

5-2016

The Art of the Process: The Creation and Production of Wrinkles in Our Clothing

Julia Alexandra Yancey

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dc.etsu.edu/honors>

 Part of the [Other English Language and Literature Commons](#), and the [Playwriting Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Yancey, Julia Alexandra, "The Art of the Process: The Creation and Production of Wrinkles in Our Clothing" (2016). *Undergraduate Honors Theses*. Paper 324. <https://dc.etsu.edu/honors/324>

This Honors Thesis - Withheld is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Works at Digital Commons @ East Tennessee State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Undergraduate Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ East Tennessee State University. For more information, please contact digilib@etsu.edu.

The Art of the Process:
The Creation and Production of
Wrinkles in Our Clothing

By
Julia Yancey

Writing the Play

Initially my plan for working on this piece was to write a short story and then use that as the basis of the play. I decided against this and went straight into writing act one. I am what is called a “pantser” in the modern writing community, meaning that I began writing without an outline. I had a very rough idea of what I wanted Andrew, the character focused on in act one, to experience and how his journey would end so I began in act one with scene two. I wrote the majority of act one by hand first before typing it while on the other hand I typed all of act two, only jotting down the occasional idea or change on paper. This process of writing by hand allowed for me to take my time in developing Andrew’s storyline which helped tremendously. What Andrew needed was to learn to allow for things to happen and in a sense, slow down. I found this to be paralleled by my writing his actions by hand because I was also forced to slow down and take in what was happening with the story as it went on.

Christine’s storyline was more difficult to write. I began her scenes in November but I was unable to finish act two until mid-March. My original concept for Christine was shifting as I continued to edit Andrew’s storyline and as I made changes in my own life. Around the time I wrote about Andrew meditating in the play was when I began to get serious about meditating myself. Since Christine was eluding me I decided to meditate on her character and the result was unexpected. Not only did I find out more about Christine, I also found out things about Andrew and Janet. I employed this method a few more times when I was stuck on something and it has always worked well for me. I also went back and revised the scene wherein Janet talks about meditating on a problem to reflect the process that I used.

The editing process was different from anything I had worked on before. At times it was easy to see what needed fixing while other issues I didn’t pick up on until much later. For example, I noticed that while I was writing a scene I would leave out punctuation in certain places and those were easy mistakes to catch. Structural story element issues were much harder to edit. Originally there was a scene in which Andrew returned to his apartment after Jeff’s party and interacted with an apartment staff worker. I realized that not only was this scene bringing up unnecessary details about Andrew but that the purpose of the scene could be fulfilled in Jeff’s dialogue after the party was over instead. I cut the scene, expanded Jeff’s dialogue in scene two and created a much better moment for Andrew and further developed the character of Jeff in the process. There were also some changes that I made after the rehearsal process had begun and these made the play stronger. After talking with the actors playing Christine and Christine’s parents, I could feel the storylines expanding. Due to this conversation I extended the flashback scene in act two to include a young Christine interacting with her mother. These edits that were made during the rehearsal process improved the play. The input of the actors has been invaluable.

Overall, I learned much about my personal writing process while writing this play. I feel as though I grew as the characters grew. I have even learned somethings from my characters. One day I was feeling a bit lost as my future plan was shifting but Andrew was there to remind me that it’s okay to allow things to change. Whenever I go through moments where I feel less confident, Janet is there to tell me to go for it and believe in myself. I hope that these characters can help others as they have helped me.

Production Preparation

This was perhaps the most exciting part of working on *Wrinkles in Our Clothing*. Getting it ready to be seen by an audience was a process that involved many different steps. After completing draft three I began the audition process. I worked with Patchwork because they were producing a student play festival and they accepted my play to be a part of it.

The Patchwork Players is the student lead theatre group. They do productions each semester that students have an interest in producing. These productions are completely student led which is what drew me to submit to their festival. The application process was fairly simple. I sent in a draft of my play along with extensive character summaries and set and costume descriptions. I also sent in a detailed summary of the entire play as well as detailed summaries for each scene that I was not yet finished writing.

For auditions I selected two monologues from the play for a cold read. The first night of auditions no one came out which was a bit concerning. My stage manager and I assumed that it was due to the fact that the first night of auditions was on a Friday April 25, 2016. On the second night of auditions, a Tuesday April 29, we had just enough people come out and audition. However, due to some unforeseen circumstances we were unable to cast two of them. I held private auditions as the week went on for those who were interested in the play but that could not make it to either audition day. And thus I completed the cast April 1.

We began rehearsals the following week and rehearsed between two to three hours four days a week for three and a half weeks until the show. Initially in rehearsals we focused on a few scenes at a time before moving on to blocking. Because we were unable to rehearse in the performance space blocking proved to be a little tricky. I made rough sketches of what the set would look like in the space and used those to help the actors visualize the setting. We blocked in various locations across campus including Carter Lobby, the basement of Ada Ernest, and the Great Room in Yoakley.

After rehearsals had completed it was time to begin tech. The actors were finally in the space and ready to go but they psyched themselves out to the point where they were forgetting their lines. We were concerned that this would happen during a show so we made a change to the structure of the play. Originally we were going to put on a full performance off book. Due to the fact that the actors were panicking we decided it would be best to shift to a reader's theatre style production. We had already worked with sets and costume changes, so what we ended up with was an interesting mix between reader's theatre and a stage production. The actors felt much more comfortable with the scripts in hand and were able to focus more on their performance. The show ran two nights April 22 and April 24.

On the Stage vs. On the Page

Something that I found very interesting was how the play shifted focus during rehearsals. I wanted to focus on the symbolism of the wrinkles and the ironing boards a great deal when I began this project. As time went on, through rehearsals and edits, I realized that the journey that the characters were on would carry more weight and in turn naturally enhance the symbols. I shifted my focus on making the dialogue stronger. I made sure that the conflicts that the characters were experiencing were genuine. When I made those changes the symbolism that I initially wanted happened organically and did not feel forced. The end result was exactly what I had initially wanted but I got to that point differently than I had envisioned.

The reason that I was able to shift this focus had a great deal to do with the process of staging it. Once the stories and the characters become real it was evident what needed to be the focus of the play. While working with the actors I found that the words were what should be carrying the themes and pushing their journeys, not the physical set pieces. I was able to simplify the set and I did not feel as though any of the meaning was lost. Something that I would have liked to have kept for the stage performance was the ironing boards and the irons that are located around the memory door. Although their absence did not take away from the set design, their presence would have added that visual stimulation component that we were unable to produce.

During the performance each scene transition was too long and this could have been fixed by reducing set changes. For a final draft and for future productions it may be best to have the fixed set pieces such as the ironing board flat and the memory door and simply use props and chairs to indicate location. There was too much happening for only an hour length play. Doing more with lighting would also have eliminated the need for some set pieces and simplified the production leaving the focus on the words.

The Play

Wrinkles in Our Clothing

Julia Yancey

Act One

Scene One

The set in scene one is the minimal set of the play and should be maintained throughout its entirety. Each scene calls for what to add and take away. The minimal set is as follows. One entrance upstage right for the entrances and exits of the characters in the memory sequences. This flat or doorway should be simple and painted a pale color much like old photographs. Placed next to and around this entrance are irons, some in boxes some not, and an ironing board. Next, one flat downstage right with ironing boards hung on the flat mixed with 2d ironing boards painted on the flat to provide contrast. A soft light should be fixed on this flat. Some ironing boards should be hung from beams at an angle along with a clothes line adorned with clothing similar to the main characters, space permitting.

There are three chairs center stage each with a spotlight on them as the play begins and the rest of the stage should be dark. Janet, Andrew, and Christine walk forward downstage to the chairs. They all sit simultaneously.

Janet

What makes us unique?

Andrew

Is it our belongings or life plans?

Christine

Or is it our passions?

Janet

Or is it something more? The intricate and infinite possibilities of who a person is dependent on the finite number of wrinkles in their personality.

Andrew

That which defines our identity is the small seemingly meaningless attributes of what we consider important.

Janet

Writing

Christine

Painting

Andrew

Living

Janet

These little things that make us - us. Who we are and why we're living.

Christine

Our wrinkles are what make us unique. We must hold on to them.

Janet

These wrinkles are precious and need protection. There are those who would see to have them ironed out. Those who do not understand or envy our individualities.

Andrew

Those who would change us. To make us like them.

Christine

And those who are afraid that we will be - different.

Janet

But there are also those that push us to be our authentic selves. Supporting our journey.

(beat)

Andrew

Maybe we should show them. They look confused.

Christine

Some look uninterested.

(Janet laughs lightheartedly)

Christine

Story time. You start. *(walking off stage right)*

Andrew

You sure?

Janet

Better hurry the clock isn't waiting. *(exits stage left)*

Andrew is left alone center stage as the spotlights go out one at a time with his going out last.

Scene Two

Lights fade in with soft color hues around the edges which become more intense when the party begins. Apart from the minimal set the scene is bare at first. The cue for the addition of set pieces and props is the line "So there I am at this party." The party scene should resemble an apartment living room as the party is at Jeff's place. There should be lounge chairs or a couch as well as a coffee table and an additional table that has been set up for food and drinks. During the party soft electronic music will be playing to create atmosphere.

Andrew

(Standing just off of center stage.) It all started one night when I went to a party. I know right. Me, at a party. *(Slightly taken aback)* Well it's not completely unreasonable. *(beat)* Anyway my buddy, Jeff, invited me to this party and I figured why not. So technically this is all his fault.

{Note for the actor - The "this" that Andrew is referring to is the play itself. In other words Andrew's retelling of his personal journey to the audience.}

(Christine approaches Andrew from offstage and hands him a red party cup.)

Christine

Maybe you should thank him.

Andrew

Hey, this is my story time, remember. *(Christine shrugs and exits.)* So there I am at this party..

(Cue. Music rises and partygoers huddle together upstage while another is passed out stage left. Jeff approaches Andrew looking frustrated.)

Andrew

(Genuine) Hey Jeff, great party!

Jeff

No. It's lame. The DJ has quit and half of the - wait - You think this is great? Have you never been to a party before or something dude?

Andrew

Um. No?

Jeff

You're kidding right? *(beat)* Man. How have you been in college for almost three full years and never gone to a party?

Andrew

(Frustrated) I've been studying.

Jeff

Dude. Come on, live a little. Now might be your only chance. You know since you want a family and all. Once you're married - Boom! - No more you time. *(Quickly paced)* Finished. Over. Check out. The lights are off! That's all folks! No more fun time for Drewy boy here.

SCENE FREEZES AND THE MUSIC STOPS

Andrew

That was it. Right there. Three little words "Live a little." And then what - my life would be over when I'm married?

(With a slow build of panic.) When did I get into a dead end marriage? When did I suddenly feel trapped by my wife and kids? Oh no. I bet my kids suck. Oh my gosh, they're failing math. I knew it. Oh and the wife, the wife sure knew it. It was all my fault. I let them stay up too late one night and they -

(beat)

You see? That's where it happened. All of a sudden my life was spiraling out of control and I didn't even have a degree let alone any marriage prospects. *(to himself)* When was the last time I had a date? *(shakes head)* So a Friday night. About halfway through junior year I realized my life was going nowhere.

SCENE UNFREEZES AS THE PARTY CONTINUES

(Jeff stands waiting for a response from Andrew who looks bewildered.)

Andrew

(Looks at cup and drinks it.) (beat) Hey. Jeff? Got any more of this?

Jeff

(Slaps Andrew on the back.) My man. (Reaches for a cup off the table and hands it to Andrew.)

The scene fades to a blackout with the music growing louder until all the lights are down. The music fades as the lights come back up. All of the party guests have gone and Andrew is alone on stage staring at a cup.

Jeff

(From offstage) Alright you guys have a good night. Drive safe.

(He enters chuckling and then sees Andrew)

Yo, Andrew what are ya still doing here, I thought you left. -- Andrew? *(He sits down next to Andrew)* You ok man?

Andrew

My kids are failing math dude.

Jeff

What?

Andrew

My plan -- poof, failing math.

Jeff

What are you talking about Andrew?

Andrew

The plan Jeff the plan! That you so easily poked holes in *(to himself)* Live a little.

Jeff

Oh. Is this about what I said? - Andrew listen, I only said that because I care. Gosh I sound like you. All I meant was for you to allow yourself wiggle room in your life. It's your life after all, it doesn't have to be like anybody else's.

(Andrew sits motionless)

Jeff

Hey how about you come to my philosophy class this Tuesday. We have a guest lecturer and I think it would do you good to hear her speak.

Andrew

Tuesday? I'd have to skip a class.

Jeff

Dude.

Andrew

Okay Tuesday. What time?

Jeff

My man.

BLACKOUT

Scene Three

Set is bare apart from a single seat center stage occupied by Andrew. There is a spotlight focused on him.

Andrew

I was completely lost. Everything I had ever wanted all of a sudden didn't seem to fit. All of a sudden I had no idea who I was anymore. Was I ever anybody? *(beat)*

Live a little - That made me think. Worry actually. Was what I was doing before not living?

Damn it Jeff!

I had a plan. The plan was solid. College, marriage, two kid's a dog, house in the burbs, and me a psychology teacher. The plan was-solid.

Except then I began to question the plan. I psychoanalyzed myself something I said I'd never do. *(beat)* Well for one thing- I was in denial.

Then it hit me. I never made my own plan. I just fit myself into somebody else's suit. Everything that I was all - of the wrinkles of myself I'd flattened out into the clothing of a person who wasn't me.

You know, I'd always been sure of myself, ever since I was a kid.

Scene shifts into a flashback. Two male actors enter stage left. One in dressed in wrinkled basketball shorts and a t-shirt. The other is dressed in crisp wrinkle-free business casual. They begin to play catch and continue to play it throughout the duration of the scene. A soft sepia toned light focuses on them while Andrew is at the edge of the light. He watches them play. For a brief moment nothing happens apart from Andrew watching the two play catch.

Andrew

I used to play catch with my dad all the time after he got home from work. He'd ask me about school and we'd just talk. Hang out.

Young Andrew

There doing a career test next week.

Dad

Oh yeah? On one of those bubble in things? That's supposed to tell you what to do for a job?

Young Andrew

Yeah it's stupid. I'm only-

Andrew

(cutting in) I don't remember how old I was.

Dad

Well don't worry about it son. It's just so the school doesn't feel like it's not making you apply yourselves in thinking about your future.

Young Andrew

I don't really know what I want to do. Maybe I'll be a -

Andrew

(delayed in cutting in) Oh. Yeah I don't remember that either. *(beat)* I don't even think I know what I want to do now.

Dad

Well you've got time. Have fun with it, who knows maybe it will give you an idea after all.

Young Andrew

Yeah of what not to do.

(They laugh and Andrew joins in.)

Young Andrew

What do you think I can do?

Andrew

Oh! I remember what he says.

(The two speak at the same time.)

Andrew

Whatever you want to do son.

Dad

We always thought you'd
lean towards teaching.

Andrew

What!

Young Andrew

Teaching?

Dad

I always wanted to teach but I didn't have the guts or brains for college.

Andrew

(walking around to stand behind the Dad.) No you said-

Dad

Hey. It'd be like you picking up where a younger me left off!

Andrew

STOP!

THE SCENE FREEZES

Andrew

We? This isn't right. I- I'm remembering it wrong.

The scene resumes but it is altered

Dad

Your mother and I think you'd be a great teacher.

Andrew

No.

Dad

I always wanted to teach.

Andrew

Stop.

Dad

Somewhat secure job and summers off. Different kids every year. *(The father begins repeating the same thing in different ways as Andrew tries to remember. Andrew is growing agitated and is pacing around.)*

We thought-

I wanted-

Your mother and I-

Secure-

Summers off-

A dog-

Andrew

NO! This is your fault. You planted that seed. Look at me! Look at me!

Dad

I can't. *(Not looking at Andrew.)* This is a memory.

(Andrew looks around and is at a loss. He exits stage left)

The scene does not unfreeze and the spotlight fades out.

Scene Four

Lights come up on the stage. The set should reflect that of a small college classroom. Depending on the number of actors selected for the play directors may or may not choose to have the stage crew sit in desks behind the actors to make the class appear fuller. However, the actors who play Christine and Janet should not be in the class seats.

(Andrew and Jeff enter and sit down.)

Andrew

Aren't there usually more people in this class?

Jeff

It is one of the smaller philosophy classes but yeah people skip from time to time. Unlike you.

Andrew

Hey I skipped today.

Jeff

Once in three years doesn't count. *(to a classmate)* Where is Dr. Frederick?

Student

No clue. The guest lecturer isn't here yet either.

Jeff

I'd noticed that much, thanks.

(A woman enters wearing a blouse and dress pants. Her blouse is somewhat wrinkly but it is not distracting. She has a very commanding air about her but she does not cause fear. She generates respect.)

Janet

I see that Dr. Frederick elected not to be here to introduce me.

(The class looks at each other.)

Ah well. Formal introductions are so boring anyway. I'm Dr. Nickels but call me Janet. We're very familial over in the theatre department.

Student

(Raises hand and speaks at the same time.) Why are you lecturing for a philosophy class?

Janet

Why does anybody lecture for a philosophy class? You read the literature, study it, and move on. Whether or not it spoke to you in the process is what teaches you.

Student

Um.

Janet

Did Dr. Frederick not tell you anything about today?

Jeff

Nope. He enjoys being vague.

Janet

Well I am here to talk about different ways to approach studying and processing information as well as looking at a problem creatively.

Now, I know most of you are seniors so you are probably wondering why you need new ideas when it comes to studying. Most of you have probably stopped studying altogether at this point. Nonetheless, it is important to know how to apply different thought processes because you never know what kinds of problems, or people for that matter, you will encounter. The better equipped you are to handle these different situations the easier things will be.

(beat)

Tell you what. I'll drop the studying tidbits and we will just focus on different approaches to problem solving. So, let's say you come across a question you don't know the answer to. What do you do?

Andrew

Look it up.

Jeff

Deductive reasoning.

Student

Ignore it.

Janet

Okay all valid.

Student

(Surprised.) Wait really?

Janet

Yes. It's not the best idea but it is still a valid one. But what if the problem is not academic but personal?

(Andrew pipes up.)

Andrew

What do you mean?

Janet

So a personal problem, like - Why are your relationships not working out or why have you lost motivation-

Andrew

Or why have you lost a sense of self?

Janet

Exactly. How would you approach solving those kinds of problems?

(beat)

No one? Well think through how you feel about the situation. Make an effort to acknowledge your emotions. Most people go for the logical approach and ignore their feelings. So you have to internalize and visualize the problem. One way to approach solving this problem is by meditating on the problem.

Student

Seriously-

Andrew

Hey, man. Shut up. I want to hear what she has to say.

Janet

(Has a look of understanding on her face. The lights fade out as she talks)

So. You visualize this problem and seek out its roots. I think you'll find that calming music helps.

BLACKOUT

Scene Five

Lights up on Andrew in his room. He paces awkwardly around before setting his backpack down on a chair. He pauses then moves it to the floor and sits in the chair. He pauses again looking around the room before abruptly standing up.

Andrew

I can't do this. - Why? - I don't know it feels weird. *(sigh)* ok.

(He sits back down and closes his eyes)

Aaand meditate. -- Nothing is happening. I can't do anything right. Ahh, what did Janet say?

(He hears Janet's voice in his mind which starts first as a voice over and then changes as Janet enters from the memory flat as if she were still giving the lecture)

Janet

It doesn't have to be perfect. Meditation takes practice and remember, problem solving is not immediate.

Andrew

I can do this. I can do this. I can't figure out my life but I can do this. *(He closes his eyes)*

Janet

(entering) Focus first on your surroundings and allow yourself to be fully in the moment.

(her movements freeze after her lines end as if she is suspended in time during the class lecture)

Andrew

I am in a chair. -- The chair is uncomfortable. -- *(opens eyes)* This can't be right. *(reluctantly closes eyes)*

Janet

Usually this is the part in the meditation where you would bring the mind inward and focus on your breathing but we want to focus on a problem instead. You can try that kind of meditation another time but this is focused on problem solving.

Andrew

Okay. Problem, problem. I don't want to be a teacher. *(pause, he slightly opens his eyes as if he is expecting something to be different)* Okay that's not it. Ummm. *(beat)* I let other people make decisions for me? *(he stands up in frustration and paces some more)* Why is this so hard?! I just want to fix it!

Janet

(addressing the audience) Do you?

Andrew

I mean, I thought I did. But apparently I let other people think for me. *(he slumps back down into his chair)* I wasn't always like this. I used to think that having a plan that seemed perfect was what I wanted but now? I don't know what I want.

Janet

Once you have identified the problem allow yourself time to let it sink in. It may be different than what you were expecting it to be.

(the lights fade out on Janet and she exits)

Andrew

Maybe that is the problem. I don't know what I want. -- And that scares me. I've always had a plan and now I don't and I'm scared.

Well this is new. -- But I-how do I fix this? -- I... Do I need to fix this? *(beat)* If I learn how to be okay with not having all of the answers then I can clear my mind enough to find some. Well I don't know if I'm meditating right but whatever this is it's working.

(He sits)

Why am I so afraid? -- The whole world tells you that you have to have this plan and then when you don't there is no help offered. -- It's not fair for people to expect so much of you when they don't care enough to help. And I mean really help. Not fake concern when you visit home or ask out of an obligation but really help. Get in there with you. In the nitty gritty scary parts of the problem and help. But even when they don't help they want to give their opinion on what you did wrong and take credit for what you did right.

You know what? Screw it. Screw the world and what it thinks I need. *(with growing intensity and emotion)* It doesn't know what I need, I know what I need. And I don't need to know right now because I am allowed a little leeway in my own life! Maybe I am scared and maybe I do need some kind of plan but I am capable of making my own and I don't have to do it now.

Well this is new.

BLACKOUT

Scene One

Lights up on Christine in her apartment. There is a twin bed and nightstand stage right, a desk and a desk chair center stage and a closet/wardrobe in the back covered with some of her old sketches and paintings. She is on the phone and pacing around the room.

Christine

No I - Listen to me for once - Dad - Dad I - Dad! *(She moves the phone away from her ear for a moment and takes a deep breath before putting it back up to her ear)* Dad - Dad I am fine I just was thinking about changing my major. Look I - never mind I have to go to class - Yeah love you - bye.

(She sits on the bed and puts her head in her hands)

Maggie

(entering stage left) You ok?

Christine

(muffled) Peachy.

Maggie

Had to pull the "I have class" card to get him to stop talking?

Christine

Yep. Maggie I do not understand why it is so hard for him to wrap his head around the idea that I might actually want to do something with my life other than sit in a lab and make notes for somebody else. I want to make a difference in the world, inspire people! Not pass chemicals to another person.

Maggie

I take it he freaked when you told him you switched to art.

Christine

Maggie I didn't even get that far. All I said is that I was thinking about switching majors to test the waters. You'd think I shot someone the way he reacted.

"How are you gonna get a job? What if you change your mind again? How are your mother and I supposed to pay for this?"

Maggie

But don't you have a scholarship? They don't pay anything.

Christine

Well can you tell him that because I am this close to running away and joining the circus.

Maggie

I think your dad might actually murder the ringmaster for giving you that job.

(They laugh)

Christine

I can't keep having the same argument with him. It can't be good for my health. If he would just let me talk long enough to get my point across then maybe he could get over it eventually but I can't get him to listen to me. I am going to have to write him a letter or disappear or --something.

Maggie

Well I actually do have class so I will talk later. Hey don't freak out on me and go streaking across campus or something, you'll figure it out.

Christine

Bye girl.

Maggie

(exit) Bye!

Christine

(Christine walks over to her backpack and pulls out a laptop. She narrates what she is writing)

Dear diary,

The fact that I still manage to write anything in here is a miracle. I am so happy that at least something will listen to my thoughts about things. Well Maggie does a great job of listening but I can't burden her with my life story every single day.

Note to self - find some other way to start a journal entry. Dear diary sounds too childish.

(beat)

So here's the thing, I don't like science anymore. I know that I said I was all excited just two months ago but hey a lot can change in two months.

(reflective) Gosh I was so happy about science. Why was I ever excited about science?

(at this point she is no longer typing at her computer but simply speaking, movement in the space as seen fit by actor)

Anyway back to today. Dad is not capable of conversation anymore. That is the only logical explanation as to why he freaks out when I try to have a conversation with him about anything. Take for instance a few days ago I mentioned that I wanted to look into being a vegetarian. His reaction: what are you going to eat, how are you going to fix food in your dorm room, who wants to date a vegetarian? Like really dad you are concerned about my dating life right now.

He is going to shit bricks when I tell him I am not having kids.

You know when I was a kid I knew I wanted to do art. Gallery art to be specific. I always loved going to art museums and the thought of strangers walking through a room of what I had created made my heart sing. It was the only time I remember being truly happy.

(beat)

I remember when I had just gotten into painting and then a week later I had lost all of my paints and brushes. I still don't really know what happened it was just - they were all of a sudden gone. I was really bummed for a while but then Dad told me I was going to go to a science camp. He said I would love it. I didn't at first but after some time... I guess I let it fill the hole where art used to be.

(beat)

(she looks at her watch and closes her laptop quickly and gathers her things. She pauses for a moment before leaving)

(glum) Well. Here's to my first art class.

BLACKOUT AS CHRISTINE EXITS

Scene 2

Dark in Christine's apartment. She is lying in bed. Lights slowly fade in with hues of yellow and orange, a sunrise. Her alarm goes off.

Christine

(shutting off her alarm)

Good morning Tuesday.

Maggie

(From offstage)

Hey, you up?

Christine

Well if I wasn't I would be now.

Maggie

(walking into Christine's room)

Oh come on you have the most obnoxious alarm clock sound, the whole building knows you're up.

Christine

Then why did you ask?

Maggie

Because that's what people do. They ask questions that they already know the answers to. That's why no problems ever get fixed.

(Christine laughs)

Hey I'm serious. Think about it. Besides aren't you doing the same thing?

Christine

What are you talking about?

Maggie

You ask yourself if you really want to do art. And the answer is yes.

Christine

I'm not sure I'm following you.

Maggie

You should be asking why you're so afraid to tell your folks you're doing art. You don't know the answer and part of me thinks you don't want to. And you're afraid of finding out why you stopped doing art when you were younger.

Christine

(defensive)

I want to. It's just not the time.

Maggie

You've been "mulling it over" for weeks C. You're afraid. *(she exits)*

Christine

(yelling after her) I'm not afraid.

Maggie

(from offstage) Then call them. I'm making the last of the eggs, I'll make yours too.

Christine

(to herself)

Way to ruin my morning. - I'm not afraid. - I'm terrified.

(she grabs her laptop and sits on the floor center stage narrating as she writes)

Tuesday. -- Maybe I like not knowing. Maybe I feel safer without the truth. I mean I do wish I knew why I stopped doing art. I can remember being five and knowing more than anything that I wanted to be an artist. -- I used to draw all the time and I would sneak on my dad's computer to draw with Photoshop and...why did I have to sneak? I don't...

(Flashback happens behind her as she faces forward. There is a soft dim light on Christine)

(Mark and Diane enter from upstage right. There is a soft sepia toned light focused on them. Diane is ironing)

Mark

She's been on my computer again Diane.

Diane

Mark she's just a kid. Drawing is her only hobby right now.

Mark

Well she needs to get a new one. She's never going to make any money drawing. Do you want our only daughter living in a bad neighborhood, poor? Do you Diane?

Diane

No Mark. What do you suggest we do?

Mark

I'm taking Photoshop off the computer. And I'm enrolling her in a science camp.

Diane

If you think it's best.

Mark

Of course it is. She doesn't know what she wants we have to tell her. And get rid of her painting supplies.

(Mark exits and a young Christine enters from the memory scene wearing a backpack)

Young Christine

Mom?

Diane

Hey C.

Young Christine

Is dad ok? He sounded mad from outside.

Diane

Oh. He's just had a bad day at work that's all.

Young Christine

Oh. Hey look what I drew today!

Diane

Oh its- lovely.

Young Christine

What's wrong?

Diane

Oh. *(changing the subject)* I'll just miss you this summer.

Young Christine

What? Where am I going?

Diane

Dad has a surprise for you.

(Flashback fades out and Diane and Young Christine exit as lights focus again on Christine)

Christine

Dad never wanted me to do art. And mom always let him walk all over her. He would rather me have money than be happy. Just. Like. -- them.

(she closes the journal/laptop and lights come up on the rest of the stage as she puts the laptop on her bed. She grabs some clothes off of a rack and pulls out an iron. When she reaches for the ironing board it falls on top of her knocking her down)

Shit!

(she shoves it aside hard and sits up)

Maggie

(runs in)

Are you ok?!

Christine

No. No I'm not ok. *(she is referring here not to her physical state but her emotional one)*

FADE OUT

Scene Three

All of the actors are onstage apart from Andrew and Janet, Christine and her roommate will enter together stage right, they are going to a talk in an auditorium. The other actors are playing audience members and are chatting quietly with each other. They are all sitting stage right slightly angled so that the audience can see them. There is a podium stage left slightly angled out as well. Christine and Maggie enter talking.

Maggie

What exactly is it that we're going to?

Christine

I don't know but they said there would be food afterwards and we currently only have water and salsa in the fridge.

Maggie

Good point. We seriously need to go shopping.

(They sit in the front row of the students. There is one seat in the back and Andrew walks in looks around and sits. He is wearing the clothing he wore in act 1 scene 4 to indicate an overlap of time within the two characters story lines. The two main characters do not notice or acknowledge each other)

Maggie

So where's the food?

Christine

(laughs)

I think you have to sit through the whole talk first.

Maggie

Okay but at least find out what we're listening to.

Audience member

Dr. Janet Nickels is talking about expression and using your past to your advantage.

(Christine and Maggie look at each other shocked)

Maggie

Dude...how did you find out about this?

Christine

...I saw a flyer in the - art building... I didn't catch the name of the talk I just saw the blurb about free food.

Maggie

What are the odds....?

Christine

I'm a little freaked out to be honest.

Maggie

Well they say college is a magical place.

Christine

What! Who says that?

Maggie

Umm. Degas?

Christine

Okay Degas never said that. Degas was a French artist in the late 1800s who did paintings and sculptures.

(Roommate gives Christine a "see you know your stuff" look)

Christine

Shut up.

(Janet enters stage left and walks up to the podium. She is wearing the same outfit she wore to speak in Andrew's class. Indicating it is the same day)

Hello everyone. *(she address the audience on stage as well as the actual audience)*

I'm so glad you could make it out tonight. My name is Dr. Janet Nickels and I am going to be addressing some ways, as university students, that you can express yourself. Now these are going to be healthy and legal ways, we don't want anybody setting a playground on fire. *(beat)* You may think that's random but my brother did that his second year of college, I still don't know why, he doesn't talk about it. Probably because most people don't go to a playground at 3 am and torch the monkey bars.

(beat)

So self-expression. It is of course the expression of thoughts, feelings and ideas through dance, music, writing, and art. *(Christine perks up a little bit)* Now personally I've always been a fan of using self-expression therapeutically. It's a healthy way to release stress and sometimes you get some amazing art out of it.

When I was young I never really felt like I fit in anywhere. I thought I was too weird and wanted to do too many different things with my time. Most kids had three or four hobbies I had about ten. I was too much of an overachiever.

So I got into different forms of art. I started acting in community theatre and writing plays and song lyrics. By the time high school rolled around I found my old writings I had done as a kid and looked through them. Most of them were about the princess saving the prince from an evil wizard or a group of goblins appealing to a queen for release from prison. Turns out those goblins were the bullies from elementary school.

So then I started thinking about writing again. I was applying for college and I knew I would be getting back into theatre so I figured I may as well pick writing back up too since by that point I actually knew how to properly write and format a story. But after writing for a few weeks I realized that it didn't feel genuine. I couldn't figure it out. The stories about the goblins felt genuine but the well written ones didn't.

Then it hit me, when I was working on stories as a kid it was my way of expressing myself, a way for me to look at my problems differently. I was using my pain to create art even though I didn't know it at the time.

So I know not everyone in here may consider themselves artistic but you don't have to be to express yourself.

We all have things in our past that bog us down or make us feel incapable of doing things but I'm here to tell you that you can use that to your advantage.

So as students you have a lot of stress and new responsibilities. Sometimes this stress is a result of unresolved issues from your past and they are just now coming to light because you are out on your own.

Finding problems in your life or from your past that you never acknowledge can increase your stress levels and make you unhappy. Life is short and hard and you deserve to be happy as often as possible. Don't forget that.

Something that you can do to deal with this stress from these problems is make a list of them. Force yourself to sit down and write out everything that is bothering you on paper. When you can see your problems you are better equipped to deal with them. If your list ends up getting too long stop and deal with the first three. You don't want to overwhelm yourself that would defeat the purpose of the exercise. And don't feel guilty about the number of problems you have whether that number is high or low. You are focusing on you and nothing else in this moment.

Now depending on your hobby this next step will vary. If you are not into art or what would be classified as a creative hobby, test the waters to see if you enjoy any of them. No one is judging what you make. It's not a contest, it's a personal journey and if people judge you for that get rid of them. You don't need them in your life.

Look at your list and determine what is causing you the most amount of stress and start with that. Mull it over and give that problem a symbol.

If you are writing, make that problem a location or a creature and describe the problem in terms of the symbol you have picked. For example, say the problem is that you have poor time management skills. Create a town where no one follows a plan and utter chaos is breaking loose. You have created a symbol for what your life is like without time management. When you're brainstorming a solution, do so in the context of the story first. Maybe a magical force guides the townspeople into better organization or a visitor comes into town and assists the citizens.

Once you have creatively solved the problem translate that into real world application. Is the magical force a symbol for an app for your

phone or is the visitor someone that you know who is organized and can help you out.

Looking at a problem in a fictional world that you have created will make the issue seem less daunting and it will give you the confidence to fix it in your own life. By using this technique in something that you enjoy doing, it enables you to allow yourself to fix the problem.

Most of the time we stand in our own ways because of fear or a lack of confidence. I encourage you to give this a try and see what comes out of it.

Well now. As you all mull that over let's grab some of that free food and chat out in the lobby.

BLACKOUT

Scene Four

Lights up on Christine's apartment. She is sitting at her computer typing. There is a sense of calmness about her now.

Christine

(Looking up from writing)

Maggie?

Maggie

(Walks into her room) Yeah, what's up? We finally going to get groceries?

Christine

I think—I think I can tell my dad.

Maggie

Wait really? *(happy)* When?

Christine

Well do you remember when I said I was thinking of writing him a letter, as a joke? Well I am. I am going to send him this.

(She motions for Maggie to look at her computer. As Maggie reads the letter Christine is getting out her art supplies which consists of an easel and brushes and paints)

That letter along with a painting that I started on last night. He may not be happy about it but I guess he will have to find a way to deal

with it. Maybe I should tell him about what Dr. Nickels was talking about.

(She begins to set up the supplies)

Maggie

This is - C this is really good. I mean wow. I'm impressed. And a little jealous. You can paint and write.

Christine

Well I can only write journal-y type stuff nothing like a book or anything.

Maggie

So what are you painting? Oh is it something from the letter! The birdcage, the flower?

Christine

It is from the letter. But you can't see it until it's done. Okay, out I need to finish this.

Maggie

You look the happiest that I've seen you in a long time.

Christine

You know. I finally feel happy. Now shoo. I need to finish.

(Maggie exits as Christine begins to paint)

Christine

Alright painting. What is your name? - What story are you telling? - *(contemplative)* Our wrinkles are what make us unique, we must hold on to them. That sounds about right.

You see Dad you are an iron. You want everything to be flat and perfect because you think that's the way it should be. But life isn't flat and perfect and neither are people. You are afraid of wrinkles and what they might mean. Well wrinkles are rare and beautiful. You must have lost yours a long time ago but you know what. I - I forgive you Dad.

(She sets aside the brushes and looks at her painting. She smiles and is feeling genuinely happy)

(She moves the painting to the center of the room and just before turning the painting to face the audience the lights blackout)

Scene Five

Christine is standing alone on the stage which is bare apart from the painting that is behind her. The stage is dark with a single light on Christine.

Christine

An open letter to parents:

We are ok and we are smart. You raised us well and taught us how to take on the world. -- So why are you afraid? What is it that makes you think that we are not ready or prepared? - You talk about how proud you are of us but then you turn right back around and tell us that you think we are not ready or that you think we don't understand just how hard life is. Of course we know how hard life is we put up with you don't we? -

-- Dear parents - we are ok. Your concerns are valid, we will give you that much. But don't assume to know everything that goes on. You act like we don't know the value of a dollar when secretly we have had two jobs just to afford groceries.

What if I told you that we know best when it comes to our major? It is our decision when it comes to the future for us. We know what the job market looks like and yes we know how expensive it is to live in the city. But we cannot sit by and let our dreams stay in the dark because sometimes you have to wake them up and let them wander. - We remember all of the times you told us to find our passion and follow our dreams. We also remember the times that you told us we would have to fall on our face to understand what it is like to fail and then you were so afraid to let us do either.

You taught us to read. You taught us to live free. You taught us to - fly. And then you locked us in a cage and refused to open the door. You taught us to iron. How to rid ourselves of the wrinkles that you felt were not appropriate to have. - Well we like wrinkles. It may take us a while to find them again but we know that we can.

Have a little faith in the children you have but remember - all things grow and sometimes you have to let them go so that they can blossom; so that every wrinkly petal can be seen.

So this is our letter to you.

She exits stage left to reveal the painting behind her. A spotlight focuses on the painting of clothing on a line swaying in the wind. It is held for a moment and then the light fades.

BLACKOUT