

Adventure Cabaret

My True Name

Actor enters, sits.

When I was just a little boy, only five years old, a miracle occurred in my family. The miracle was that my mother disappeared. I don't think I've ever been happier than the day that I knew that my mother was gone.

It was Christmas time in New England, and my father was trying to take care of the five children by himself. The gifts under the little Christmas tree that year were paltry, and one of them was strange. It was a pair of moccasins, and my father explained to me that my mother had made them, as a way to help her "get better."

I looked at those moccasins and didn't want them, because they meant that there was a terrifying possibility that my mother would return, and also return to telling me the only stories she ever told me. There were only three of those stories, and each story had only three words.

Here is the first story my mother told me: "You are stupid."

Here is the second story: "You are ugly."

The third story was the best of all: "I hate you."

Those were the only stories my mother ever told me, and she told me those stories again and again, pretty much from the time I was born.

And then there were the beatings, with pieces of wood and a heavy leather belt. I used to go to school with bruises all over my body, and puncture wounds in my skin from stray nails in the pieces of wood. No, I did not miss my mother at all. I was glad she was gone.

But back to Christmas time, and my father, who was overwhelmed. He made the interesting decision to hire the daughter of our cleaning lady to live with us, and take care of the five children seven days a week, indefinitely.

Her name was Patty Smallwood, and her skin was about as black as a person's skin can be. She was beautiful, or at least she was beautiful to this five year old boy, and she had a big smile, and a big warm laugh. Very quickly, I wanted her to be my mommy—my real mommy, a mommy who would be nice to me, and love me, something I had never known.

[To be continued...]

Later, when I was fifteen, when one day I asked my mother whether she thought those beatings had been good for me, this was her response:

Stand.

"I don't care if they were good for you! They were good FOR ME!!!"

Sit. Pause.

So that was my mother.

- A loving smack on my little bottom, smiling at me, and with a loving twinkle in her eye
- And that skin...My God...that skin. It was as though a brilliant light of love was shining out of it.
- Crawling all over her beautiful black body like a little monkey while she laughed and tickled me.

Then Patty began telling me stories.

Ever since I was a little boy, I've always been just one of the girls.

Kathy Nugent, Laura Ernst, Pam Breen, Laura Merrill

We would practice the fine, feminine art of just being nice to each other.

"Your always with girls, but you're never *doing* anything."

But we *are* doing something. Together, we are practicing the fine, feminine art of just being nice to each other.

Abolish / Abolition

What does it mean to be a slave? Aren't we all still slaves?

I want to abolish the slavery of the mind, the slavery of bad assumptions, the slavery of fear.

Stand, palms out toward the audience.

And so I stand before you, a proud black woman. An important figure in the abolition of slavery.

Here I am, a black female abolitionist.

My name...my name is...

MY NAME IS SOJOURNER TRUTH!