

TATER

Tater sits in a chair center stage, smoking a cigarette. Down center is a bowl of food and a bowl of water (Note: Tater can be either male or female, but will be referred to in the masculine when needed in this text). Tater is dressed in a brown shirt and brown pants, a colored scarf around the neck. Tater wears a bandage on its right hand.

Pause. Tater looks above the audience as though in a trance, in another world. He then looks down left, stares intently. Then he seems to snap to the audience, as though they've just said his name. After a beat, Tater relaxes.

TATER

Sorry. So sorry. This must be confusing for you. I'll try to clear things up. I am - how shall I put this? - I'm a dog.

Drag from the cigarette.

No, really. I'm a dog. An actual dog. I probably don't look like it to you, um...people, is it? I don't know - you're all dogs to me, whatever that means. My name is Tater. I was giving that name - and I know this because my owners repeat it often - because as a puppy, I was light brown and the size of a baked potato.

Tater shows the size with his hands.

That big. Cute little thing. Still am, you know.

Drag from the cigarette.

What I know is that for tonight I look like you. And I can make sounds with my mouth like you always do. Always. You're either doing that, sleeping, or watching the TV. You know, you might learn a thing or two if you'd shut it for a while and watch things. That's what

your roaches do, by the way. Didn't know that, did you?

Tater snaps his head down left in anticipation.

Then back to the audience, relaxed.

Yes, you have roaches unless your home was built in the last three years, which only means you'll have them soon. And they know your patterns so well that you may not even see them for awhile, until there's so many they don't care anymore. They see me, of course. We talk, in our way. Little bastards. They're all French, did you know that? They think they have little swords and capes and they always talk about Napoleon like he's Jesus and is going to return any day. We're all a little bit delusional, right? I mean, you're listening to a dog. And, of course, the spiders are German. But that's all for another time.

Tater snaps his head down left in anticipation.

Then back to the audience, relaxed.

Thought that was her car. Hmm. These are good, by they way. I always wanted to know what smoking was all about.

Puts the cigarette out.

So, what I'd like to tell you about tonight is called love. No, wait. I mean suicide. Hard to tell the difference. At least for dogs anyway. You don't understand. Dogs are immensely more emotionally tied to anyone or anything than people could ever be. What I hear so many people say when someone committs suicide is that they don't understand. Why did this happen? Why? Why? Well, it's always clear to a dog. Goddamn, I'm going to have another one of those.

Tater lights another cigarette.

I guess all I'm saying is that I understand it. Suicide and love. Suicide is love. Sometimes it's the absence of love. Or the loss of love. But it's always love.

Tater snaps his head down left in anticipation.
Then back to the audience, relaxed.

Some say it's a blackness that you can't escape. No matter how good things are, or how much success or wealth, they say there's simply this blackness that drags you down. I say that's the spiders talking.

Tater snaps his head down left in anticipation.
Then back to the audience, relaxed.

Did you hear that? I think I heard her car. I'm a touch off my game tonight. Regular ears. So yes, we know your patterns inside and out. Some of us - the smarter ones - know their owners better than the owners know themselves. And I know what you're thinking. The "smarter ones"? That still means stupid, right? Only not as stupid as some of the others so technically they're smarter. Here's the secret. The dumber your dog, the smarter he is. That's the truth.

Tater snaps his head down left in anticipation.
Then back to the audience, relaxed.

Yes, the dopey grin with the tongue hanging out, the bounding off for a ball that appeared to have been thrown but wasn't, the manic wagging of the tail and the licking of the ass - all of it a show. We are busy cataloging your every move, mood, behavior and sound. I had a friend named Moby. He was the smartest guy I ever met. Made himself go blind. Believe that? Man, that guy looked like a dumb shit all day, running into the stairs, appearing to not know where the front door was when the bell rang. Sometimes he'd "stare" at a blank wall for hours. Genius - hey, that's it! That's gotta be her car!

Tater snaps his head down left in anticipation.
Then back to the audience, relaxed.

Even his roaches had respect for him. Called him the White Maestro - apparently there's no French word that really equals 'maestro', same in English I guess. He

told me that he could predict what his owner what have for dinner that night simply by what clothes he put on in the morning. He even proved it, showed me. See? Navy oxford - sleeves rolled up - khakis, black Rockports. Yep, that'll be chicken kabobs, garlic sauce, pecan praline ice cream for dessert. Amazing.

*Tater snaps his head down left in anticipation.
Then back to the audience, relaxed.*

One day he came over and stayed with us for a while. Moby wasn't himself. Distracted - and not in that clever blind way of his. He was distant. He wasn't eating. He didn't eat for days. It was like a hunger strike of some kind. I didn't know what to say and he didn't know what to say either. After a few days, he went off in the backyard and laid down. I went out to see him, I had a feeling it would be the last time. I laid there with him. Then I heard him say in a whisper: I can't take it anymore. I asked him what, what couldn't he take? He said: All this love.

Pause. Tater snaps his head down left in anticipation.

That's her. That's her car. I know it.

Blackout.

YARD LANGUAGE

Tater and Moby sit Indian style. Tater is in all brown with a scarf, Moby is in all white with a scarf. They're smoking a joint. Tater tosses a ball up in the air.

MOBY

And you thought cigarettes were good.

TATER

God! I wish I was a person all the time. They've got it made. And people can catch the ball with their front paws instead of their mouth. Here.

*Tater tosses the ball to Moby, who can't see it.
It hits Moby in the head.*

MOBY

The hell was that?

TATER

Sorry. Forgot you're blind. You should see your yard.
It's awesome!

MOBY

I can. I can see it in my mind's eye.

TATER

Hmm. I think I just have my face eye.

*A car speeds off. Tater doesn't notice but Moby
does. Moby is concerned.*

TATER

Hey, Moby. Can I get some water?

MOBY

Certainly.

*Moby rises, stretches, then runs into the wall and
falls.*

MOBY

May have to get that water on your own.

TATER

You're a fucking wizard!

*Tater exits but runs into a person dressed as a
French soldier from the Napoleon era, early 19th
century.*

SOLDIER

Pardonez-moi, monsieur! I request the presence of
Maestro Blanc.

TATER

The one over there on the ground.

SOLDIER

Ah, bien sur. I expect nothing less from le genie.
Remove yourself from the business of his majesty the
emperor and king!

*Soldier pushes Tater out of the way and goes to
Moby. Soldier bows with a great flourish.*

SOLDIER

Maestro Blanc?

Moby comes around, blindly staring about.

MOBY

Yes, Capitaine. Make it quick, I'm hosting.

SOLDIER

Upon my word, my network has received knowledge that
your - ahem - owner has taken ill and has been rushed
to the hospital.

MOBY

I know.

SOLDIER

Sacre bleu! How can that be? I have only now received
word.

MOBY

Ah, Capitaine. That's why my guest is with us. They're
going to take me away with them.

SOLDIER

Mon dieu! That shall not be!

Tater enters with a water bottle.

TATER

You have a keg set up in the garage? Tell me you get

some of that.

Soldier draws his sword and attacks Tater.

SOLDIER

Empire! Toujours empire and king!

Soldier strikes Tater's hand.

TATER

OWW!

MOBY

Capitaine! Don't make me pummel you!

SOLDIER

You shall not be exiled, Maestro! Not by this fool!

*Moby leg sweeps Soldier, who falls to the ground.
Tater and Moby proceed to "play" with Soldier,
rolling Soldier back and forth between them.*

TATER

You cut my hand, you bastard!

MOBY

That's my friend you sliced up!

SOLDIER

I only wish to keep him from taking you away!

*They have Soldier pinned. Soldier frantically
kicks its legs and arms, then finally plays dead.*

TATER

Taking you? Taking you where?

They let Soldier get up.

SOLDIER

The procurer de roi shall hear of this.

MOBY

The procurer de roi is nibbling on a Tillman treat that I left out as we speak.

SOLDIER

Oui. Bien sur, Maestro Blanc. I needn't remind you of the respect we all have for you.

MOBY

No, you needn't. Now shake ass and get out of my yard, Frenchy.

Soldier runs off. Moby hits the joint again.

TATER

So you're coming with us?

MOBY

Yes.

TATER

That's incredible! We can share a bed. Talk all night and play ball all day! And smoke weed - hopefully - and eat wet food, then dry food, then dog cigars - Moby? Are you sad? Don't you want to stay with me?

MOBY

Of course I do.

TATER

We'll have fun, right?

MOBY

Yes, Tater. We'll have fun.

The end.