

the big, fat naked truth

By Gary Garrison

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SYNOPSIS

THE BIG FAT, NAKED TRUTH finds five women, with wildly diverse backgrounds, locked in the same bare room with no way out. **TWINKS MARGARET**, a wealthy, suburban housewife is picking up cheese in a mall; **REILLY** has been sent to a dance school to take ballroom dance lessons for shy people; **TANYA** is a student who arrives for an appointment with her lecherous professor; and **DUSSEY** (pronounced "Dew-see"), a young woman on probation for "maiming" someone, arrives for her group therapy session.

As each woman enters the room and realizes they are not where they think they should be, they become a part of the question (where are they, and why are they there?), and ultimately, a part of the answer.

THE BIG, FAT NAKED TRUTH is 41 pages long, and plays approximately 55 minutes with no intermission. The set consists of 3 white walls, a white chair, and a door.

CHARACTERS

TWINKS, 24, F.

Fast-talking, dry, tough, but not unfeeling. Sexy, but could never realize it. From Brooklyn, New York.

MARGARET, 37, F.

Methodical, compulsively organized; lost in her own outline for life. From Youngstown, Ohio.

REILLY, 20, F.

Unrelentingly shy, innocent, quiet. From Washington, D.C.

TANYA 21, F.

Disinterested, apathetic; sadly a victim of 90's values. She has a wild, outrageous laugh. From Bloomfield Hills, Michigan.

DUSSEY 39, F.

(pronounced Dew-see) Pretty, but hidden. Loud, boisterous, scattered. From Mobile, Alabama.

SCENE I

Lights bounce up on the room. There is one chair; nothing else. It is unrelentingly quiet and still.

Several moments pass.

TWINKS bursts through the door, slamming it shut behind her, then turning immediately back to it.

TWINKS

Where are your manners, you slimey bastard?! You gotta know I ain't like everyone else in the joint. I gotta certain style, see? A certain kind of class, in case you ain't noticed, baby. And I got a good reputation, see? I hold my head up 'cause I got good reason to. I'm a Class A barmaid, a Class A friend, and a Class A person. This is quality fuckin' stuff your lookin' at here!

She bangs the door with her fist.

TWINKS (continued)

Hey! This is the lady's room, Mr. Big Shot -- Mr. Big Spender. One step through that door and you're outta this joint. You hear me, Mr. "Walk-Me-To-My-Car?" Mr. "WE-ONLY-GOT-TONIGHT-'CAUSE-MY-WIFE'S-IN-WASHINGTON?" Shit, those lines are shit! You need some better lines, baby. Somethin' to *help* your cause, not friggin' defeat it 'cause that shit's pitiful. Pitiful!

She bangs the door harder with her fist.

TWINKS (continued)

Hey! You still there?

No response--she bangs again.

TWINKS (continued)

HEEYYYYYYYYYYYYYYY! . . . Alright, man, don't play me. I know you're still out there, just waitin' to make your break with me. But it ain't workin', baby, 'cause your actin' like Barney Fife in Mayberry. You gotta go easy, honey. Play your hand slow. You know, you order a few drinks, you roll your olive around, flick a couple of straws at me from across the bar-- you leave a big tip. But don't chase me around the bar, man! What is that about, mo-fo?!

No response--she knocks almost sadly.

TWINKS (continued)

Are you there?

She knocks again. Softening.

TWINKS (continued)

Hello? . . . Is anybody listening?

Twinks turns and leans against the door, noticing the space for the first time.

TWINKS (continued)

Eugene, what did you do with the toilet, man?!

(circling around room)

Oh, my God! He took out the whole friggin' toilet!? What is that about? Oh, no, and my wall! Where's my wall with all my beautiful graffiti, man? Damn, some of my best thoughts were on that wall!

Twinks races to open the door as MARGARET rushes in, closing the door behind her.

MARGARET

A pound of Virginia cheddar cheese -- extra sharp, sliced a quarter-inch thin.

(presenting a slip of paper)

Are you new here? I paid for it. Here's the slip. Oops, my mistake -- that's the parking garage ticket. Oh! Here it is! . . . No, no that's the dry cleaners. Oh, I know. I stuck it in the envelope with the phone bill.

(rummaging through bag)

Well, darn. Where the heck is it? . . . Well, I did pay for it. Call the register. I'm Margaret Mason-Neal.

(awkwardly noticing the room)

Excuse me, but where's the cheese?

TWINKS

(amused)

This is a toilet, lady, a skanky john.

MARGARET

Oh, it's not that bad. Nothing a little fresh coat of paint wouldn't brighten up. Now, where's Maurice? And where's the cheese?

TWINKS

What the hell are you talkin' about? . . . Don't answer that. Just get outta my way.

*Margaret slinks to the side of the door.
Twinks walks full-force towards the door,
muttering to herself.*

The door is locked.

TWINKS (continued)

What the hell?

*Twinks shakes the door, then turns to
Margaret.*

TWINKS (continued)

Why'd you lock the friggin' door?

MARGARET
(backing away)

I didn't.

TWINKS

Come here . . . COME--HERE!

*Twinks collars her and begins pushing her
towards the door.*

MARGARET

Don't you touch me! I didn't do anything. I just walked
through that door . . .

TWINKS

. . . Yeah, yeah, yeah, shut-up, alright? . . .

MARGARET

. . . I have people waiting for me, and when they don't see me
at the Cracker Barrel at 2:15, they will call security, lots
of security . . .

TWINKS

. . . We're wasting time here, hon, with your yak-yak-yak.

MARGARET

(shaking free)

I am visible in this community. People know me, and if you
hurt me . . . Don't hurt me, please. I'll give you anything --
anything in my purse is yours. I just cashed a check -- you
can have it. It's only thirty dollars, but you can buy food,
or, or drugs, or . . . I have children! I have four beautiful
children who'll miss me if anything happens to me.

TWINKS

(losing patience)

What the hell are you talking about?

MARGARET

(frantic)

My husband doesn't really have any money. Alright, he does, but it's all tied up in bonds and money market accounts and I don't know what else. But we really don't have as much as he lets people think. And he didn't just flat-out buy the Beatty Building with cash -- like the newspapers said -- no, he had to borrow the money. We're in debt for the rest of our lives. Really! We're cash poor!

(blurting it out)

I even had to charge the cheese!

TWINKS

What is with you and this FUCKIN' cheese?

MARGARET

(another tactic)

Oh, I get it. I understand now! You saw my picture in the newspaper. That's how you know me. But you're mistaken. I only threw that benefit so that I could be in this club, and you can't be in the club unless you throw an extravagant benefit for some worthy cause.

(sharing a real secret)

Honestly, I don't even know if we have any homeless people in this city. It just seemed like a good idea . . . We're not rich!

(bolting for the door)

So you won't get anything if you kidnap me. There's nothing to get.

Twinks pulls a knife.

TWINKS

Move. I've never had to use this, but I keep it for drunks and idiots who get out of hand. Been tiltin' back that bottle, huh, babe?

*Margaret crosses quickly across the room.
Twinks goes for the door. It is still
locked. Twinks rushes Margaret, grabs her
and shoves her towards the door.*

TWINKS (continued)

Tell him to open up.

MARGARET

Who?

TWINKS

(slams fist into door)

TELL HIM!

Margaret shrieks. Twinks crosses to the chair, sits angrily.

MARGARET

Please open this door. This person's upset. And she's angry and . . . she's got this knife . . .

TWINKS

(springing from the chair)

Why'd he lock us in here, Cheese Lady?

MARGARET

I don't know what you're talking about.

TWINKS

Let me get this straight, doll. You just happened to be going to the toilet . . .

MARGARET

No, I was picking up cheese, and they said, "past the fountain, past the section of inlaid terra cotta tile, past Toys R Us, first door on the left." I came here, and you're here.

TWINKS

Okay, one of us is freaking out, Cheese Girl. One of us seems to need a few drugs or a little rest or maybe just a nice, quiet padded room with nurses and . . . oh, wait. Wait a minute. Oh, I got it. --Duh!-- Eugene got you high, didn't he? Oh, for God's sake, the man just want stop . . . He got you friggin' high, didn't he?

MARGARET

(insulted)

I don't get . . . high.

Awkward silence. Finally:

TWINKS

(amused)

Yeah, right! Me neither! Where do you think you are?

MARGARET

Liberty Land Mall. Cheese and Things Pick-Up Service.

TWINKS

Uh-uh. Try the lady's toilet at Eugene's Pool and Brew.

MARGARET

What?

TWINKS

Last time I checked, which was about five minutes ago, I had my big, happy ass on a torn, red plastic barstool behind the bar at the Pool and Brew serving drinks to a horny, old cab driver named Betrand and a teenager who's missing his front left tooth . . . That's where I am. Where are you?

MARGARET

(disconcerted)

Well, obviously, one of us is confused.

TWINKS

Or stoned outta her mind.

MARGARET

(searching her purse)

Well, I know I was scheduled to be at Liberty Land Mall from 1:30 until 2:45, at which time I was to leave for a meeting with Danny Schafer's mother.

(finding date book)

Okay. Here. Right here. Health spa: 9-10 am. 10:30: Pick up flowers, 10:40: drop flowers off at Our Sister of Mercy. 11:00 Brunch with Delphine. 1:30 Liberty Land Mall. See?

TWINKS

Bottom line, Velvetta, you're in a toilet -- as if you didn't know -- in a beer joint with a lot of lonely losers. Now I don't know what you're whacked out on, but you gotta get a grip, okay?

MARGARET

Okay. Okay. If this is a bathroom, then where are the booths?

TWINKS

Never had any.

MARGARET

Then where are the commodes?

TWINKS

WHERE IS THE CHEESE?!

MARGARET

I . . . don't . . . know. I DON'T KNOW!

Margaret circles the room, looking for a clue.

MARGARET (continued)

You know, to be frank, I'm having trouble believing all of this.

TWINKS

Whatever.

MARGARET

Okay, but we're in this room, the door's locked, you have a knife, and we're screaming at one another . . .

TWINKS

So I'm a little nervous. I get loud when I get nervous. And mean. I get mean as hell. Just a warning.

Margaret suspiciously walks towards the door, making small talk.

MARGARET

Look, I'm sure this is all a little mistake, and we'll walk out smiling, calm -- a little frazzled, maybe. But our loved ones will . . .

(tries the door)

. . . they'll miss us . . .

(tries the door)

. . . they'll know we're missing . . .

(shakes the door violently)

This is a simple . . . mistake.

TWINKS

Think what you gotta think . . . GOD! I AM SO UPTIGHT!

Twinks sinks the knife in the floor.

TWINKS (continued)

Got a marker in that bag of yours?

MARGARET

A marker?

TWINKS
A Magic-Marker? A pen? Pencil? Anything to draw with? I am uptight and I would like to draw, okay?

MARGARET
Don't you want to try and get out of here?

TWINKS
You've lost the big picture here, doll. You got a drill?

MARGARET
No.

TWINKS
Hacksaw?

MARGARET
No.

TWINKS
Any explosives?

MARGARET
Of course not.

TWINKS
The door is locked. You don't have anything to get it open. All I've got in this bag is a banana, a box of animal crackers, a couple of rubbers, two pairs of fishnet hose, and a Sears card. Now, we know that none of that can get us out. And unless a fuckin' hurricane blows through here, that door and these walls ain't gonna budge. So, you got something to draw with or what?

MARGARET
(searching her purse)
I have some colored chalk for my daughter's chalk board.

Margaret hands it to Twinks who positions herself next to a wall.

MARGARET (continued)
Excuse me, but I have plenty of paper if you'd like to draw on that.

TWINKS
Too small. I make large art. That way, no one can ignore it.

MARGARET

That way, there's no choice.

TWINKS

You always have a choice, the way I see it -- and here it is: live through it, or die. There's your choice. For example, Cheese and Crackers, if you don't like what I draw, then kill yourself -- that way neither one of us has to deal with it.

She turns to the wall to draw.

MARGARET

What are you going to . . .

TWINKS

SSSSSSSSSSHHHHHHHHHHHHH! Jesus, can you just stand there and be whatever it is you are?

She thinks for a moment, then furiously scribbles something on the wall.

TWINKS (continued)

There!

*Written on the wall in capital letters:
"FUCK ME, RUNNING."*

MARGARET

Oh, my. What is that? . . . Is that . . . I mean . . . I mean, it's not poetry, is it? No, poetry usually rhymes and . . . It's the beginning of a short story, or maybe . . . No . . . Well, now, wait. Maybe I'm just not getting it. Maybe it is poetry. Or . . . or . . .

TWINKS

Are you really that stupid? That ain't fuckin' poetry. That is fuckin' vulgarity. Jesus! This usually makes me relax. But for some reason -- and I don't know, but maybe it has something to do with you -- I'm getting more tense!

MARGARET

(sincerely)

I'm sorry . . . I'm just so confused.

Margaret pulls a handkerchief from her purse and begins dabbing at her eyes. Twinks tries to ignore that Margaret's crying.

TWINKS

Aw, what are you doing? Stop that! What are you crying for?
Nothing bad happened.

MARGARET

(really crying)

How can you say that? We're locked in a room and we don't know why we're locked in a room and if I ever needed a reason to have one of those God forsaken cell phones, this is it!

TWINKS

Oh, come on now, don't do that . . . Shit! Look, I can't worry about you. I don't do that so well. Blame it on my mother. Hey, look, just stop that okay?

(moving the chair towards Margaret)

Here, sit down. How 'bout I tell you a story -- take your mind off things . . . You wantta hear a story? Yeah, I bet you do. Okay. Okay. So. When I was in high school, I was in this literature class. It was suppose to prepare you to go to college, which was a joke, 'cause the only reason I took it was because I was eight months pregnant and the classroom was next to the nurse's office. But everyone in the class took it so serious like -- like it was church.

(stooping beside her)

This one guy, Milton Beeber, was crazy about this class. I mean, he read support materials, if you know what I mean. I don't know, I think he wanted to go to fuckin' Princeton or Harvard or something. Anyway, one day we had this test on one of them, you know, really ancient guys, you know, that nobody ever reads 'cause they hate their shit --Milton, or Chaucer, or, shit, no, I think it was that loser, Shakespeare. Well, whoever it was, old Milt had studied the wrong damn guy. I looked over at him -- because I was gonna cheat like hell -- and scribbled on his paper was "Fuck me, running." I almost choked. I mean, here was old Milt, going down like the fuckin' Titanic -- like he was thinking a community college wouldn't even take him -- but he had enough class to punctuate the damn sentence: "Fuck me -- comma -- running -- period."

*Underneath what she's written on the wall,
she writes, "Milt, The Man."*

TWINKS (continued)

That's style, baby. That's class. That's what you call, "works well under pressure."

(studying the words)

When I get tense, I remember this.

(a little too chummy)

What do you do?

MARGARET

Generally, I'm not a tense person. I cope well with stress. Sure, I get migraines, but that's so common nowadays. They even say it's normal . . . and I drink a lot of coffee, which isn't good for that . . . Burl, my husband, says I don't have headaches -- I just like to think I do. Listen, believe me, I don't make these headaches up. What for? To get attention? I don't need attention, I just need to be left alone . . . I don't mean alone-alone, but if there weren't so many people crowding our lives -- but I like them, but not all of them -- some of them . . . two . . . but they're never around. Burl doesn't like those two. So we have all these people in our lives that don't . . . that aren't very . . . Maybe we should try the door again.

*Margaret tries the door, then defeated
walks back to the chair.*

MARGARET (continued)

How long do you think we'll . . .

Twinks shrugs her shoulders.

MARGARET (continued)

Why? . . . I hate this.

TWINKS

(offering her the chalk)

So draw.

MARGARET

No.

TWINKS

So don't draw. What are you gonna do, look at the walls until you go crazy?

(turning to the wall)

I like walls. I like walls a lot. They let you know just how far you can go.

(doing just that, looking at the space)

You know, it was in this bathroom--or where ever the hell we are--that this Oriental guy showed me the biggest prick I'd ever seen.

(turning to the wall and drawing)

He followed me in here, and when I came out of the stall, he was standing there. Close to the floor was his pants. And just below his knee -- I kid you not -- was his wang.

(drawing more intently)

He just stood there. Didn't do anything. Guess he wanted someone to be proud of it . . . So I shook his hand.

TWINKS (continued)
(stepping back to reveal a drawing of a flower)
What do you think?

MARGARET
(not looking)
Oh, I can imagine.

TWINKS
I bet you can, doll. You house-wifey types got big imaginations,
I hear.

MARGARET
When they open that door, what are they going to think?

TWINKS
Same thing I think. She looks good, but can't draw worth a
shit . . . I drew a flower.

MARGARET
(turning around)
That's nice.

TWINKS
Shit.

MARGARET
No, I used to teach art. Second and third grade. It's good.

TWINKS
Yeah, if I were a kid, it'd be damn good. I'm twenty-four
years old. I can't do nothing my age.
(sitting on the floor)
Wake me up if someone opens that door.

A moment. The room falls silent.

MARGARET
It's so quiet in here . . . Don't you hate that? . . . I do.
I hate that . . . You know, I have a sister about your age.
Pretty. With high cheek bones. And one dimple in her right
cheek. She hates it, of course. But I think it makes her
special. I mean, everyone has two dimples, and she's just got
the one . . . Are you asleep?
(drawing awkwardly)
She always slept with one finger in her left cheek. She thought
one day she'd wake up and somehow she'd have the other dimple
to match. Can you imagine? It was so foolish.

MARGARET (continued)

(smearing the drawing with her hands)

I'd wait until she fell asleep -- like maybe you are now -- and I'd take her finger away. I mean, there's no use wishing for something that couldn't come true, that couldn't possibly happen . . . is there?

Margaret sits lost in thought. Twinks' head remains folded on her knees. REILLY opens the door quietly. She steps in and closes the door behind her.

REILLY

(whispering)

Miss? . . . Excuse me?

MARGARET

HOW'D YOU GET IN HERE? WHEN ARE THEY GOING TO LET US OUT?

TWINKS

HOLD UP, SIS!

(to Reilly)

Eugene thinks this is pretty damn funny, doesn't he? Does he fuckin' know I got his car keys and wallet in my purse? Or did he forget he gave them to me to keep? And the longer I stay in here with Martha Fuckin' Stewart, the more time it's going to take to get them back. IN FACT, I MAY NEVER GIVE THEM BACK, YOU BASTARD!

MARGARET

I have people waiting for me at the Cracker Barrel and I WANT OUT OF HERE, GODDAMN IT!

(gasping)

OOOOoohhh! There! Is everyone happy? I just used the Lord's name in vain. What else can go wrong?

TWINKS

(to Margaret)

Will you chill out?

(to Reilly)

Does he think this is funny locking me in here with this psycho?

(to door)

That's it! NO MORE PARTY FAVORS, EUGENE. AND YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN.

REILLY

I'm so sorry. I think this was a mistake.

She goes for the door. It's locked.

REILLY (continued)

Locked? They locked it?

(turning)

Unlock it. I want out of here, please.

TWINKS

Don't play this game with me, babe. My patience is paper thin.

REILLY

Let me out of here. PLEASE! I didn't want to do this in the first place.

MARGARET

Where did you . . .

REILLY

(retreating)

Please? . . . Please?

(backing into a corner)

Alright. Well. I'll just stand over here.

TWINKS

Great. Just great. Now that she's arrived, things are really looking up.

MARGARET

(to Reilly)

I know this is going to sound very strange, but where do you think you are?

Reilly mumbles something. Margaret takes a step toward her.

MARGARET (continued)

What?

REILLY

(with difficulty)

I don't really like to talk to people.

TWINKS

Leave her alone. Can't you see you're scaring the hell out of her?

(trying the door again)

SON-OF-A-BITCH!

(slamming the door with her fist)

I'm going to kill him!

REILLY

Let me out . . . please! I don't want to be here but my father made me come.

MARGARET

Where did your father send you?

REILLY

Madame Sandy's Ballroom Dancing.

(unfolding a wadded paper)

"Doorway to Freedom--Madame Sandy's Ballroom Dancing."

TWINKS

People still do that?

REILLY

It's for shy people.

TWINKS

I don't know any.

MARGARET

Of course not.

TWINKS

What is that suppose to mean?

REILLY

I think this was a mistake. I never wanted to come. I only came because I could stop going to my water ballet class if I did. And I hated that.

(pause)

May I go now?

TWINKS

Uhhhhhhhhh, no.

REILLY

Please?

MARGARET

We can't get out.

REILLY

Then I'll just stand here until the hour's over. I don't want to dance. I couldn't.

REILLY (continued)
(an awkward silence)

Where are the men?

TWINKS
Funny how it always comes back to that. D'ya ever notice?

*Twinks takes the knife out of the door,
begins carving the wall.*

REILLY
(whispering)
Why does she have that?

MARGARET
Don't worry. It's just some sort of cultural decoration.

TWINKS
(approaching her)
How about I decorate your face, Cheese Puff?

REILLY
Don't! I don't want to see this. Alright. I'll dance if I
have to.

TWINKS
(laughing)
Oh, she's special.

MARGARET
She's confused. I'm confused. What I don't understand is why
you're not confused. Unless you know something.

TWINKS
I don't know nothing, I'm just a pro at waiting. It's one of
the things I do best.

MARGARET
Well, not me!
(looking around)
What is this?!

REILLY
(approaching Twinks)
Can you help me?

TWINKS
Help you what?

REILLY

I don't understand what we're doing here. Are we waiting for the men?

TWINKS

Never! Never do that! I mean, that doesn't answer your question, but it's a good rule of thumb . . . What's your name?

REILLY

Reilly.

TWINKS

Listen, Reils, the way I see it, there are some things in life that just don't have a reason. Like when you were a kid, and you said, "Ma, can I go to the duck pond and swim?"

REILLY

I didn't have a mother.

TWINKS

Alright: "Dad, can I go to the duck pond and swim?" And he'd say, "No!".

REILLY

Because he never let me out of the house.

TWINKS

Whatever. And he'd say "No." And you'd say, "Why?" And he'd say, "Because I said, 'No!'"

REILLY

Because you're too shy, and if you needed help, you wouldn't ask for it.

TWINKS

WHATEVER. And you'd say, "What kind of answer is that? Just no?" And after he knocked you around a couple of times . . .

REILLY

No ice cream.

TWINKS

WHATEVER! -- after that, you sat there and thought, "It's still no goddamn answer -- "Because I said 'No!'" This is the same kind of thing. Understand?

REILLY

No.

MARGARET
(to Twinks)

That was brilliant.

TWINKS

Look, Cheese Ball, I did my best.

MARGARET

We're not sure what this is about. We only know we can't get out.

REILLY

Did we do something wrong?

*Both Margaret and Twinks stand in thought --
have they done something wrong?*

TWINKS

Well, not me . . . Alright, I take a couple of lousy bucks out of the tip can every once in a while. But they're mine. I work hard for those bucks. Lookit, it couldn't add up to more than a hundred bucks. That's nothing compared to what Eugene rakes in a month.

MARGARET

Isn't it interesting that you see this as some sort of punishment.

TWINKS

More interesting that you always gotta make some sort of fuckin' comment.

An awkward moment.

MARGARET

I'm sorry, I just don't accept this.

TWINKS

Okay, now what?

MARGARET

Nothing. I just . . . I guess I just wanted to voice that.

TWINKS

So you voiced it. Now what?

I DON'T KNOW WHAT!
MARGARET

SO SHUT YOUR MOUTH.
TWINKS

I WANT OUT OF HERE!
MARGARET

SO DO I!
TWINKS

Me too.
REILLY

People have missed me by now.
MARGARET

TWINKS
(backing her against a wall)
The way I see it, we are all missed! Look, Mother of the Cheese, the way I see it, in here we're all the same. I don't care how many people you've got waiting for you. There is no difference between me and you until we get out. We've all got one cause. So forget who you are, and what you are, and who you belong to until then.

Get away from me.
MARGARET

Twinks steps to the side.

You're an animal.
MARGARET (continued)

Is that right? . . . I happen to love animals, so thank you, Velvetta.

(to Reilly)
Reils, have I ever done my world famous animal imitations for you?

No.
REILLY
(tentatively)

Alright. "Housewifey Dog In Heat."

TWINKS (continued)
 (mimicking this action)
 Dust-dust-dust. Wag-the-tail-wag-the-tail-wag-the-tail. Dust-
 dust-dust. Wag-my-tail-wag-my-tail-wag-my-tail.

MARGARET
 (overlapping)
 Stop it! That's enough, damn you. That is offensive and
 demoralizing. She doesn't understand what you're doing.

TWINKS
 Oh, she got it. I saw her smile.

MARGARET
 She's "smiling" at your stupid imitation.

TWINKS
 Who you callin' stupid, Ghouda?

MARGARET
 You. I'm calling you stupid. Stupid, and moronic, and abrasive,
 crude, vulgar . . .

TWINKS
 Vulgar? Vulgar?! The last bitch that called me vulgar doesn't
 have a tongue in her head now. But I can't do that again: too
 much blood. So let me get creative here.
 (pulls her knife)
 Oh, yeah. That's a good one: let's do a head-stand, Cheesey.
 Get on your head. Let's go.

MARGARET
 What?

TWINKS
 Stand-on-your-head. You know how you did that in grade school?
 We're gonna do it again. Just you and I. 'Cept you're gonna do
 it and I'm going to watch.

MARGARET
 I will not.

TWINKS
 You will, or you'll bleed.

MARGARET
 You wouldn't dare.

TWINKS

I'd cut you quicker than the blink of an eye. Nip and nick you from top to bottom.

(backing her towards a wall)

Now, put your head between your legs, arch your back and throw your legs up to the wall. Remember, kick off before you bend back. It's real easy, Cheddar. Now get going.

MARGARET

I can't . . .

TWINKS

Sure you can. And I bet you could stay up there for an hour. So let's try.

MARGARET

Why are you doing this to me?

TWINKS

Because you keep trying to make a class thing in here. And I'm going to teach you that we won't get anywhere unless you give that up. In danger, there ain't no class -- just a lot of scared people. Now get up.

MARGARET

Please don't make me do this.

TWINKS

Get up!

MARGARET

NO!

TWINKS

GET UP!

REILLY

STOP IT!

TWINKS

(thrusting the knife towards her)

GET THE HELL UP!

REILLY

STOP!

Reilly goes for the knife; Twinks jumps out of reach, then turns the knife on Reilly. Margaret goes for the knife, knocking Twinks to the ground. The knife is thrown across the floor.

Reilly runs for the knife, grabs it, then runs for the door. Without thinking, she throws the knife under the door.

Twinks scrambles to the door and tries to reach the knife through the crack. She bangs the door in frustration.

Reilly slumps to the floor, sits. Twinks walks to Reilly, hovers over her for a beat, then -- like a cat -- springs to Margaret.

TWINKS

You win for now . . . but watch your back, lady, 'cause now you got me mad.

Margaret takes the chair, pushes it to safe area of the room, and sits.

Twinks crosses to the wall she's written on. She rests her head -- face forward -- on the wall, and folds her arms over her head.

They wait . . .

SCENE II

The room Time has passed--enough time to make the waiting unbearable.

Lights slowly fade up.

Margaret sits slumped on the floor, head between her hands, her eyes closed. Reilly sits on the floor, facing a corner, humming. Twinks is lying on the floor, asleep.

TANYA sits in the chair, legs folded underneath her. She seems perfectly at peace with the setting. She reads a text book.

TANYA

(reading)

I don't get it.

(flipping backwards through the pages)

This is so confusing.

(scanning the previous page)

Who wrote this shit? Like, I am totally confused now.

Reilly looks up, but doesn't say anything.

TANYA (continued)

You too, huh? Who cares what a "dyadic coalition" is? Who? Will I use that--ever--in my adult life? No!

(reading)

"Each participant's perception of the other is a transaction between the qualities of the other and the unique interpretation of them and affects their communication." . . . Is it me? Or is there, like, just too many words per thought there?

(slamming the book shut)

Fuck it.

Margaret's head pops up.

MARGARET

What?

TANYA

Nothing. I was venting. Sorry. Go back to sleep.

MARGARET

I wasn't sleeping.

TANYA

So, how long have you been waiting?

Margaret looks at Reilly, then Twinks, but no answer.

TANYA (continued)

That long, huh? Great. I have a lot of things on my To Do List to accomplish today, so I hope he doesn't keep us waiting too long. It just wouldn't be cool if I was late to my Behavior Mod class for the ga-zillionth time. He already thinks I'm a pain in the ass. I can't blame him, though. I didn't go to the first six classes because I heard he was, like, boring and spits when talks. So he's going to bore you to tears and spit at you at the same time? Gee. What a party.

(regarding Twinks)

Boy, she's got that sleep thing down, huh? Damn, talk about go out like a light anywhere.

(To Reilly)

What year are you?

REILLY

I'm not, uhm . . . I don't know.

TANYA

Isn't that for shit? You accumulate like four-hundred and forty-thousand credits and they still say you're between a junior and a senior because you haven't taken Fractions, or some other fucking math course.

(a beat)

Do I sound bitter? That's what my father says: "You sound bitter. You have an edge." Edge, my ass. I think he's full of shit. Just because this educational institution is run by morons, taught by virtual illiterates, and attended by every loser in a five state radius does not mean I'm bitter. It only means I have perspective about my situation. Am I right?

MARGARET

You go to school?

TANYA

Oh, are you somebody's mother, or something?

MARGARET

Yes, but . . .

TANYA

Ohhhhh! Are you the mother of that girl that's bringing Professor D. to court? We all heard you were coming today. We can't wait to see what happens. I personally have always hated going into his office. Did he really take his penis out of his trousers and shake it at her?

TANYA (continued)

And did she really pass out and hit her head on the floor and lose, like, two quarts of blood? Oh, my God. I would have died. Just died. He's never done anything like that to me. Except once, I thought he was winking at me, but he said he just had dry eyes. Yeah, right.

MARGARET

Is that why you're here? To see him?

TANYA

I got a "D" on a research paper. Then at the bottom, to make matters worse, he wrote, "See me."

(To Reilly)

What'd you get?

REILLY

I'm not in school.

TANYA

Oh. Are you just auditing his class? Shit, I envy you. See, if I could just kick back and listen to the lectures and not take the tests or write the papers -- like you -- I know I'd be at least a B student. I just get so stressed. But it's partly their fault too. I mean, do you think that I think for one minute that they actually enjoy teaching? Well, if they do, why do they have all those bitchy graduate assistants who don't really know what's going on anyway? The worst is my English Comp teacher who actually admitted that she goes to psycho therapy right before our class, and is like, in the darkest, shitiest mood when she walks in the door. AND, she's got this nervous tick. It's the worst. She, like, picks at her nose and doesn't even know she's doing it? Who can concentrate? And my Communications class is taught by an Iranian. He can't even speak English and he's trying to teach me how to communicate?! I don't buy it. But the worst is my Women's Studies class that is just full of these radical lesbians who want a world without men. Can you imagine? Alright, I admit, there are a few men I hate -- like my father and often, my boyfriend. But do I want them not to exist?

(a beat, then screaming with laughter)

Now that's an interesting question. That's deep.

(To Reilly)

Why are you here?

A beat. Reilly doesn't know how to answer.

REILLY

I don't know.

TANYA

Are you confused? I was too at first. I mean, my academic advisor told me I should go into genetic something or other. I absolutely hate science and everything about it. So I changed to nursing.

MARGARET

No, she really means she doesn't know why she's here.

TANYA

Are you lost, or something?

REILLY

I don't think so.

TANYA

Are you waiting for someone?

Twinks raises her head.

TWINKS

Look, princess, she doesn't know where she is. Cheese Lady over there doesn't know where she is. I don't know where I am. You think you know where you are, but you don't.

(a beat)

We've got a lot in common to have nothing in common.

Twinks lowers her head.

TANYA

Is she, like, dreaming or something? Was that real?

TWINKS

(springing to her feet)

No, I'm not dreaming. I'm awake. I've been awake. I just didn't want to look up, because then I'd be a part of the "girl" group. Now I'm up.

(stretches, yawns, shakes)

Okay. Let me get this straight. You're waiting to see your professor?

TANYA

Yeah.

TWINKS

Well . . . chances are, you're not going to see him anytime soon.

TANYA

(gathering her books)

Did he overbook his appointments again? This is the third time this has happened. I feel like a number. I do. I feel like student number 1003, who's got this problem, and I'm at the hands of this maniac who is fucking me over. I knew it. I should've taken Gender Issues. Why didn't somebody say something?

(moving towards the door)

Thanks a lot. I'm probably going to be late for my Behavior Mod class . . .

The door is locked.

TANYA (continued)

What the -- the door's jammed.

TWINKS

Locked.

TANYA

Locked? Why?

Margaret, Twinks and Reilly look at one another, then slowly allow the absurdity of it all to vocalize into almost uncontrollable laughter.

TANYA (continued)

Is there, like, something I'm not getting?

TWINKS

Yeah. Something like that.

TANYA

They locked me in? That is so weird. How are we suppose to get out?

TWINKS

Well, we could scream.

MARGARET

We've done that. Maybe we should pray.

REILLY

I've done that.

TANYA

Why not just knock? I mean, people do respond to that. It's universal, isn't it? You knock on the door, someone answers it.

Twinks gestures grandly towards the door. Tanya, self-conscious, walks to the door and hesitates. First she knocks softly. No response. Tanya knocks loudly.

Embarrassed, she starts to walk away, then jumps to the door and bangs on it.

TANYA (continued)

That's pretty rude, don't you think?

MARGARET

FUCKING INHUMANE, I'd say!

TWINKS

Well, well, well. I hope you're still not worried about taking the Lord's name in vain as today's big sin.

MARGARET

I WANT AN ANSWER . . . DAMN-IT!

TWINKS

(approaching her)

Cheese-on-a-cracker -- you're getting yourself all worked up, here. Honey, if anybody had an answer, we'd give it to you. But we don't. We just don't.

MARGARET

(breaking)

But--it doesn't--make sense.

Reilly crosses to Margaret and puts her arm around her.

TANYA

Can I get something straight . . .

TWINKS

. . . probably not, but go ahead . . .

TANYA

. . . We're locked in this, like, nondescript room, and we can't get out? And I get the feeling nobody knows why. And everyone's, like, really intense and angry.

TANYA (continued)

And there's this unspoken hostility everywhere. It's really thick . . . Well, I think the answer to this is simple. We should try to communicate with them.

MARGARET

Who?

TANYA

Whoever locked the door. But we have to be careful. I mean, who knows who it is? It could be a serial killer, or terrorists, or the F.B.I. Were any of you demonstrators against the government or maybe you're, like, pro-life and stalk abortion clinics? I think we should be honest about that. The F.B.I. make lists. They do. My aunt use to carve the face of Ronald Regen into potatos and then let them dry up and get all wrinkly and nasty and then sell them at street fairs for a lot of money. But then some stranger told her she should be careful because she could end up on a F.B.I. list. And wouldn't you know: all of a sudden, she stopped getting her mail for two whole years. Coincidence? I don't know. But she stopped selling the potatos and all of sudden, the mail was back in her box. Coincidence? I don't know. But if it is the F.B.I., they're bound to want to talk about it. I mean, they just don't do things without a reason, do they? I even studied them. I did. But I don't remember a fucking thing. God, wouldn't you know? I even remember thinking, why would I ever want to know this shit? Story of my life.

MARGARET

It's worth a try.

TWINKS

Alright, who's got paper and a pen?

TANYA

I do.

(finds paper and pen)

Oh! I know who it could be. There's this sect of catholic nuns that are suppose to have this really violent, mean side to them and they carry machine guns and machetees, and do these really sick, twisted things in the name of Jesus Christ while they sing, like, hymns and stuff. And nobody ever suspects them. It could be them. I hear they turn up everywhere.

(a beat, she screams with laughter)

No. Wait. I think that was just a short story I read once.

Twinks scribbles a message across the paper, then walks towards the door.

MARGARET

What did you say?

TWINKS

Trust me, okay?

MARGARET

No. What did you say?

Twinks stops in her tracks--tired of the battle. She crosses and hands Margaret the note.

MARGARET (continued)

"Open the door, you motherfuckers!" Oh, yeah. Yeah, that's good. I'd open it. Quick.

Margaret crumbles the paper and tosses it to the floor.

TWINKS

Alright, what would you suggest?

MARGARET

Be direct. "We are tired of waiting. We don't appreciate being locked in here. The police will be here soon. Let us out."

TWINKS

Do you think they care if we "appreciate" being in here?

REILLY

What about: "Let us out. Please."

TWINKS

Oh, Jesus, I will not beg to get out of here.

TANYA

Let's do what we have to do!

Tanya retrieves the pen, pulls out a sheet of paper and begins writing.

TANYA (continued)

If one thing doesn't work, let's try another. But what the hell good does it do to argue about it? Now I know why you were in here for so long.

TWINKS

Oh, puhleeease. What do you know but what's in that empty head of yours, anyway?

TANYA

Look, asshole, if you think I'm going to stand here and take your shit . . .

MARGARET

You're wasting your time. She's like a pit bull. She tears at what she's trained to kill.

TWINKS

What the fuck is that suppose to mean?

MARGARET

Women threaten you, so you attack them.

TWINKS

What are you, my fuckin' therapist?

REILLY

Stop it!

TWINKS

Kiss my ass.

REILLY

You have a really bad mouth.

TANYA

If that was her only problem.

MARGARET

Right?!

TWINKS

Look! I got more education than your sucker-father could ever pay for you in a lifetime. If you got three fuckin' Ph.Ds, I'd still be ahead of you. Because I didn't go to school, see? I went to life -- straight to life. And when I failed, it wasn't no goddamn English class. No, I lost a man I loved, or got me an abortion, or had my goddamn house repossessed. So don't throw your education around here, okay? In here, it don't count.

MARGARET

You like that, don't you? Nothing counts in here.

TWINKS

That's right. We got our minds -- well, most of us do -- that's all we need.

REILLY

What difference does it make if you don't stop fighting?

A beat. No one knows what to say.

TANYA

(scribbling)

"WE--WANT--OUT." Okay? This should do it, provided they can read English.

She slides the paper under the door. As she turns away from the door, DUSSEY bursts in frantically, slamming the door behind her.

DUSSEY

I'm late. I'm late. I'm like a big, fat naked ten-month pregnancy. I'm sorry. I know, I know. I'm scattered. I'm just scattered. I'm like a crossword puzzle just thrown all over the card table --don't even try to see the whole picture! I am in a total state of what they call "dis-array." I got that chronic something that has somethin' to do with bein' late. Anyway, you can't believe what just happened. I'll never forget it. It's gonna be with me forever. Just like a big, fat naked wart on my nose I see every time I look in the mirror.

(a beat)

Am I in the wrong damn room? Is this the advanced group? I'm new. I was supposed to be in the other group -- recommended by my probation officer -- but I was late to that so they said to come on in here . . .

TWINKS

I don't have the energy.

MARGARET

Neither do I.

REILLY

You're not really here.

DUSSEY

I better be. I paid. Had to hock my first engagement ring to make the payment. But, hell, I ain't proud. I'm just as screwed up as anybody you'd want to see. So can I sit in your group and talk my problems out?

(moves towards the chair)

Can I sit in that chair? I am, afterall, a victim of trauma.

MARGARET

You don't understand . . .

DUSSEY

I know, that's why I'm here.

TWINKS

Just let it play out.

TANYA

Really. What else can we do?

DUSSEY

I got this problem, and I want to talk about it.

(a big sigh)

I don't learn from my history -- there! I said it! . . . I could tell you stories about myself that would make you never want to have children, or give back the ones you got. Lord, the things I've put my people through. And me, of course. I went through them too . . . I mean, someone should study me and figure out what NOT to do.

(pause)

I'm chronic something and something depressive, and I just don't know how much a part of that is my fault and how much other people are messin' me up. I try to go forward. I try to do right. But I keep doin' the same things, and other people remember me always doin' the same things and don't expect me to do nothin' but those things, and . . . and nobody's learnin' or listenin' to each other or listenin' to themselves. I'm just like a big, fat naked mute -- hadn't heard a word I've said to myself in four years. I'm sorry. I just don't . . . I don't see the point if I keep doin' it all over again. Am I makin' any sense?

TWINKS

No. But in here, nothin' does, so you're in good company. Go ahead.

DUSSEY

Okay. Okay, here it is -- the big, fat naked truth. I got this history. Some call it "criminal," but I think they're exaggeratin'. I mean, I didn't kill anybody, just . . .

DUSSEY (continued)

well, maimed 'em. But anyway, I got to do this community service stuff, and I read to the blind.

(a huge sigh)

Anyway, today I was readin' to this really nice blind man. And there was this other guy there --where he lived -- that took care of him . . . and, loved him; you know what I mean. I could see it in his eyes, he . . . loved . . . him, and I could see that, but real quick like, I forgot it, 'cause I wanted something from this blind man. See, this blind guy wouldn't be able to see how my face doesn't look like it use to, or that my body's just gone to hell in a handbag or that I got a bruise on my leg the size of a softball from this guy who thought it was lots of fun to hurt me.

(softer)

So I just "forgot" this guy loved him. And I made a move for him. In front of the other guy. I had a sense that this blind guy was a little confused about this other guy lovin' him, so I just wedged myself in there . . . So I just "forgot" this guy loved him. I've done that before. Me first, because what I need is always bigger than what anyone else needs. But the blind guy needed somethin' too. And his boyfriend need somethin'. So how does that work? How does that work?

(pause)

And ain't it always that? People needin' different things from the wrong people . . . One thing led to another, and they got in a fight and hurt each other . . . the blind guy stabbed the boyfriend . . . I sat there and watched the whole thing and didn't feel bad, 'cause I needed what I needed.

(breaking)

The really sad part is that I got a feelin' that we all needed the same thing, but we couldn't help each other because everybody was operating from "Me, first." Isn't that sad?

MARGARET

(genuinely effected)

Yes.

TWINKS

Oh, give me a break.

MARGARET

What?

TWINKS

What's everyone gettin' drippy over?

MARGARET

Her story, her problem.

TWINKS

That's what's wrong with all of you. You sit, you moan, you groan, you whimper. Do something about your problems.

(to Dussey)

You wanted something. And you went for it. I don't see anything wrong with that.

MARGARET

That is the most selfish thing I've ever heard. How do you...

TWINKS

You look after YOU. You do for YOU. You think for YOU, 'cause trust me on this, no one is gonna do it for you.

REILLY

Then we'll never get out of here.

TANYA

How can you just think about you? I mean, aren't there other people in your life around you that you love . . .

REILLY

Can I say something?

TANYA

. . . if not love, like . . .

DUSSEY

It's happening again.

TANYA

. . . and what do you do, just forget them?

TWINKS

(to Tanya)

You're so full of your own shit.

DUSSEY

Who did I think I was foolin'?

MARGARET

(to Twinks)

You are so damaged. What happened to you?

REILLY

Can I say something?

TWINKS

Awww, go fuck yourself.

TANYA

(to Reilly)

Just talk loud. That's what I do. You've got talk loud to get noticed.

DUSSEY

When are you going to learn, girl? When?!

REILLY

(louder)

I WANT TO SAY SOMETHING!

DUSSEY

Where ever I go, I cause trouble. Well, who wants trouble? I don't. No wonder nobody wants to have anything to do with me. I'm a big, fat naked loser, is what I am.

TWINKS

(overlapping Dussey)

Then say something, goddamn it! Crawl out of that damn shell of yours and say something that is gonna matter to your life. You're getting on my nerves, so fuckin' say something.

DUSSEY

. . . the big, fat naked truth of it all is I NEED WHAT I NEED AND I CAN'T SEE BEYOND THAT. I'm the one that's blind! Not that poor country boy!

TANYA

Somebody's blind? Who?

REILLY

(louder)

WILL YOU PLEASE LISTEN TO ME?

DUSSEY

Oh, God. This is it. I'm tired. Give me a stroke, or something. I'm ready.

TANYA

Don't say that. Even if you're kidding.

DUSSEY

Who's kiddin'?

REILLY
 (overlapping several times)
 I WANT TO SAY SOMETHING!

TWINKS
 GOD-DAMN, I WANT OUT OF HERE!

DUSSEY
 I blind myself. That's what I do. And I can't stop. I CAN'T
 STOP! Oh, my God. I've gotta get the hell outta here.
 (going for the door)
 How do you run away from yourself? Has anybody figured that
 out in here?

TANYA
 You are really high-strung.

TWINKS
 WOULD SOMEONE ASK THE HOMECOMING QUEEN TO PUT A LID ON IT?

TANYA
 FUCK YOU.

*Reilly lifts the chair and drops it to the
 floor.*

REILLY
 STOP IT! PLEASE!

The room falls silent.

REILLY (continued)
 (walking slowly to the center)
 We're all so awful, aren't we? . . . Me, too. I sat here and
 let you scream at each other . . . hurt each other. Don't you
 feel like you've been hurt? I do . . . I hate that.
 (a beat)
 I don't know why we're here. I only did what I was told to
 do. But we've got to decide something, don't we? I mean,
 don't we have to talk, or something? It's like a war in here
 and . . . and . . . I feel sick.
 (a beat)
 Why can't you just leave each other alone? . . . There's
 something about being shy that I think you could all learn
 from. *Don't talk all the time* . . . Okay?

MARGARET
 Good for you.

REILLY

Wait, I'm not finished. My mother died of cancer, in her esophagus, and my brother was a drunk and died in a car, and my father -- now that we're alone -- hits me, and puts himself on top of me, and calls me "Shirley."

(beginning to break)

I use to ask why. "Why?" But there was no one there to answer that. Sometimes there isn't, you know? I'm not sure it even matters.

TANYA

Sure it matters. If my father crawled up on me -- not that he ever has -- but you know, you never know . . .

TWINKS

Will you shut up?

MARGARET

Look, she has an opinion. Can't she . . .

TWINKS

Opinions don't count in here! At least not hers.

MARGARET

Since when?

TWINKS

Since I said so.

TANYA

Who IS that bitch?

DUSSEY

This is group therapy, isn't it?

REILLY

You didn't hear anything I said, did you? Did you?

DUSSEY

Not a word. But don't count on me for much of anything.

TWINKS

I did. I heard you, hon.

MARGARET

And a lot of damn good it did.

TWINKS
 (shoving Margaret)
 Goddamn it, lady, you are pissing me off.

TANYA
 Leave her alone.

TWINKS
 (to Tanya)
 You want some of me. DO YOU WANT SOME OF ME?

TANYA
 You don't scare me.

DUSSEY (overlapping)
 (digging in her purse)
 I'm sure I got the right room. I wrote it down.

MARGARET (overlapping)
 (to Twinks)
 Look, you've got no right to push and shove anybody . . .

TWINKS
 I CAN DO ANYTHING! ANYTHING!

TANYA (overlapping)
 She's crazy. YOU'RE CRAZY! WHY ARE WE EVEN TALKING TO HER?

TWINKS
 I'M WARNING YOU. I'M WARNING ALL OF YOU.

REILLY
 DID ANYBODY HEAR WHAT I SAID?

DUSSEY
 (looking at paper)
 Yep. Room 219.

REILLY
 (screaming out in pain)
 STOP! . . . STOP IT! . . . PLEASE!

*Reilly collapses to the floor. The room
 quiets again. Reilly, visibly upset,
 abruptly brushes her tears away.*

DUSSEY

I sure hope I'm in the right room, and didn't just spill my guts to a beginner's group. Oh, wouldn't that take the big, fat naked cake?

REILLY

How can you . . . be so . . . unkind to each other. You don't even . . . know each other.

Reilly buries her head in her arms and painfully begins breaking down.

TWINKS

Reils? Honey, what's going on? . . . Reilly?

TANYA

Are you okay? Is she alright?

MARGARET

Sweetheart, it's all over. It just got a little heated, but everyone's stopped. No more yelling, everyone!

Tanya goes to Reilly, puts her arm around her.

TANYA

It's alright. Everything's alright. Come on. It's going to be okay, Reilly. Everything's okay.

Twinks tentatively walks to her and hesitantly takes her hand.

TWINKS

Okay, Reilly. It's all over. And nothing bad happened. We're still here. Hey, lookit. I got a smile on my face.

Reilly looks up and sees Twinks frowning over her. Twinks quickly smiles--but it looks awkward on her.

TWINKS (continued)

See? Big smile. Oh, I've got a big smile for you. It's gonna be okay.

MARGARET

Sure it is.

TANYA

That's right!

DUSSEY

This has got to be the beginner's group . . . Don't you get it? Don't you understand what's going on here, ladies? Hell, she was just waiting for someone, anyone to think of her.)

(to Reilly)

That's all you wanted, ain't that right, darlin'?

*Dussey walks to the door, opens it . . .
and walks out. The others look to the
open door, silent.*

Slow, slow fade out.

END OF PLAY