

LISTS

A Monologue for the Theater

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Lights up on a performance space. This could be anywhere; a theater, a high school gymnasium, a hilltop, a bathroom mirror, that sort of thing.

GIRL

My Dad is my hero.
 He is....
 Juggling tangerines in the produce aisle
 Singing like Elvis during the seventh inning stretch.
 He is mandatory t ball in the backyard
 Dancing to Paul Simon and The Beatles in the kitchen
 He is popcorn on Saturday nights
 Pancakes on Sunday mornings.
 He is road trips on the holidays
 Dill pickle sunflower seeds
 He is “that Dad” at every game, every concert, every performance
 Because he is *always* there.
 He is the “just jog it off’s” and the “way to go champ’s”
 He was the first person I called when I hit a deer with my car
 When I left my social security card in a Walmart
 When I drank for the first time and barfed in the bathroom at the Mall of America
 Because he really always knew what to do
 Whenever I wasn’t, he was always fine.
 And he was always right.
 At least until this past summer.

Lights could change here as GIRL removes her cell phone from her pocket. She unlocks it and opens the “notes” app.

I have a note on my phone dedicated to things men have said to me that have pissed me off. For instance:
 I once had a sociology professor tell me that I was “feisty” in the middle of my final presentation on American imperialism and genital cutting.
 Some boy in the eighth grade once said to me, “you know, you’d be a lot more attractive if you would just chill.”

GIRL scrolls on her phone

Oh! I once sat next to some guy in a place that said I looked like Nicole Kidman. He also told me not to worry because in the event of an emergency, he would put the oxygen mask on me before securing his own. Even though they tell you not to do that.
 “Well you’re probably going to be successful because you’re skinny. So don’t blow it.”
 “O’ holy night, honey” which is what the pastor of the local United Methodist Church whispered to me as he lit my candle before the start of the silent night chorus.

“You’re kind of a bossy talker.”

Beat

I honestly don’t remember who told me that.

GIRL hastily shoves the phone in her pocket and continues to speak

And it’s funny or whatever but this stuff starts to get to you, you know?

And that is kind of a difficult thing to talk about because it’s, it’s personal and -

I don’t want to be *that* girl that is like:

“men suck”

because that is not what I think

but the reality is that these are the kinds of things that I endure every day and you can spend so much time trying to convince yourself that they can’t change you, but they can.

And they do.

I mean *of course* they do.

It’s like when Meryl Streep as Margaret Thatcher in *The Iron Lady* says to the House of Commons:

GIRL recites the following in a very performative imitation of Meryl Streep as Margaret Thatcher

“If the right honorable gentleman could perhaps attend more closely to *what* I am saying rather than *how* I am saying it, he may receive a valuable education despite himself” and then hires a drama coach to train her to speak more authoritatively.

And this makes sense because -

Because according to a lot of feminist theory
you know

we are constantly performing our gender to conform.

I mean we pretty much make gender a thing by talking and appearing - to speak in binary terms real quick- like “girl” and “guy” and we do this to... to get by. To fit in. To survive.

I mean, we can’t expect everyone to resist all the time because that would be exhausting.

But you know what does help? Running. And so I run a lot.

Like a lot.

Sometimes with my Dad, because it’s always been something that we love to do together.

But mostly I’d run alone.

And I’d go for miles

and miles

and miles...

and with every mile, I would blame the male race for plaguing me with insecurities.

And so these runs, for me, they were... “cathartic,” they were... “mental health,” they were...

“alone time...”

pause

They were “don’t blow it”

So I just... kept running.

And it was while running this past summer that my Dad and I got to talking:

GIRL begins to run in place and speak as if she were out of breath

So you know how I’ve been like having some anxiety stuff and have been like I don’t know -uh- feeling like, like not like myself and, I don’t know if Mom told you about that - did she tell you about that? therapist? That I started talking to? and like all that but she has been like super helpful in just like providing just some like clarity for me because I’ve really been um struggling. For like awhile now - with this anxiety stuff particularly about my, my body. And the way I present or am - like specifically around men. And - and - and.

And well. She actually diagnosed me with an eating disorder.

And while I know that I is like ahh scary or whatever, and im really scared but - and I don’t know where it all like really came from... I think it is just like like like all the pressure. The- the - the expectations and all that. So anyway, I just wanted you to know that and if you have obviously if you have any questions or like, like, like - what?

Pause

Ok....?

Pause

17 times?

Pause

And he said “ I don’t know honey I just think when you say “like” so much, it makes all the smart things you say sound... unintelligent. That’s all.”

Silence. GIRL stops running.

But did you even hear what I said?

Beat

We kept jogging.

I was so angry

and so humiliated

and I wanted so badly to say something

and if I could go back -

but I was shrinking

and out of breath

so it was 4 ½ miles of silence.

I showered.

He showered.
 We ate dinner in silence.
 He hugged me... and he cried.
 Because he knew he could never take it back.

Beat.

You know, Judith Butler, one of these theorists I was talking about, says that:
 “Because gender is a project which has cultural survival at its ends, the term ‘strategy’ best suggests the situation of duress under which gender performance always and variously occurs. Hence, as a strategy of survival, gender is a performance with clearly punitive consequences.”

So. I say “like” because it is a strategy. Because I don’t want to be a bossy talker.

GIRL brings the phone back out of her pocket. She scrolls back through the list for a moment.

My Dad isn’t on this list because he is my hero -
 He’s my Dad
 but what if he weren’t, you know?
 What if he were just some guy I sat next to on a plane?

 I don’t know.

GIRL puts her phone away

Dad, if you are here, I want you to know that I know you’re sorry.
 And that I forgive you.
 And I know you’re here -
 because you come to everything.

