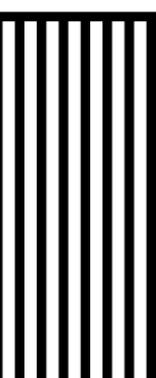




BRIGHT HALF LIFE

BY TANYA BARFIELD



**DRAMATISTS
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INC.**

BRIGHT HALF LIFE
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The world premiere of BRIGHT HALF LIFE was produced Off-Broadway in 2015 by Women’s Project Theater (Lisa McNulty, Producing Artistic Director), New York City. It was directed by Leigh Silverman; the set design was by Rachel Hauck; the costume design was by Emily Rebholz; the lighting design was by Jennifer Schriever; and the sound design was by Bart Fasbender. The cast was as follows:

VICKY Rachael Holmes
ERICA Rebecca Henderson

The West Coast premiere of BRIGHT HALF LIFE was produced in 2015 by Magic Theatre, San Francisco, CA (Loretta Greco, Artistic Director). It was directed by Jessica Holt; the set design was by Erik Flatmo; the costume design was by Christine Crook; the lighting design was by Burke Brown; and the sound design was by Brian Hickey. The cast was as follows:

VICKY Sarah Nina Hayon
ERICA Lisa Anne Porter

BRIGHT HALF LIFE was developed during residency at the Eugene O’Neill Theater Center’s National Playwrights Conference (Preston Whiteway, Executive Director; Wendy C. Goldberg, Artistic Director) in 2014.

BRIGHT HALF LIFE received developmental support through the Playwrights’ Lab and the Creativity Fund at New Dramatists.

BRIGHT HALF LIFE was commissioned by Center Theatre Group, Los Angeles, CA.

CHARACTERS

VICKY

ERICA

many ages

Erica is a “soft butch” and should be played by a Caucasian actress. Vicky appears more traditionally feminine. An African-American, Latina, or Asian actress may play her. (See Appendix.)

TIME

1985–2031.

SETTING

There is little to no set. No props. No pantomime. No projection. Lighting can accomplish what set pieces would — in most cases, the sense of place should only become clear as the scene progresses.

SCENES

There are no blackouts. The entire play shifts rapidly through time without a break between scenes. Settings and scene numbers are indicated throughout for reference only.

An asterisk “*” indicates a temporal change, but *not* a pause.

No transition should be manifested in the same way. Most time-place shifts are interruptive and jarring — like a jump-cut. But, there are also moments in which the transition is elliptical, almost blurry, and the temporal-spatial change isn’t initially clear.

DIALOGUE

A slash “/” marks the point of interruption for overlapping dialogue.

A word in brackets “[]” is implied but not spoken.

Parentheses “()” indicate a tonal shift.

Line breaks indicate a slight rhythmic change, but not a pause.

BRIGHT HALF LIFE

1.

(An elevator. Erica and Vicky are side by side. Quiet.)

*

(The hallway outside an apartment. Vicky stands in the doorway. Erica is exuberant, almost manic — but not in a clinical sense.)

ERICA. The thing is, soulmates/

VICKY. / Soulmates?

ERICA. — an idea that may or may not exist; I mean I'm trying not to over-intellectualize, but you only live once; and so marriage/

VICKY. Marr/iage?

ERICA. It's not really an outdated institution —

VICKY. It's not legal/

ERICA. For us; but, I mean, you could claim that in some parts of the world where We Don't Live, you could say that

VICKY. What?

ERICA. That it's not outdated and it would be true over there — but *here*, it seems like marriage is an idea that *is* outdated because so many marriages end in divorce, but *actually*, it's a Ritual of Commitment (or perhaps a Ritual of Delusion that concludes with betrayal and broken hearts.) but/

VICKY. Why are you here

(Beat.)

ERICA. My father's dying.

VICKY. Oh.

Oh oh oh no/

ERICA. Will you marry me.

VICKY. What? No You — this is grief

You should

ERICA. I am, I'm grieving *and*

VICKY. You're not, you're proposing

ERICA. I'm so happy to be here
VICKY. I broke up with you
ERICA. We were together for a while/ and we should
VICKY. Oh my god, how's your mother taking it
ERICA. Not good,/ not good
VICKY. You should be with her
Get on a plane, get on a plane right now and go be with
your mother, that's what she, you need
ERICA. Come with me
VICKY. What, no
I can't
ERICA. You can't
VICKY. It's just ... not a good time
ERICA. The doctor said it'll be quick
You'll be back soon
VICKY. I'm going skydiving, I can't go with you
ERICA. What
VICKY. I'm going skydiving
ERICA. I heard you
Why
VICKY. I've always wanted to and you never/
ERICA. You've never/ asked
VICKY. And I just decided screw it, I'm sick of waiting for, so I'm
going and
ERICA. And
VICKY. And so there
ERICA. Can you postpone
VICKY. No Erica I'm going skydiving, this is just another one of your
You want me there not because of me, oh my god, you're *so*
(What am I saying?)
Your father's dying?

*

(A rapid shift in time. A street, but we don't know that yet.)

ERICA. Ahh
My heart
VICKY. *(Sympathetic.)* Ooh
It was like a pound of Gorgonzola
way too rich
ERICA. My heart really this is serious

VICKY. When he first gave us the menu, I thought don't order a cream sauce

ERICA. Ow, this might be a heart attack
(*Vicky finds Erica's overreaction rather adorable.*)

VICKY. Or heartburn

ERICA. That's for old people

VICKY. You didn't really chew your food

ERICA. Ow

VICKY. Do you want some Tums?

*

(*Without pause, we are back in the hallway.*)

ERICA. The thing is: [soulmates]

*

VICKY. Your dad's dying, okay okay okay
I'll go

ERICA. No don't go

VICKY. I just said I'd go

ERICA. People die, it's part of life, dying

VICKY. Erica

ERICA. You don't have to go

VICKY. Yeah I'll go.

ERICA. Can I

VICKY. Come in, of course, come in the apartment, you can come in
Why've you just been standing/ there

ERICA. You didn't invite me/ in

VICKY. Sorry, come in, the place is a mess
(*Erica enters the apartment.*)

ERICA. It's not

VICKY. Well for me it's

ERICA. Your place is always spotless
You got a new lamp

VICKY. Shade

ERICA. It's/ nice

VICKY. The last one, you always complained —

ERICA. / I did not

VICKY. The last one was a grandma lamp

ERICA. (*Re: the new lamp.*) It's very Swedish minimal

VICKY. Is that a compliment?

ERICA. It's, yes, it's a — I like it.

(Beat.)

I like it, I like your place

I'm gonna get my own

My roommate,

I'm so over heavy metal

VICKY. You should, you should get your own/ place

ERICA. I should

I am

First month, last month

It's a lot

(Beat.)

VICKY. So, your dad

ERICA. Yeah, my dad

VICKY. Plane ticket

ERICA. What

VICKY. Did you buy a

ERICA. I haven't, I don't, I can't focus

VICKY. I'll do it

ERICA. Thanks

Um can I have some

VICKY. Water

Tea

ERICA. Brandy

VICKY. Help yourself

(I can't find the phone book)

ERICA. You look really

Nice

VICKY. *(Smiles.)* Thanks

(Beat.)

I'm gonna call the airlines

I don't know where you put/

ERICA. I didn't

VICKY. Last time when you were here you were looking up Xerox
places/

ERICA. I was?

VICKY. For that protest, the posters,
you wheat-pasted/ like a hundred

ERICA. I put it back, the phone book

(Beat.)

VICKY. You look nice too

ERICA. Thanks

(Beat.)

Can you call information

VICKY. That's like a dollar

ERICA. A dollar

VICKY. A dollar a *call*

ERICA. My dad's

VICKY. Okay okay I'll call information

ERICA. [Thanks]

VICKY. *(On the phone.)* American Airlines please

(Pause.)

ERICA. I really appreci/ate

VICKY. Shh

(On the phone.) Yeah, I'd like to make a reserva —

Yup

Holding

ERICA. You should get a cordless

VICKY. What?

ERICA. Phone

VICKY. Why

ERICA. Because then you won't get all tangled up in the wire

VICKY. I like having the kind of phone that plugs into the wall,
and I don't have to worry about the battery dying, and the
cordless ones are a fortune

(On the phone.) Yeah I'd like to make a ... okay sure

ERICA. You know when I said that thing

VICKY. What

ERICA. That pissed you off

VICKY. You didn't say anything to piss me off

ERICA. Yeah I did

VICKY. You didn't say anything

ERICA. Well something pissed you

VICKY. You said, "it'll fade"

ERICA. You didn't wait for me to finish

VICKY. You didn't answer back

ERICA. Yes I did

VICKY. When I said I loved you

ERICA. I did

BRIGHT HALF LIFE

by Tanya Barfield

2W

A moving love story that spans decades in an instant — from marriage, children, skydiving, and the infinite moments that make a life together.

“BRIGHT HALF LIFE, a sixty-five minute chronicle of a deeply committed lesbian relationship, is contemporary as a play could be but the theme is classic and timeless. Legal gay marriage has occupied merely a nanosecond of our existence, but the presentation of the highs and lows of coupledness, as exemplified in this piece, defy the ages.”

—The Huffington Post

“This well-written portrayal of smart women finding, losing, and finding themselves and each other again, is profound ... past, present, and future are contained in each moment, and every one of them feels full.”

—The New Yorker

“Most relationships develop in one of two ways — they endure or they don’t. Ms. Barfield’s variegated structure complicates this simple either/or, showing the volatility in a long-term partnership, the joy and desolation, the hurt and help — all intermingled, all at once. If these women, these maybe soul mates, could somehow suddenly see what the years will bring, would they still go out on that first date?”

—The New York Times

“It may sound fatalistic to accept that every relationship has a half life — that true love is not an infinite resource destined to endure for eternity. It certainly defies the institution of marriage, whose romantic reputation hinges on this concept of “forever-ness.” True, it’s no fairy tale story, but Tanya Barfield’s new two-hander BRIGHT HALF LIFE sacrifices none of its head-over-heels romance, even as its central couple spirals towards extinction.”

—TheaterMania.com

Also by Tanya Barfield
BLUE DOOR
THE CALL

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