



545 7th Street SE
WDC 20003

info@taffetypunk.com
www.taffetypunk.com

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Contact: Erin Mitchell Nelson
press@taffetypunk.com
(804) 357-6523

For Immediate Release:

Taffety Punk “Hollas Back” with Darts Disguised as Kisses

The Punks’ first foray into book publishing is a comedic F U to catcallers.

Too Like the Lightning: Prose Poems to My Almost Loves

by **Teresa Spencer**

illustrated by Sydney Schwindt

Pre-Orders Available Now

► **Book Release Date: August 23, 2024**

Available wherever books are sold, or via direct link at www.taffetypunk.com

► **Book Launch Event: August 24, 2024, 7:00pm**

meet the author, book signing, reading of selections, and Q&A
at East City Bookshop, 645 Pennsylvania Avenue SE, Washington, DC 20003

Taffety Punk Theatre Company returns to antagonizing the patriarchy with the publication of company member Teresa Spencer’s *Too Like the Lightning: Prose Poems to My Almost Loves*. This riot grrrl’s first published book is, appropriately, a riot. This comic, pro-lady-rage collection is a series of love poems to catcallers, followers home, online trolls, and other sundry unsavory types. Spencer began to pen these delights, framed as “missed connections”, to share with friends in solidarity over the utter nuisance of street harassment. The collection grew, she took requests, and ultimately her home theatre company commissioned her for more.

Taffety Punk will release the book as a print edition featuring pin-up style illustrations by Sydney Schwindt on August 23rd. A full-cast audiobook, narrated by the company’s all-female Riot Grrrls and guests, will follow shortly thereafter.

Flipping the power dynamic between target and harasser, each poem in *Too Like the Lightning* is a bitingly funny takedown of the harasser’s gaslight: “I was just paying you a compliment.” So what if it *were* a compliment? *Too Like the Lightning* imagines love stories whose first sparks are those too-brief missed connections on the street.

Taffety Punk Company Member **Teresa Spencer** has been collecting true stories of harassment of women in public spaces for close to a decade and turning them into hyper romantic odes to pervs. Spencer says, “Street harassment exists, in a very real way, on the same spectrum of behaviors as sexual violence. The harasser knows what he’s doing: he’s not hitting on her, he’s exercising control. He’s putting her in her place in public. These poems flip that script: the joke’s on him.”

The collection of poems and short fiction in *Too Like the Lightning* has been evolving since 2016. The series started in that mecca for DIY sass activism: Tumblr. When she began, Spencer expected the series would include no more than a handful of love poems based on the most laughable catcalls from her own life. Very quickly, though, women started sharing their most appalling, obscene, scary, or just weird meet-cutes with harassers, and the collection just kept growing.

And then Spencer's work took off, as the best underground art does: her poems made appearances in *The Establishment and Defenestration*; the Cincinnati-based company Walterhoop released five comedy shorts adapted from the collection; and there is even a jazz composition of one poem by the band Fallen Crooner.

Taffety Punk, as ever refusing to be bound by genre, was *Too Like the Lightning's* natural home for publication. Excited by the prospect of publishing, Taffety Punk Artistic Director Marcus Kyd asked Spencer to expand the series for an illustrated print edition and a full-cast audiobook. Kyd says, "These are the poems we did not know we needed. Women will bond over its painful truths while man can, and should, learn just how bad things are."

M.L. Rio, author of *If We Were Villains*, received an advance copy and has already praised the collection calling the book "a dark delight." She continues, "Spencer writes like a vampire bites — with fanged and ferocious wit."

Too Like the Lightning: Prose Poems to My Almost Loves is available August 23, 2024 wherever books are sold and via Taffety Punk's website: www.taffetypunk.com.

Bookstores can order copies via Ingram, or by reaching out directly to Taffety Punk's distributor, Itasca Books at orders@itascabooks.com.

A **Book-Launch event** will be held at **East City Bookshop** on August 24 at 7:00pm, featuring readings, book-signings, and a Q&A with the author. Registration for the book-launch event is here: <https://tinyurl.com/TLTL-Launch>

The forthcoming *Too Like the Lightning* audiobook will feature the voices of Tonya Beckman, Jenna Berk, Renea Brown, Lise Bruneau, Dan Crane, Omar D. Cruz, Danielle A. Drakes, Kimberly Gilbert, Sydney Schwindt, Teresa Spencer, Dawn Thomas, Esther Williamson, and Gabra Zackman. Editing and mastering by Marcus Kyd.

For hi-res photos and a sneak peek at the illustrations, go to: www.taffetypunk.com/press

- Author **Teresa Spencer** is an actor and writer based in Baltimore, Maryland, where she teaches acting at Towson University. She writes from an actor's point of view: always aware of the sounds of language spoken out loud. Feminism and fart jokes underpin all her work. She has been a frequent Taffety Punk collaborator since 2013.

- Illustrator **Sydney Schwindt** is a nomadic theatre practitioner and illustrator working under the moniker True Edge Art. She directs, fight directs, acts, teaches, paints, and draws. At the time of publication, she will be van-dwelling in Alaska.

- **Taffety Punk Theatre Company** is the resident company at Capitol Hill Arts Workshop. Founded to establish an actively collaborative company of actors, dancers, and musicians, the company has been at the forefront of theatre innovation, presenting groundbreaking productions that inspire audiences and introducing new playwrights and stories to the stage, new works of choreography, and new compositions of original music. Through its artist-nurturing Generator program Taffety Punk has a rich history of developing original works that challenge theatre norms. Generator projects that have realized full production include the widely celebrated dance plays *suicide.chat.room*, *Fragments of Sappho*, and *Enter Ophelia, distracted*; as well as the world premieres of Liz Maestri's *Inheritance Canyon*, and Kelsey Mesa's *La Salpêtrière* (nominated for five Helen Hayes Awards in 2024 including Outstanding New Play, and winner of two of those nominations: Outstanding Production, and Outstanding Supporting Actor - company member Kimberly Gilbert). Over the years, Taffety Punk has garnered numerous accolades and recognition for its work and, in fact, won the very first John Aniello Award for Outstanding Emerging Theatre Company from the Helen Hayes Awards. The Washington Post declared the company "The most vital of the city's small troupes." The company's all-female ensemble, the Riot Grrrls, have repeatedly delighted audiences delivering impassioned productions of classical plays while empowering women in theatre. The Riot Grrrls reunite this year to prevent *The Tragedie of Macbeth*. The Bootleg Shakespeare is a widely celebrated event the company hosts with the partnership of the Folger Theatre providing the most exciting night of theatre anyone could ask for: an entire Shakespeare play rehearsed and performed in a single day. The company has released albums by its company members and their tangential bands, most notably the indie rock sensation Beauty Pill, the musical home for two Taffety Punk Company Members: composer Chad Clark and singer Erin Mitchell Nelson. Taffety Punk's music catalog is available on all streaming platforms and via taffetypunk.bandcamp.com where LPs and singles can be ordered. Taffety Punk is thrilled to add company member Teresa Spencer's book of poetry and short stories to the company's media catalog. *Too Like the Lightning* will be released August 23, 2024 and will be available at bookstores everywhere. As Taffety Punk Theatre Company moves forward, it remains committed to its mission to ignite a public passion for theatre by making the classical and the contemporary exciting, meaningful, and affordable. The company is excited to continue its legacy of excellence and making the greatest theatre for the lowest price.

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