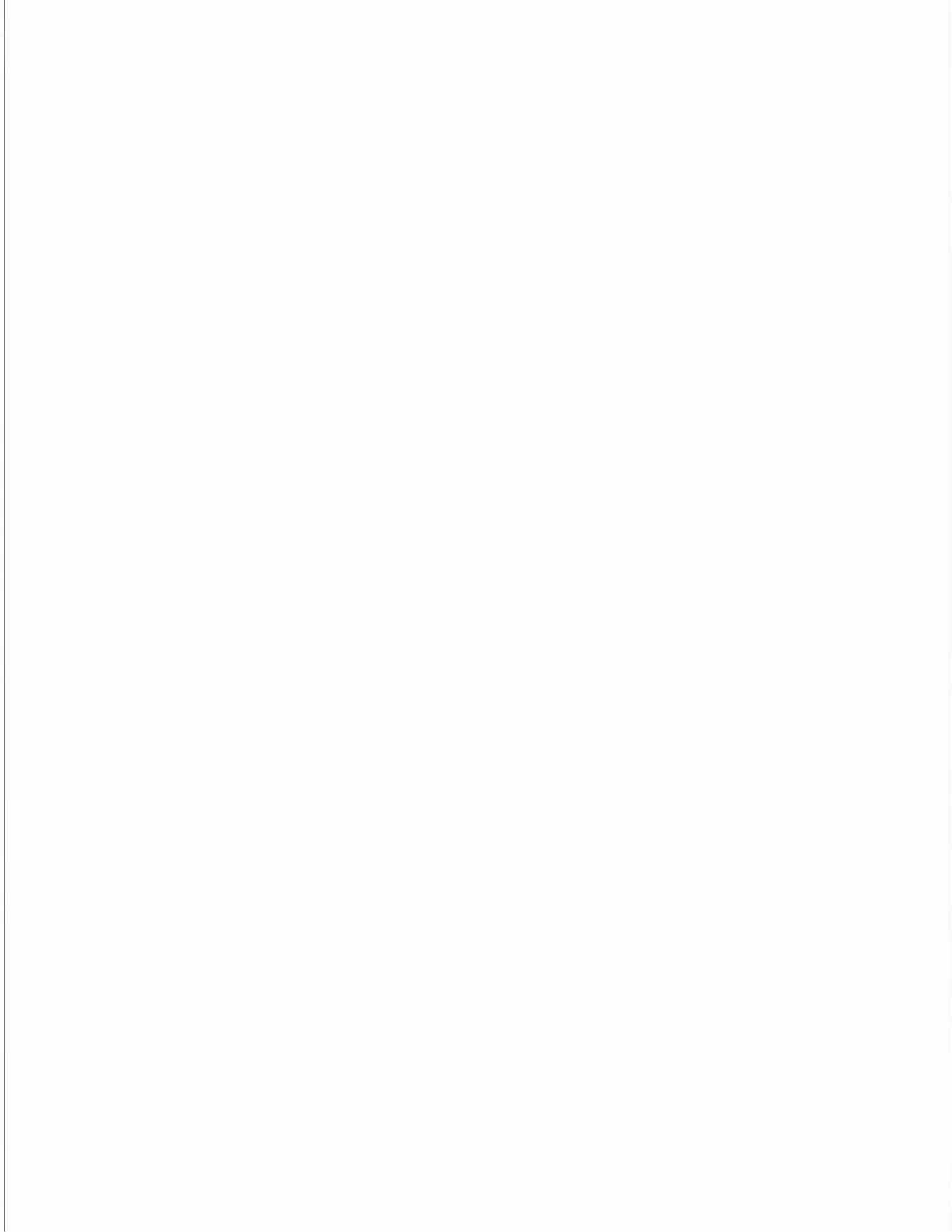
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*Amina dancing. She is athletic, vicious, stunning. She absolutely dominates. She turns out to us. She hisses. She gnashes her fangs.*

**End of Play**



when they're real and when they're psychic, but I'd say they're particularly helpful during the "Baby Sexy Robot" portion of the play (Scene 8) and not necessary anywhere else – although, I'm curious what would happen if you tried them!

I'm also in favor of having a moon.

**On the ending...**

In both New York and London, we found that stillness was really crucial for Amina's final monologue, despite the stage directions about her dancing. Feel free to experiment, but the most important thing to protect is the emotional resonance of that text. If you do choose stillness, which I recommend, the play should still end with some kind of gesture or dance sequence that stems from her anger and voracious desire. (In other words, "I was alone" is not the final beat of the play.)

**A final word on tone...**

Play it like adults. The actors should be sincere and grounded. And the stakes should feel real – like "adult problems."

**Special Thanks**

I made this play over the course of two-and-a-half years with Lee Sunday Evans, and her instincts and insight were absolutely invaluable in shaping it. Thank you also to our incredible cast and team of designers and stage managers, and to all the artists who helped develop this play, of which there were many. And thank you to Playwrights Horizons for your support and advocacy, and for immediately believing in us. I would also like to thank: Clubbed Thumb, Maria Striar, Michael Walkup, the Atlantic, Page 73, New Dramatists, Margot Bordelon, David Herskovits, Alex Borinsky, Chiara Atik, Paul Hardy, Rachel Viola, RESCHAA, and the Barron family.

## PLAYWRIGHT'S PERSPECTIVE

It can be kind of paralyzing to make work about gender in a moment like this. And worse to have to talk about it. But I'm going to try.

This is a play about thirteen-year-old girls. It's also a play about women, ambition, and desire. I wanted to write this play because I wanted to present a different picture of teenage girls onstage. One where trauma wasn't the central narrative. One where "being the best" was.

The girls are played by women ranging from their twenties to their sixties because I was tired of the casting convention of hiring petite twenty-five-year-olds to play thirteen. I didn't want the characters in the play to look like what you think teenage girls should look like – because teenage girls don't really look like that! Also, because the play is really about how we carry what happens to us when we're thirteen through the rest of our lives.

I, for one, am still struggling with a lot of the same things. For example:

I remember standing in a press line to talk about a play I had written. The journalist asked me if I was an actor. I said, "No. I wrote the play." He gasped in surprise. "All by yourself?" Instead of rolling my eyes or telling him off, I laughed, shyly, and smiled back at him: "Oh, well, you know. I had lots and lots of help."

In that moment, making him feel comfortable with his actions, with his words and his perspective – making sure that he didn't think he had done anything wrong – was more important to me than standing up for myself and my work. And I do think that that is a pattern that has haunted me.

Sometimes I think that the subtitle of my professional and my personal life could be "Clare Barron Makes Mediocre Men Feel Good About Themselves."

That's something I have to change. And I want to be clear that I think that all of this is as much about the world's expectation that I be palatable to other people, well-behaved, sweet, helpless, and unassuming, as it is about my own failure to take real responsibility for myself as an agent for change in the world – as each of us are.

And also, in my case, sometimes that "helplessness" or seeming helplessness has enabled me to work within the system and succeed.

We participate in corrupt currencies all the time.

I feel a lot of shame when I receive any kind of recognition. In part, because I'm not comfortable taking up too much space. In part, because I'm aware that I've had it relatively easy. That there's something precarious about being palatable to gatekeepers in a world that is so deeply unfair.

That's the tricky thing about rewarding excellence: How can we celebrate a few when there are so many without the platform, without the access and who are met with deep institutional bias?

Or even, something more psychological:

I remember when I first started out in playwriting, my playwright guy friends would get really angry when they applied for something (a residency, a writer's group) and didn't get it. I was confused – I didn't feel angry. Then I realized the difference: they thought they deserved it; I had convinced myself I didn't.

The girls in the play are dealing with all these questions of who's the best, who deserves to be recognized, what to do when the system (aka Dance Teacher Pat) is unfair, how to be friends and compete at the same time, how to stand up for yourself when you've been trained not to...

The difference is they're only thirteen.

The difference is they're still a little naïve. They still think anything is possible.

In the play, the girls audition for a "special part" in one of their competition dances. After the audition, one of the girls, Amina, runs up to her best friend, Zuzu. They both congratulate each other on their auditions, ignoring the fact that one of them will inevitably be disappointed. Then Amina gets an idea: "Maybe we'll both just get it!"

Zuzu lights up. The thought hadn't occurred to her. "Oh my god! That would be perfect!"

Why not.

# 1

*Blinding white lights. Thirty little bodies dressed like sailors are tap dancing. They are flapping their feet and kicking their legs. They are perfectly in sync. Their faces are beaming. They live for this shit. It's the end of the number - they strike a pose.*

*Thunderous applause. A curtain drops.*

**THE GOD MIC.**

Alright girls. That's it. Good show. Let's clear the stage.

*Thirty little bodies run in all directions.*

*A Crumpled Sailor is left behind. She is bleeding profusely and her femur is sticking out of her skin.*

**CRUMPLED SAILOR AKA VANESSA.**

I can't get up

*A tiny dancer dashes back across the stage without stopping.*

**CRUMPLED SAILOR AKA VANESSA.**

I can't get up

*Another tiny dancer comes back onstage. She sees the Crumpled Sailor and slowly backs off the way she came.*

*Suddenly, a voice from the God Mic.*

**THE GOD MIC.**

Hey. You in the sailor suit. Let's go

**CRUMPLED SAILOR AKA VANESSA.**

I think there's something wrong with my knee

**THE GOD MIC.**

Hey Minda? We've got a sailor down. Can you come get her off the stage please?

**MINDA.** *(Yelling from somewhere far offstage.)*

Coming!!

*A long moment of the Crumpled Sailor alone on the stage, bleeding.*

*One by one the tiny dancers come back onstage and stand in horror around the Crumpled Sailor.*

**SOFIA.**

Oh my god

**MAEVE.**

Oh my god



**ASHLEE.**

Oh my god! Vanessa! What happened?

**CRUMPLED SAILOR AKA VANESSA.**

I landed funny

**MAEVE.**

Wow. That's really bad

*The Girls try not to cry.*

**THE GOD MIC.**

Hey Minda? Can you bring some paper towels? And maybe some-

**MINDA.** *(Yelling from somewhere offstage.)*

Sorry! Just a minute!

**CONNIE.**

Does it hurt?

*One of the stage lights comes undone. It falls to the stage and lands with an enormous BANG like a cannon going off.*

*The tiny dancers scream and run in all directions.*

*The Crumpled Sailor - once again all alone onstage and bleeding. A long moment of silence, and then...*

**THE GOD MIC.**

Just sit tight, honey. Someone's calling an ambulance.

2

*Dance Teacher Pat stands in front of an army of little Girls and Luke – the one male dancer in the group.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Alright girls  
We've got a lot of work to do  
Nationals is a month away  
And we're a mess.  
Maeve. Get that hair out of your face

*Maeve pushes her hair back. It falls back into her eyes.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Where's your hair tie?

**MAEVE.**

In the dressing room

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Run and get it

*Maeve runs out of the studio to get a hair tie.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Now we all get to wait for Maeve...

*They wait for Maeve.*

...

...

...

...

...

...

*Maeve comes running back, her bangs awkwardly pinned back with butterfly clips. Dance Teacher Pat clears his throat.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Alright. Where was I?

**MAEVE.**

*...sorry*

*Dance Teacher Pat holds up a thumb.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

This week? We're off to the Legacy National Talent Competition in Philadelphia

*He adds a finger.*

*id lands with an*

*bleeding. A long*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Next week? We take the bus to Akron, Ohio, for StarPower USA

*And a third finger...*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Then it's Lanoka Harbor, New Jersey, for The Boogie Down Grand Prix

*He starts with his thumb again and counts up.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

If we win in Philadelphia...

If we win in Akron, Ohio...

And if we win in Lanoka Harbor, New Jersey, at The Boogie Down Grand Prix  
(And I'm talking Overall First Place finishes or nothing)

We will pack our bags...

And we will get on a plane...

And we will fly all the way to TAMPA BAY,

**FLORIDAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA**

**ALL THE GIRLS.**

Yes!

**Yes!**

**Yesss!**

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

**FOR NATIONALSSSSSSSSSS**

**ALL THE GIRLS.**

Yes!

**Yes!**

**Yesss!**

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

**IN FLORIDAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA**

*They start to shout: "Yes!" He silences them.*

*They hush.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Now some of you are bumpin' at the top of the pre-teen division, and next year I'm gonna have to bump you up to teens. (Connie. Ashlee. Zuzu. I'm talking to you.) You're gonna be at the bottom of the pile again and you're gonna have to crawl your way back to the top...

**ALL THE GIRLS.**

...

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

But right now you're Big Dogs...

How're you gonna cap off your prepubescent years?  
Will you be winners?  
Like the Elite Pre-Teen Competition Squad of 1992?

*He raps a framed photograph of the Elite Pre-Teen Competition Squad of 1992. They are in sequins and face paint and grasping a four-foot-tall trophy - vicious, victorious.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Or '95

*He raps another photo on the wall.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Or '97

*And another.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Or two-thousand-thirteen. *Fourteen. Fifteen!*

Three years in a row

Boom, boom, boom

...

...

Or will you not even make it to The Wall...

**ALL THE GIRLS.**

...

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Who were the girls in 1996?

We don't know...

It's like they never even existed

**ALL THE GIRLS.**

...

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

But the girls in 1997.....

You remember who they were, don't you????

*All the Girls whisper, mesmerized by the memory of..*

**ALL THE GIRLS. (Whispering.)**

*Sabinaaaaaaaaaaaaa*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Yes, Sabina

**ALL THE GIRLS.**

*Sabinaaaaaaaaaaaaa*

*The Girls gaze admiringly at a portrait of Sabina - beautiful, gracious, wearing an enormous crown.*

id Prix

A

next year I'm gonna  
u.) You're gonna be  
back to the top...



**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Why don't you girls know this? He went on a hunger strike and stopped eating.

*Dance Teacher Pat looks at them menacingly.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

It's going to be a really beautiful number about resistance. You'll all be playing Citizens of the World. And one of you will play the role of Gandhi.

*They all look at Connie - the only Indian-American student in the class. Sofia raises her hand.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Yes Sofia

**SOFIA.**

I don't think it's fair that Gandhi is the star

*They all look at Connie.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

I don't know which one of you will play the role of Gandhi yet.

It could be anyone.

*Zuzu raises her hand.*

**ZUZU.**

I'd really like to play the role of Gandhi.

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

You're all going to learn the part and then we'll see who does it best.

*Luke raises his hand.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Yes Luke?

**LUKE.**

Is Vanessa okay?

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Vanessa's in the hospital. Vanessa's doing fine.

**LUKE.**

Is she coming back?

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Vanessa won't be dancing with us for awhile.

*They all look at the floor.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

That's what happens when you don't roll through your feet properly when you land.

Alright. Spread apart!

*The Girls get into formation.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

I want you to learn it as if it's your solo to lose

## 3

*Drumroll! The Girls and Luke audition for the part of Gandhi.*

**ASHLEE.**

I hope I get it!

*They do the dance as if we could only see a close-up on their faces. They are perfectly still except for their eyebrows, their nostrils, their mouths, etc. and the occasional dramatic arm movement. At the moment in the dance where they would leap, they breathe in deeply through their nostrils. At the moment in the dance where they would do a series of turns, they breathe out through their mouths. They furrow their brows as the music swells\* and then break into a radiant look of surprise. Everything is perfectly choreographed. It is a complex and exquisitely rendered ballet of the face.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Alright. Good stuff

*The Girls disperse. He calls after them...*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

**REMEMBER TO CLOSE YOUR MOUTH WHEN YOU TURN, ASHLEE!** Everybody needs to work on their faces

*He claps on each word.*

**DANCE TEACHER PAT.**

Sadness, Surprise, Fierce

Sadness, Surprise, Fierce

I want you to practice in front of the mirror

No limp arms, or I'll cut them off!

*Almost all the Girls are gone now. Zuzu catches up to Amina.*

**ZUZU.**

Hey

**AMINA.**

Hey

**ZUZU.**

Good job!

**AMINA.**

You, too!

**ZUZU.**

You were awesome

**AMINA.**

Oh my god. *You* were awesome

\*A license to produce *Dance Nation* does not include a performance license for any third-party or copyrighted music. Licensees should create an original composition or use music in the public domain. For further information, please see Music Use Note on page 3.

**ZUZU.**

Your turns were crazy. You went so fast

**AMINA.**

I loved your chest roll. You were so *intense*

**ZUZU.**

Really?????

**AMINA.**

You're such a diva

**ZUZU.**

Was my side aerial okay?

**AMINA.**

Yeah it was good

**ZUZU.**

It felt a little lopsided

**AMINA.**

Maybe a little but you caught it

**ZUZU.**

But a little?

**AMINA.**

Maybe a little but I didn't really notice, I feel like you pulled it off

**ZUZU.**

Okay good

**AMINA.**

What about mine?

**ZUZU.**

It was perfect

**AMINA.**

Are you sure?

**ZUZU.**

It was totally perfect

**AMINA.**

Okay cool

**ZUZU.**

Your turns were perfect, too

**AMINA.**

I'm always worried that I go too fast

**ZUZU.**

No, / no it's cool

**AMINA.**

And lose control. It's not good to lose control

hi.

ir faces. They are  
ouths, etc. and the  
dance where they  
At the moment in  
out through their  
then break into a  
ed. It is a complex

.EE! Everybody needs



**ZUZU.**  
I like it

*They smile at each other.*

**AMINA.**  
I hope we both just get it

**ZUZU.**  
Yeah! I hope we're both just Gandhi!

**AMINA.**

**OH MY GOD**

**ZUZU.**  
What?!

**AMINA.**  
That would be *perfect!*

*Connie's still there, drinking from her water bottle. She waves at them.*

**CONNIE.**  
Hey