

#twinning

By

John Patrick Bray

#twinning

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CHARACTERS

Gillian, a senior in high school, the “normal” twin, the one with the plan.

Jessica, a senior in high school, the “weird” twin, the one who doesn’t get credit for being more attuned.

Patrick, father to Gillian and Jessica, a grieving widower, principal, and older brother to:

Carl, uncle to Gillian and Jessica.

Voice, Trudy (Tennis Player, Dancer), Student

SETTING

2011/ Several locations represented in a unit set, but there should always been a classroom feel (two high school desks and chairs moved around to change the space, etc., and the ever-present twin lights upstage, being a nod to Tribute in Light).

CONTENT WARNING

Self-harm.

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HISTORY

#TWINNING (under its original title, *CAPSTONE*) was commissioned as part of the 2018 San Francisco Olympians Festival: Rome (Stuart Bousel, Artistic Director). The play was presented as a staged reading at EXIT Stage Left Theatre (Christina Augello, Artistic Director, EXIT Theatre) in San Francisco on October 11, 2018, with the following cast:

Alisha Ehrlich (Gillian)

Ciera Eis (Jessica)

Vince Faso (Patrick)

Heather Kellogg (Trudy)

Scott Lettiri (Carl)

Sara Breindel (Stage Directions)

The play has had two additional readings with Rising Sun Performance Company (NYC), under the leadership of artistic director Akia Squitieri.

RUN TIME

60-65 minutes, no intermission.

SYNOPSIS

Jessica and Gillian are bullied twin girls who have been cast to play the Twin Towers in their uncle's pageant at Rome High. They decide to make a statement by disrupting the event with self-inflicted wounds. A look into the life of twins, *#TWINNING* reminds us that we all follow the beat of our own (not necessarily patriotic) drum.

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NOTE

I am an identical twin and the father of children with autism. I found out one night from a family member that my teachers and guidance counselors wanted to have me tested. As an adult, I was diagnosed as borderline, but my insurance plan did not cover further tests. This play is for those who still don't know.

FURTHER DEDICATION

To Gregg. To Tomax and Xamot and the Hasbro Toy company. To Doublemint Gum and to people who say they "study twins."

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She was born under the sign of Gemini. And that stands for the good and evil twin. Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde both hiding and residing inside her heart. Her good twin was not bad at all. But her evil twin was even better, and showed up to be way too fatal!

— Ana Claudia Antunes, *Mysterious Murder of Marilyn Monroe*

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In the darkness, music plays. Something mono-tonal, repetitive. As if we're in the bleakest casino. Numbers and letters project around the room in darkness. Lights come up a little bit. Twin girls, JESSICA and GILLIAN, sit at two desks. Behind them, two blue beams of light shoot to the sky. PATRICK and CARL, move into the center of each light. They look up.

GILLIAN. I used to think I was smart. (*Gillian and Jessica lift their tests.*)

JESSICA. Not think.

BOTH. Feel.

JESSICA. I used to feel smart.

GILLIAN. I used to feel...

JESSICA. Heart. Hands. Fingers. Feet.

GILLIAN. I used to feel...

JESSICA. Smart.

GILLIAN. Connected. We were part of something, weren't we?

JESSICA. Were we?

GILLIAN. It's not nostalgia. Nostalgia is like...waving a flag because you're told by someone older it's the thing to do.

JESSICA. There's a story of a temple of monks. They were very old. A cat used to come in and disturb their prayer. So, one of the monks tied up the cat. It became his responsibility each day to tie up the cat to a post in the room and let it go when the prayer had ended. Then the monk died. And another took his place. And another. Until all the old monks passed away and new monks took over the responsibility. And one day the cat died. They buried the cat. And the next day, someone bought a new cat to tie up during their daily chants. That's nostalgia. That's waving a flag. I used to feel smart. (*Sound of a school buzzer.*)

GILLIAN. Adults sound like French horns in the Charlie Brown Peanuts cartoons we stream.

JESSICA. Because they sound that way in life.

GILLIAN. One sound fits all.

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JESSICA. McEducation. McTests. McAmerica.

GILLIAN. The scores go into a black hole.

JESSICA. Princeton Review publishes the study guides for the GRE.

GILLIAN. And creates the GRE tests.

JESSICA. That you pay for.

GILLIAN. Buy the guide, increase your score.

JESSICA. It's something I now know.

GILLIAN. Something I can pass onto my daughter. If I have a daughter.
If I get married.

JESSICA. And before that.

GILLIAN. If I get into grad school. If I pass undergrad.

JESSICA. And before that.

GILLIAN. If I pass high school. If I make it through senior year alive
alive alive I don't feel ALIVE.

JESSICA. And before that.

GILLIAN. If I pass THIS TEST!

JESSICA. I will never have a daughter. This is something I know now.
This is something I wish I could tell my younger self sitting at a desk. You
will never have a daughter. (*A beat. Suddenly!*)

VOICE. (*emulating French horn*) Charter vision!

JESSICA. Common core.

GILLIAN. More tests.

JESSICA. Less common.

VOICE. (*emulating French horn*) Common core!

GILLIAN. More black holes. Make the tests fit the black holes.

JESSICA. (*Beat. Looking at test.*) It's a pattern.

GILLIAN. I can't see it...

JESSICA. Just look at the page. It's a bubble dance. (*Sounds of NYC at
night.*)

CARL. I CAN'T BELIEVE I'M SEEING IT!

PATRICK. WHY ARE YOU SHOUTING?

CARL. BECAUSE. I'M OVERCOME BY AWE.

PATRICK. BY WHAT?

CARL. THE MAJESTY!

VOICE. (*emulating French horn*) Never forget.

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CARL. WHO KNEW THAT TEN YEARS LATER THIS PLACE
WOULD BECOME HOLY?

VOICE. Holy?

CARL. YES. HOLY. TEN YEARS AGO, WHEN TRAGEDY STRUCK,
I NEVER THOUGHT I'D BE ABLE TO STAND HERE AND LOOK
ON IN AWE. I THOUGHT IT WAS THE END OF EVERYTHING

CARL AND VOICE. NEVER FORGET!

CARL. THE END OF HISTORY!

GILLIAN. Bubble dance. Dot dance.

CARL. THE END OF HUMANITY!

GILLIAN. (*Attempting a dance in her seat, speaking
rhythmically/poetically.*) No top, no bottom, no side to side/ No dots, no
dots.

CARL. NO BUILDINGS.

GILLIAN. (*Rhythmic/Poetic.*) No government, no art/ No dots, no dots

CARL. And we stand tall.

GILLIAN. The lesson we learned is wrong/ Because there is no lesson

JESSICA. It's a pattern.

CARL. We stand together, millions of dots on a map.

GILLIAN. (*Rhythmic, Poetic.*) No lines, no dynamics/ No dots, no dots.
/Never forget where you came from / Never forget where you belong.

GILIAN, CARL. NEVER FORGET! (*Carl's eyes grow with awe and
inspiration.*)

PATRICK. How can I? Everywhere I go I'm forced to remember.

CARL. Remember when they said I had to come up with a patriotic
pageant for the investors for our awesome Charter School?

PATRICK. (*Beat.*) No. (*Sounds of NYC and mono-tonal music continue.*)

JESSICA. It's a movement. Gillian – (*Jessica rises from her seat. She
looks up as if someone is talking to her. She addresses the unseen person.*)

I'm not cheating. It's a movement. There's a pattern to the answers.

CARL. I'VE SEEN THE LIGHT!!!

GILLIAN. Jessica, sit down!

JESSICA. Look at it. Imagine, you're trying to learn how to dance. Think
of those really old cartoons where they would have the shoe prints of
where you're supposed to step, and when you're supposed to step, and the

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dots and lines leading to different footprints, and how...once you see the pattern, the questions don't matter. It's step, step, step –

GILLIAN. (*Toward an unseen test monitor downstage.*) She's just – please, don't –

JESSICA. Failed? I didn't fail. The pattern is right –

GILLIAN. Don't touch her!

JESSICA. DON'T TOUCH ME! (*Music out. The girls freeze.*)

CARL. TWINS, PATRICK! THE TWIN THING! I see it! The Tribute in Light. Oh, you'll see what I have in mind. Man. Kind of makes you proud. (*Beat.*) Man, what do you know, you're still looking for a way out. Aren't you? (*Patrick glares at him. Lights change.*)

GILLIAN. (*unfreezing*) Dad? (*Carl's light turns off as Patrick approaches Gillian.*) Jessica's has in school suspension. And, um. Principal Rua says we both have to report to detention.

PATRICK. Oh. That's....oh.

JESSICA. (*to us*) I don't think I've ever felt...connected.

GILLIAN. No dots. (*BLACKOUT. A voice in the darkness. Music might swell under as it speaks.*)

VOICE. (*robotic*) Choice. Choice is a freedom. You have the freedom to be innovative. You have the freedom to be creative. You have the freedom to ask. To think. To build. As part of education reform, you now have the choice to attend a school that is tailored to suit you. Our student. Our customer. Our community. Welcome to Rome Charter: Balance, Discipline, Strength! (*A light on Patrick.*)

PATRICK. She's a substitute teacher. Young. She doesn't know we can't just put our hands on people here. My daughter doesn't like being touched. At all. And I don't think folks should...Mr. Rua, I've been thinking. Can we do something about getting Jessica an IEP? I know, I know that's something we don't really do here. Public school? No, I'm not sending her to public school, she's too smart for that. As you know, she graduates from here, she'll have her pick of colleges. No, I don't think it's right that she got up, but that's just a girl standing up for a moment, you know how girls are and how they like to, um, stand. Forget I said anything about an IEP. No, I think we are all fine here. We're fine. It was just a mistake with the substitute teacher. Just a mistake. (*Lights Up on Gillian and Jessica.*)

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GILLIAN. I can't believe *I* have detention.

JESSICA. Guilt by association.

GILLIAN. Twin discrimination.

JESSICA. Is that a thing?

GILLIAN. It's the twin thing.

JESSICA. Why is Trudy in here?

GILLIAN. I don't know. She smells awful.

JESSICA. Probably from playing tennis.

GILLIAN. We have showers.

JESSICA. Maybe she avoids them here. I avoid them here.

GILLIAN. I know. I've been meaning to talk to you about it.

JESSICA. I smell? (*Smells herself.*) Oh. I don't play tennis, though. I do like the track. Huh. Maybe I should start.

GILLIAN. Maybe.

JESSICA. You smell, too. But it's a good smell. (*Lights change. The girls remain in their seats. They're both doing work. Gillian pauses, takes out her cell phone and looks. She's somewhere between panicked and mortified. She says nothing. Jessica continues working.*)

JESSICA. You saw the pictures.

GILLIAN. There's more than one? (*Lights up in a different area: instead of being near the former site of the towers, we're near a high school tennis court – entirely suggested by a costume worn by Patrick, a coach, and the sounds of the game. Occasional grunts can be heard by an offstage TRUDY who is not doing well on the court. Patrick watches, but he's not fully invested. He has an old laptop and is typing a bit and returning occasionally to look at the off-stage practice. Carl enters carrying a box of props. One can immediately tell that whatever he teaches, he must be involved with HS drama. He takes a banner out of the box and holds it up. It reads TEN YEARS OF 9/11. He looks at it proudly and sets it back in the box.*)

CARL. Dinner tonight?

PATRICK. I can't, I have –

CARL. A paper due?

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PATRICK. I have to argue why the school day should or should not be extended. It's an argumentative essay I'll need to present both to the Board of Education and to parents.

CARL. Actually, present or just as a hypothetical?

PATRICK. Hypothetical, but...it's worth considering.

CARL. Career suicide.

PATRICK. Maybe. Maybe not. I don't know.

CARL. You sure you really want this degree?

PATRICK. If I want to be an administrator.

CARL. I don't think you really need an online PhD –

PATRICK. It'll help. Right now, we need all the help we can get. (*Beat.*)

Thank you for.... for helping Jessica out of her, you know. Her jam.

CARL. Hey! I get a patriotic pageant; she gets a capstone project. Pretty good as far as punishment goes. Rua says he might consider doing this as a creative alternative to one of the tests.

PATRICK. I know. Social Studies. Is he allowed to do that?

CARL. He's the principal so he can do whatever he wants. So sayeth the board.

PATRICK. The corporate investors.

CARL. Don't start. Rua said something about an IEP.

PATRICK. Oh.

CARL. It might be worth considering.

PATRICK. No. You know what labels do here.

CARL. If she's already acting out in class.

PATRICK. It's not acting out. It's standing. All she did was stand.

CARL. Okay. I want the girls here, I like having them here, I like having us all together in one place, but if it comes down to Jessica's comfort.

PATRICK. She's comfortable. She's fine.

CARL. Okay.

PATRICK. There have been too many disruptions already the last couple of years.

CARL. ...yeah...they ever talk about? (*Patrick goes silent.*) Do you ever talk about? (*A ball bounces hard. Trudy groans in frustration off stage.*)

Trudy can't find her feet out there. Look.

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PATRICK. It's like she's wearing clogs. (*Patrick claps.*) Good energy, Trudy! Don't lose your focus!

CARL. Great coaching there.

PATRICK. Shut up.

CARL. The girls inside?

PATRICK. Yeah, they're ready for you. (*Beat.*) Hey. Gillian mentioned. (*Struggling.*) She said. She said for your Patriot's Day Pageant. I can't believe I'm saying this out loud. She said that she and Jessica are playing the Twin Towers.

CARL. Yes!

PATRICK. Why?

CARL. I told you when we visited Ground Zero – the twin thing!

PATRICK. The twin thing.

CARL. Yes. Come on, it's apropos!

PATRICK. Of what?

CARL. For the ten-year anniversary of 9/11! Everyone is playing someone or something, you know, American. And they're twins, isn't it spectacularly obvious? And they're going to wear American Flag sashes, but they're going to be like, at different angles. They'll be mirror-image twins like those G.I. Joe guys...what were they called...

PATRICK. Tomax and Xamot.

CARL. Tomax and Xamot! Yes! And Trudy out there – she has a part. She's a dancer... (*They look at Trudy. A missed ball and a grunt. Carl and Patrick wince.*) All your girls need to do is stand. Tall. Proud. Twins.

PATRICK. (*Not convinced.*) Just stand.

CARL. You suddenly have a problem with your girls just standing?

PATRICK. Fine. They can stand.

CARL. That's right. Just stand.

PATRICK. As the Twin Towers.

CARL. Right. They just stand there. (*Beat.*) Until the airplane dance.

PATRICK. !!!!

CARL. No, wait, I know that look and I know how it sounds, but it's tasteful. It works.

PATRICK. It works?! It can't possibly work!!! (*He looks at the court apologetically.*) Not you, Trudy, you're doing great! (*Back to Carl.*) You

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know how much trouble they're.... (*lowers voice*)...they're having trouble here. Relating. They get...bullied.

CARL. Oh, you mean the picture thing?

PATRICK. What picture thing?

CARL. They made a meme out of the girls.

PATRICK. Who did?

CARL. One of the other kids.

PATRICK. They...they didn't tell me.

CARL. Oh. It was just a...silly thing. Someone took a picture of them where they looked like the Olsen twins. So, they pasted the words Full House over it and sent it out on Instagram or Snapchat, one of those.

(*Jessica addresses us. They're still looking at their phones, presumably where they see the pictures.*)

JESSICA. That's not really what happened.

GILLIAN. There was a picture of us just standing next to each other. Nothing Olsen twins about it. And they put titles over the pic, but like...changed the titles of the Olsen projects to be like pornographic.

JESSICA. We'll spare you the examples. (*Beat.*) "*Full Mouth.*"

GILLIAN. It was Trudy. I think it was Trudy. Had to be Trudy.

JESSICA. I didn't really get it. Olsens weren't really on my radar.

GILLIAN. Would Trudy do a thing like that?

JESSICA. When we were younger, we'd get a lot of "Doublemint Gum" references from people who were older. That's how I learned to smile. Not because it was funny. But because I was supposed to.

GILLIAN. Trudy is such a bitch.

JESSICA. I don't know Trudy. (*The focus changes to Patrick and Carl.*)

PATRICK. And you think having them do a, what, *plane* dance will make them (*searches for a way to end the sentence*) ...I don't know if it will help.

CARL. Oh, OH, no! Nononono, *they're* not doing the plane dance. They're just standing. Trudy is doing the plane dance. It hits the towers and they fall.

PATRICK. She hits my girls.

CARL. And they fall.

PATRICK. !!!! (*A big grunt from Trudy. Back to Gillian and JESSICA.*)

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GILLIAN. It's just the name. *Trudy*. It's a crap name. It had to be Trudy.

JESSICA. Why would Trudy do it?

GILLIAN. Oh, I know why. It's because she's the plane. We're the buildings.

JESSICA. She gets to knock us down. I don't see why she'd need revenge for knocking us down.

GILLIAN. Oh. Then maybe it was Brad...God, I hate him. (*Gillian and Jessica freeze. Back to Carl and Patrick.*)

CARL. We shouldn't do this now, let's, um...

PATRICK. We need to –

CARL. I'll come by tonight. I know, I know, your essay, but. I'll grab a pesto pizza from Touch of Naples, okay? (*Patrick reacts; it's his favorite, dangit. Carl smiles.*) You'll have time to work on your essay, eat, and we'll show you what we're doing. Okay?

PATRICK. Early tonight.

CARL. Good. (*He exits. Another hit, another groan from Trudy. PATRICK looks at Jessica and Gillian who remain frozen.*)

PATRICK. They fall. (*Something loud – like the big “I get knocked down!” part of Chumbawumba’s “Tub Thumpin”- plays as LIGHTS CHANGE. Gillian and Jessica stand under blue beams of light. Patrick and Carl move the desks into a sort of table. Carl plops a pizza box on it, opens it. Gillian and Jessica recite as this action occurs.*)

GILLIAN. World peace through trade.

JESSICA. (*Doing a bad Nixon impression.*) This center shall be major factor for the expansion of the nation's international trade.

GILLIAN. We stand shoulder to shoulder.

JESSICA. Brother to brother.

GILLIAN. We are balance, democracy.

JESSICA. Freedom.

GILLIAN. We represent the third time in the twentieth century that the United States had a dedication ceremony for the city's largest building. (*They both hold up flashlights.*)

JESSICA. What's that?

GILLIAN. Up in the sky?

JESSICA. It's a bird!

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GILLIAN. It's a plane!

BOTH. It's a birdplane! Gahh!!! (*They fall to the ground.*)

CARL. No, that's not how we did it. (*Blue lights out. Carl chuckles.*)

PATRICK. That's supposed to be funny?

CARL. It's supposed to be somber.

PATRICK. A somber joke?

CARL. Everything before the flashlights, we're doing that. The rest was them, and we're NOT doing it.

JESSICA. We should make it funny.

PATRICK. The Nixon impression is pretty funny.

JESSICA. I've never really listened to Nixon.

GILLIAN. Can't we like do this kind of dramatic –NOOOOOOOOOO!!!
(*She falls in slow motion.*)

PATRICK and CARL. No!

PATRICK. Although maybe. There really isn't a way to make this tasteful.

CARL. I mean...the *towers fell*. We have to acknowledge it as an important moment in our history.

PATRICK. Why?

CARL. First act of war on our soil in the twenty-first century. Not important enough?

PATRICK. No. Why does it need to be represented *again*? Every time I go to the movies. I want to forget. Big show down with a supervillain? A tower falls. Love story about a guy who finally gets his life together and has a job interview. Where and when is the interview? And the tower falls. Every action film, every scifi, every romance, every fantasy, it's invoking the two towers. This is unbelievably tasteless. Why not do something else that's...patriotic? Dress them like Uncle Sam.

CARL. We only have the one beard –

GILLIAN. I get the beard!

JESSICA. AWWW!

CARL. AND, we already have someone wearing it.

PATRICK. How about Mount Rushmore?

CARL. You really don't know?

PATRICK. Enlighten me.

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CARL. Liberty Freedom Charter at Rome High School has a presence in the Freedom Tower.

PATRICK. Presence?

CARL. One of the donors is an organization that keeps us going. So, we give them a little ceremony.

PATRICK. We trade our morals, and we get to keep our positions.

CARL. We're all beholden to something. *(Pause.)*

PATRICK. I gotta finish the essay. They're not doing this.

GILLIAN. Yes, we are.

PATRICK. No, you're not.

GILLIAN and JESSICA. Yes, we are!

PATRICK. No, you're not.

CARL. That was like surround sound.

JESSICA. Except we're standing together.

GILLIAN. "Together sound?"

CARL. Remember why *they* have to do this. Actually, Gillybean, I'm not sure why you're doing this, it's really Jessica.

GILLIAN. Moral support.

JESSICA. I don't really need moral support.

GILLIAN. *(Deliberate.)* Yes. You do. We both do.

PATRICK. *(Beat.)* Tell me about the picture thing. *(Carl looks nervous.)*

JESSICA. Someone took a photo of us in the hallway. They put hair on us to look like the Olsen twins and put the titles of –

GILLIAN. Their movies and shows. *(Jessica gives her a look.) Full House, How the West Was Won...*

JESSICA. *It Takes Twosomes.*

PATRICK. *(Beat.)* They should have revisited that last title.

JESSICA. There's also this girl.

GILLIAN. Trudy, your tennis star.

JESSICA. She stops us in the hall every once in a while, and goes –

BOTH. *(a la The Shining)* Come and play with us, Danny. Come and play with us, Danny. Come and play with us, Danny. Come and-

PATRICK. Got it.

JESSICA. I think she's trying to be funny. I think she wants to be our friend.

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GILLIAN. It's not and she doesn't.

PATRICK. And is there anything else?

CARL. Would you be happier on public school?

JESSICA. Happier?

GILLIAN. I wouldn't.

PATRICK. Because that wouldn't look bad. Your nieces/my daughters having to go to public school. Our workplace isn't good enough for them.

CARL. The alternative was suspension. Not in school suspension, either. We could even be talking expulsion. Say goodbye to college.

JESSICA. I didn't cheat.

CARL. It doesn't matter. They say you did. (*Beat.*)

JESSICA. I want to do it.

PATRICK. Why?

JESSICA. Because. Because I don't think I'd be happier in public school. Because I'll be a part of something. (*Gillian gives her a look.*)

GILLIAN. And I get to be a part of it with her. (*Beat.*) It's a bird...

JESSICA. It's a plane-

PATRICK. Don't. (*Beat.*) I only know the one 9/11 joke. (*Gillian and Jessica look at him as if to say "well?" He relents.*) Knock Knock. (*Beat.*) It's a knock-knock joke, you want me to do this, or what?

JESSICA. Sorry.

GILLIAN. Okay.

PATRICK. Knock knock.

EVERYONE ELSE. Who's there?

PATRICK. 9/11.

GILLIAN. (*quickly*) Already funny.

ALL BUT PATRICK. 9/11 who?

PATRICK. You said you'd never forget. (*Gillian fakes laughing hard. Jessica kid of smirks. Carl chuckles uncomfortably. Patrick is still really serious.*)

PATRICK. (*To Carl.*) See? Not funny. (*Beat.*) I'll allow it because they want it.

GILLIAN. We really don't need your permission.

PATRICK. Yes, you really do. (*Beat.*) And the internet photos. Promise me. They're really nothing?

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JESSICA. I can only promise when I'm not lying. (*Tense beat.*)

PATRICK. Okay. Good. Thank you. (*He exits.*)

CARL. It's not too late to figure something out. Ms. Landers could learn some different music, and the costumes could totally be...um...something to make you look different, like really different, or... no, it has to be what it is.... God, your Dad. He really could use.... hey, Ms. Landers is single. Do you think...? (*He looks to where Patrick exited.*)

JESSICA and GILLIAN. No.

CARL. Man. Twins are creepy. (*Lights change. Blue light from a computer screen on Patrick's face. He's been at this awhile.*)

PATRICK. By having the school day an hour longer, students will be better prepared to compete in the global marketplace. An hour dedicated to any of the STEM requirements could benefit our leaders of today. (*Beat.*) That literally means nothing. (*Beat.*) Keep going. Um...The impact of No Child Left Behind, Common CORE, and the latest evaluative criteria for teacher standards has helped created a generation of consumers who have the autonomy to select a school that meets their individual educational, and therefore, economic needs best. This is not to say that schools such as the privately owned Liberty and Freedom Charter isn't....a school that redirects necessary funds from public education by catering to the elite, resulting in overcrowded public classrooms, lower salaries for public teachers, and an entire generation of kids who can spit out information without having any actual critical thought, any knowledge, any empathy for each other, which is why I KNOW my daughters are being bullied both at school and by my own brother, but hey, make me an administrator and I'll change that all, for crying out... (*LOUD.*) THIS IS NOT WHAT'S IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE! KATHERINE, I'M DOING MY BEST! (*Beat. He collects himself. He looks around.*) I'm doing my best. If you were here, you could see...I'm doing my best. (*The door creaks open. Gillian stands there holding a couple of pieces of cold pizza.*)

GILLIAN. Dad...what the actual heck? It's three thirty.

PATRICK. I know...what are you doing up?

GILLIAN. Eating. You're screaming at her again. (*Beat.*) It's okay. I yell at her too sometimes. (*She hands him a slice.*)

PATRICK. Yeah. (*They eat together while talking.*)

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GILLIAN. But I'm not mad at her.

PATRICK. Neither am I.

GILLIAN. Yes, you are.

PATRICK. Okay. Maybe a little. But mostly...it's hard feeling anything. Sorry, I shouldn't say that to...

GILLIAN. No, please. Talk about it. (*Pause. He takes another bite. Back to saying nothing.*) I don't think...I don't think she would have minded you being mad. You know? She might worry about you waking us up with it. And she might even more if we didn't, you know, *feel* it. Talk about it.

PATRICK. Everyone wants me to talk. Sorry, your uncle today said something.

GILLIAN. What would really happen if we went to somewhere where Jessica could get an IEP.

PATRICK. She could get one here.

GILLIAN. No, she couldn't. I remember what happened to that kid Scotty. The one with Tourette's and ADHD? He got an IEP and then like all the other kids pushed him and pushed him and pushed him until he had a meltdown. And he ends up at Rome High.

PATRICK. Do you think he's happier there?

GILLIAN. We don't talk to the kids at Rome High.

PATRICK. Great.

GILLIAN. We would if we went there.

PATRICK. You're almost done here. And we get to be together.

GILLIAN. Which is more important – we're almost done or we get to be together? (*A pause.*) See that? You almost talked about it. (*They sit in silence. She looks at him. He doesn't look at her. Finally looks at her. She looks like she might say something, so he says -*)

PATRICK. Good night. (*She stands to leave. Stops. Turns.*)

GILLIAN. Ms. Landers is single.

PATRICK. Who?

GILLIAN. The one doing the music for the pageant.

PATRICK. Ah. (*An expectant pause. He gets it.*) Oh. (*Beat.*) No.

GILLIAN. Okay. I was just thinking. Maybe you need to get laid. (*He gives her a look. A beat.*)

GILLIAN. Do you like it here?

#TWINNING

PATRICK. What's not to like? (*Gillian goes quiet.*)

GILLIAN. Okay. Good night.

PATRICK. Good night. (*He turns back to his computer. Types. A beat. Gillian watches him quietly.*) The school day should be longer...because I can't bear to think about anything else.... that's how I feel. (*Lights change. Gillian stands near the blue lights and looks up.*)

GILLIAN. Hey, Kathy. Mom. He's yelling again. I know you hear it. He says he can't feel. We can't really feel, either. But. We are going to do something during the pageant. Something personal. Just to let everyone know, everyone that also can't feel...that they're not alone. Because when you can't feel, when you're numb, it's like you're convinced you're the only one going through stuff. Right? So, maybe I'll feel. Jessica will feel. Dad will feel. And anyone else who can't feel will be able to feel. In that moment. It'll hurt. It'll hurt. But...pain can be happy, right? Like childbirth and giving blood. No, I don't know what childbirth feels like. But I did give blood last week. I was okay until I saw the bag filling up. And then the lady put like this longish bag of ice around my neck. And she had another lady get me a Twinkie and a Coke which was kind of okay. It turns out I get sick at the sight of blood. But I can't hold it together. I will hold it together. Also...can Dad date again? He really needs some. (*Lights change. Music blares. There should be bells. Or sirens. The sounds of chairs being dragged into place at desks. Jessica and Gillian sit. Presumably, Jessica is in detention/suspension. She sits and keeps looking at an off-stage character adjacent to her. Gillian sneaks into a chair next to her.*)

JESSICA. You're allowed to be here?

GILLIAN. I don't know. No one said anything, so. They might think I'm you.

JESSICA. But I'm sitting right next to you.

GILLIAN. Yeah, but. You know how people are. "Is one supposed to be there or two? Or...forget it, leave it be." (*Beat.*) We need to practice.

JESSICA. After detention.

GILLIAN. Why are you here? I thought the pageant was all you needed to do.

#TWINNING

JESSICA. Ms. Landers was teaching us about evolution, and she apologized for having to teach it.

GILLIAN. It?

JESSICA. Evolution.

GILLIAN. She apologized for teaching evolution?

JESSICA. Be grateful you don't have her.

GILLIAN. Wait, you're taking biology again?

JESSICA. No, this was in study hall. It became a discussion about science and what we're supposed to learn from science, how we're supposed to use it, and what fields are available to those who love science in high school. The answer is advertising.

GILLIAN. Okay.

JESSICA. And then it turned into a larger conversation first about theories of intelligent design due to the DNA found in certain particles of lichen –

GILLIAN. And then?

JESSICA. Then I asked where non-evolved babies come from. Do they come from non-evolved storks? It was my way of trying to be sarcastic and funny. They just thought I was being weird, which I wasn't, so I shouted WE ARE THE SPAWN OF BACCHUS to see what would happen. What happened is detention.

GILLIAN. You see why we need to do something?

JESSICA. Yes, we need to do something.

GILLIAN. So, let's talk about what we need to do.

JESSICA. I don't like your plan. I don't like blood.

GILLIAN. It's your blood.

JESSICA. It's *your* blood.

GILLIAN. Yes, it's in my veins, but it's the same as yours.

JESSICA. You're going to kill yourself.

GILLIAN. No. Cut myself. In the open. Let everyone watch.

JESSICA. Why?

GILLIAN. You know why.

JESSICA. I want to hear you say it.

GILLIAN. To feel. And for those who can't feel. It's about the feels, Jessica.

JESSICA. Dad might get in trouble.

#TWINNING

GILLIAN. He can't feel, either.

JESSICA. I thought he was just in crisis mode.

GILLIAN. Of course he is. Plus, he hates it here.

JESSICA. You sure?

GILLIAN. I'm sure. (*Beat.*) He'll finish his degree and go somewhere else.

JESSICA. You're supposed to go to college. You won't go to college if you're expelled.

GILLIAN. I won't be expelled, and I will go to college.

JESSICA. If you get into Ohio State, you'll have to tell them, "I stabbed myself in front of a lot of people."

GILLIAN. It's performance art! Colleges eat that up.

JESSICA. It's a terrible idea.

GILLIAN. It's a great idea. It's a brave idea.

JESSICA. I don't want to see you get hurt.

GILLIAN. (*Beat.*) Then close your eyes.

JESSICA. Ha.

GILLIAN. Do you.... feel anything?

JESSICA. I feel everything. All at once. All the time. Everything. (*Beat.*)

GILLIAN. I...don't. How lucky you are.

JESSICA. How lucky *you* are.

GILLIAN. You agree that we need to do our own thing during the dance?

JESSICA. Yes.

GILLIAN. You agree it'll get everyone's attention and shake things up a bit?

JESSICA. It'll take attention off the Olsen thing. But it'll probably make things worse.

GILLIAN. Worse than what we're going through now? (*Beat.*) Trust me?

JESSICA. You're going to do what you're going to do. But I don't like it.

GILLIAN. Fair. (*A bell rings.*) Nervous?

JESSICA. Yes. Always. All the time.

GILLIAN. Good. Then it's worth doing. (*Lights change. Patrick and Carl stand and deliver.*)

PATRICK. Katherine, they're in a pageant. Carl planned it.

CARL. I'm fascinated by the twin thing.

#TWINNING

PATRICK. He's fascinated by the twin thing.

CARL. Just think about having another version of yourself out there.

Mirroring you. Feeling what you're feeling. I heard about this guy; he was sitting in his girlfriend's apartment smoking weed. And it was like at two AM. And so, he's sitting there, and he gets this sudden jolt. Like something bad had happened. And the girlfriend is telling him he just has The Fear. It was good stuff they were smoking. But he won't let it go.

Suddenly the phone rings. And he says, "my brother." And sure enough, the phone call was for him. His brother had been at a bar, tripped over a rug, and landed mouth down on arm of a metal bench. Knocked all of his front teeth out. The bottom ones ripped through his lower lip. There was barely a recoil, just BOOM. You see, the twin knew his brother had experienced something. I'm not sure if he felt pain in his own mouth, but there were shock waves, you know? Shockwaves in the twin ether. And he could feel it. Twins feel so much. Could you imagine feeling so much?

PATRICK. The twin thing is bull. The twin thing was invented by the makers of GI Joe so they could sell more toys. You might not remember the cartoon, but literally one twin would be drowning, and the other would start gasping for air. One twin had a scar. They parted their hair on different sides. Mirror image. With one having a scar. (*Chairs are brought on – Carl and Patrick sit.*)

CARL. Twins as the Twin Towers.

***THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS--
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