

CHARACTERS:

YOUNG RAVEN- mid to late 20's. She is a past version of Raven. Her chance encounter with "D.C." led the letters to be written in the first place.

TANYA- 16. She is the future daughter of Young Raven.

NEW YORK

PHILADELPHIA

D.C.

*"letter to the flower child"*

*tyler lynch.*

**Scene 1- "Seed"**

*'planting eden'*

*The stage is in  
darkness. A sharp white  
spotlight shines on YOUNG  
RAVEN and TANYA, who stand  
upright with their heads  
down. A drum strikes and they  
turn to face one another,  
raising their heads to eye  
level.*

*Silence.*

*Then, they perform a  
lyrical combination of four  
8-counts.*

*At the end of the final  
8-count, NEW YORK,  
PHILADELPHIA, and D.C. all  
dressed in black step out  
from off-stage forming a  
triangle.*

*At various instances,  
each makes a pose, and at  
least once at their own pace  
do a passing through motion*

*with their hands, changing level from low <-> medium <-> high, and reaching towards the middle. At the same time, YOUNG RAVEN and TANYA are continuing their mirroring dance.*

*The drum strikes and EVERYONE stops at the same time, standing straight up with their hands glued to their thighs. EVERYONE is looking down towards the ground-all except YOUNG RAVEN-who now has a black piece of paper in her hand. NEW YORK, PHILADELPHIA, TANYA, and D.C. slowly fade off-stage. D.C. #3 is the last to exit, but not before he places a red rose directly in front of YOUNG RAVEN's feet.*

*Suddenly, she sees the rose right in front of her. Briefly examining it, she moves to pick it up.*

YOUNG RAVEN

"Did you hear about the rose that grew  
from a crack in the concrete?  
Proving nature's law is wrong, it learned to walk  
without having feet.

Funny it seems, but by keeping its dreams,  
it learned to breathe fresh air.  
Long live the rose that grew from concrete  
when no one else ever cared."

*As she sits down  
center stage, TANYA  
promptly enters. TANYA  
puts 2 pieces of black  
paper and 1 black book  
down across the stage- 1  
paper upstage stage  
left, 1 paper upstage  
stage right, and the  
book center stage (right  
in front of YOUNG  
RAVEN.) As TANYA moves  
to pick up and open the  
book:*

YOUNG RAVEN

First, he saw her eyes- sweet like the maple brown  
they were. Eyelashes long and fluttering, brushing  
against the painted arches above. Once their gazes  
locked, a blinding smile stretched from one ear to the  
other. Maybe she was a dream because seeing her in the  
flesh seemed almost too good to be true. They left the  
station and got swept up in the sweaty  
ice-cream-sticky streets - hopping from the coffee  
shop to the library to the bars. Finally, he dragged  
her into his quarters and placed her delicate head on  
his throne. Not too long after her head met the plush

surface she was drunkenly falling asleep with an "I love you" on the breath. The breath that then met his own with the truest passion, for what she knew and he didn't is that that would be their last embrace for the time being. "I hope you found what you were looking for," he said just loud enough for her ears to digest. "Myself," she said. "I came here in search of myself and, instead, got caught up with you."

*A low, static sound like when the TV's not working begins to fill the room. The actress playing YOUNG RAVEN may choose to stand up and walk out like the woman in the story, or simply close the book and put TANYA to sleep.*

*Blackout.*

*As YOUNG RAVEN exits, TANYA sits back up, grabs a flashlight, and opens the book back up.*

Scene 2- "Germination"

'giving tree'

*As TANYA reads, an  
image of a little girl  
exploring a tree  
projects on the screen  
on the back of the  
stage.*

*Occasionally, the  
tree shapeshifts into  
the silhouette of a man.*

TANYA

"Once there was a tree and he loved a little girl. Everyday the girl would come to gather his leaves and make them into crowns and play Queen of the Forest." She would run around, across, and in zig-zags for hours on end. This was her first stage- learning how to jump, twirl, and fall. The tree would offer one of his branches and pull her back up onto her feet over and over again. The little girl clung onto the tree, never wanting to let him go, and the tree was glad.

"But time went by and the girl grew up, and the tree was often alone." Then one day, the girl appeared now with a tall toned body and before a hello could slip

from her lips, through a low voice he whispered shakily, "Where have you been?" "I'm sorry, tree. I should've come back and visited more, but I had to go to school and help out my family and work on my dancing. I've come back because my first performance is tomorrow. I couldn't go in front of all those people if I didn't show you first." "Well then," as the tree straightened up his trunk and crossed his branches before him, ready to be impressed. And he was. Her legs stretched beautifully as her hands carried the sunlight all around. She went for a triple pirouette but her foot got snagged in a hole. Life would've left her eyes if the tree hadn't saved her head from meeting the forest floor. The girl tearfully scurried away, embarrassed.

Time went by. Then more time went by. The tree's color dulled while his branches began to widen and curl. Then one day, as the summer rain pitter-pattered on the forest floor, the girl returned grayer and broader but now with a miniature hand in tow. This time, the tree decided against pressing her about her whereabouts since it was clear Time took a toll on her. But that same warm smile beamed from the little body she brought with her. "Hello, Tree," she whispered. "Hello, my dear," he said, "and who do we have here?" She turned and stooped down to the little one's level, whose eyes were now blazing with curiosity. "This is my little girl, my legacy. I

wanted to take her to the place where I met my best friend and found my voice." The girl then nudged her little one to the tree. As she began to shuffle her feet, the Tree scooped her up into his branches. The two laughed, played, danced and sang for hours fit for a lifetime. And the girl? She laid a few feet away near the brush, finally at peace.

*All of the sudden,  
a huge crowd of old and  
young people enter from  
the wings ready to  
party. YOUNG RAVEN is in  
the center of them,  
telling the audience the  
story as it happens  
around her.*

'baby's shower'

it was the day of the baby shower and my baby girl was  
dozing off in somebody's auntie's arms  
whitney pierce and donna wilson and bubbles franklin  
all still in their prime  
all my bad-ass ride-or-dies from the days where  
motherhood was some far-off venture  
pulled me to the corner  
when i finally had a moment to breathe  
reeking of hard lemonade and BBQ  
we slipped from the living room to the kitchen by  
blending into the walls  
with deep laughter stirring around our insides as we

ducked and dodged  
and tangled our elbows around cocoa butter smoothness,  
clinging onto the collectively spreading sundress  
fabric upon reaching our destination  
and then BBD comes on over the speaker &  
GO HEAD GO HEAD GIRL WITH YOUR BADDDD SELF  
this was the first birth of the group  
whitney had been trying, donna was on her second  
fiance, and bubbles swore off dealing with any of that  
bullshit- at least for now

We sat down on that stained tiled floor and gossiped  
as the day stretched into the night  
talking about the mens and friends and elders that  
swept past us with brewing stares  
i began sinking my back into the stove and almost  
forgot where and who i was now/  
but these women whitney donna and bubbles  
all have held and carried my heart at one point or  
another in the past 10 yrs  
and they all could tell when i was struggling  
even if i never uttered a word about it

back in the living room  
jimmy kelly was staring tucker up and down  
for the umpteenth time with those brown-black eyes  
but i knew how to reassure him

it got soo crowded

baby girl started getting anxious and her wailing  
 boomed over the humming rhythm of conversation and  
 maxwell

& dwayne got all up in arielle's business  
 cuz she was going back to mama's place soon and he  
 had to let everybody know what she (or i) could've had  
 seemed like gary and roy were too slow  
 to save their friend from embarrassment  
 so they slumped onto the couch  
 lookin' soulless  
 and almost in the Sunken Place  
 but me and my girls                      we were livin

Since 1986 i've gotten into all types of trouble  
 with these girls on my hip at THEE UNIVERSITY OF  
 VIRGINIA

*Montell Jordan singing "This  
 Is How We Do It" echoes.*

We floated                      fusing our bodies into one

*YOUNG RAVEN dances to  
 her own beat for a moment.  
 GEORGE and ROY drunkenly try  
 to mimic her until they get  
 death stares from WHITNEY,  
 DONNA, and BUBBLES.*

bending our bodies into poses that have  
been impossible for me since january  
but i had to be ready  
to keep up with my girls again  
so i had to switch like i had something in my trunk  
because of the way they squatted their knees down low  
low low  
bubbles smacked my ass  
montell jordan's voice booming in "this is how we do  
it"  
round n round n round n  
WE WAZ WOMEN                      WE WAZ LIVING, INDEPENDENT WOMEN

dwayne suddenly fell over  
and damn near knocked arielle out cold  
my girls helped him up  
come get your boy donna belted

tucker sighed i shd get him home  
fore that one starts crying  
'fore i had to hear her mouth  
we swooped baby girl up and  
scouted up the stairs  
pretending we hadn't just referee-ed a near disaster/  
i placed my baby girl in her crib and surrounded by  
the woos and coos of her aunties  
her sunshine laughter melted all of our intoxications  
away.

**Scene 3- "Growth"**

*An intoxicated YOUNG RAVEN  
stands up as her stomach balloons  
in front of her. She is handed a  
letter from off-stage.*

*As this is happening, a  
simple swing-set and playground is  
being put together behind her as a  
playground appears on the screen.*

'LETTER TO THE FLOWER CHILD'

YOUNG RAVEN

Many wishes do I have for you, child of ours,  
Child of mine.

Our love, I want you to be intellectual and enlightening,  
Silly and smiling at every opportunity you get.

I want you to be the girl I so long desired to be from the  
beginning.

I've wanted you to live in your truth from the moment you  
emerged from this womb.

I have and will continue to assure you every single day that

your

Glowing,

Moon-kissed

Body and skin and hair and teeth and

*Eyes* are too beautiful.

Beautiful not meaning simply in looks

But in how you present those features.

Your features are only one-fourth-

No, *one-third* of what makes your light.

My wish for you?

To lead and excel in your passions

As I am and will continue to do

Until I am grounded in this soil as a seed myself.

And I want to be the best possible example of what full bloom  
looks like.

Because while you, my child, were already born a flower,

One day you will bloom into a full and prosperous garden.

You will thrive on the Earth as the creator of all.

Because when Grace steps into the room, everyone notices her.

But when Love makes an entrance,

She notices everyone around her.

Love, you will be ours,

Be mine,

forever and always.

'PHILADELPHIA'

*CRINK.*

*CRANK.*

*CRINK.*

*CRANK.*

*The lights rise on YOUNG  
RAVEN laughing as she rises  
up and down on a very rickety  
swing set. She's chatting and  
cheering with her sister, who  
is swinging off-stage.*

*PHILLY obnoxiously  
enters with a toy dumpster  
truck and plastic dinosaur in  
hand, playing what seems to  
be "Space Adventure." He runs*

around in his own world for a  
while, that is until he  
notices YOUNG RAVEN.

*Immediately fascinated  
by her and her resistance  
against gravity, he drops his  
toys and hops on the swing  
next to hers. Now, PHILLY  
hasn't done this on his own  
before. Very quickly, it is  
clear that he's struggling.  
This goes on for a while...*

YOUNG RAVEN

Um... are you okay?

*Still struggling:*

PHILLY

I'm-just--- fine...

YOUNG RAVEN

Are you sure? Because I can ask our Daddy to help you  
--

PHILLY

I said I'm good!

YOUNG RAVEN

(giggling)

Alright then...

*After a few more tries,  
he finally gets the hang of  
it.*

*As if they hadn't just  
spoken:*

PHILLY

What's up?

YOUNG RAVEN

Look at that, you finally caught up with us!

PHILLY

Girl, I don't know what you're talking about.

*Beat.*

PHILLY

Are you new around here?

YOUNG RAVEN

Yup.

PHILLY

Where ya from?

YOUNG RAVEN

Not here.

PHILLY

Obviously...

*An awkward beat.*

Do you wanna be friends?

TANYA

And they were...

*YOUNG RAVEN AND PHILLY motion  
out the movement as TANYA speaks.*

They jumped off their little swings and played  
"Castle" for hours and hours until the sun was nearly  
set and they were pulled their separate ways. But not  
before he stole her first kiss.

*They share a quick peck  
on the lips. Then PHILLY*

*scurries away.*

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'NEW YORK'

*A young woman, NEW YORK, sits  
center stage atop a brownstone.  
She gets up and begins swaying her  
hips as a low salsa beat hums in  
the background.*

NEW YORK

"how you doing?"

"go head poetic justice!"

"aye ma, whatchu mixed with?"

my gramma thought she was white on her daddy's side  
and she would've been right except he had some of the  
kinkiest hair texture mixed w/ finer strands from his  
mama - an irish and jewish woman who looked pretty  
damn close to Black in the oval-framed picture gramma  
bragged about

And my pop-pop's sisters' thought they were Lenape and  
they would've been right. Except for how they ignored  
the fact that their grandparents organized one of the  
first mixed settlements in the country.

It's funny how people pick and choose who they want to  
claim as their blood. It's even funnier how people  
start to act once you tell them they look a certain  
way...

**Scene 4- "Reproduction"**

*A painting appears far stage left. Another appears far stage right. Two more appear center stage. While one painting is a landscape, it is soon realized that the three other paintings are various objects in the landscape painting.*

*YOUNG RAVEN begins performing a series of combinations as she moves from one painting to the next.*

*After a couple rotations, D.C. enters and tries to copy her combinations. He soon realizes that he must move in a way that complements her own.*

*As they finish a combination, they melt into one another.*

**Scene 5- "Pollination"**

*An OLDER WOMAN and OLDER MAN enter as a couple and begin mirroring YOUNG RAVEN and D.C.*

*However, as YOUNG RAVEN and D.C. begin getting closer and growing more in love, the grip between the older couple gradually loosens. Out of the corner of her eye, YOUNG RAVEN begins to notice this.*

*As the OLDER WOMAN falls, a collection of seeds from her pockets disperse across the stage. She looks distraught, almost broken.*

*The OLDER MAN walks across YOUNG RAVEN and D.C.'s side to off-stage, is handed a chair and steering wheel, and places it upstage. YOUNG RAVEN and D.C. disappear into the background as TANYA reemerges with a chair, journal, and pen in hand. She places her chair near the older man's as if she's in the car with him but her chair faces the audience. It begins to rain.*

TANYA

He pulled up to the house in his usual

parking spot. Awkwardly stumbling out of the driver's seat, Tony rushed towards Him and gave Him the biggest hug He didn't deserve. I almost opened my arms for an embrace but a low "Hello" slipped out instead.

We parked, walked in, and I was the first to step up to the counter.

"Can I have a -, 'Hi, can I get a..." interrupting me with the quickness.

Not new, but a frustration that stung more than before. After the orders, we found a table and these two unleashed the waterworks of the century. In public. Darting eyes shot concerned looks with lowered voices, and all I could do was sit there in disbelief. He was putting on a show. "You did this," I wanted to scream.

But rather, I bit my tongue and went up to the counter to collect our food when our order was called. As one of the workers slid the trays, my lips whispered a "Thank you" but my eyes shared all of the pain I wanted to run down my cheeks.

I sped through my meal, trying to get out of there as fast as possible. Poor Tony tried to eat his macaroni and cheese through trembling lips.

But He took one bite....then another....then.....another.  
It was a silent torture, one where  
He would enjoy a control he would  
hold for only a little while longer.  
Finally finished, we piled back into  
the car and went on our way back home.  
A little less awkward but almost just as quiet.

Pulling up to the curb, Tony shuffled  
out and ran to the doorstep.  
I almost joined him when He blurted, "I think we need to talk."  
I agreed.  
And then everything began rushing out.  
Before I could tell Him what  
He really needed to hear, He said,  
"Well, let me tell you my side of the story."  
And it was in those next moments that  
I saw my father become the sad excuse  
of the man He is today. I continued to  
push Him about the why of His choices  
until finally He said, "You're only 17.  
Honestly, I don't owe you an explanation.'  
'I'm 18-' 'Whatever. You're still a child.'"  
I don't remember if it was at that moment  
or a little bit after, but the sky broke  
into a torrential downpour and so did my pain.  
"Just take me home." He did. Before I  
stepped out of the car, he forced me  
into the hug I avoided earlier.

I walked through our lawn through blurred eyes and he sped off.

"Dream Dance"

*TANYA rises and switches places  
with the OLDER MAN. As she sits, she  
continues to write.*

*YOUNG RAVEN re-enters as  
Luther Vandross' "Dance With my  
Father Again" plays. She and the  
OLDER MAN waltz as if the previous  
monologue never happened.*

*THE END...*