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The North Plan

by Jason Wells

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION



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Design by Michael Buchino for Portland Center Stage

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The World Premiere of *THE NORTH PLAN* was produced by
Portland Center Stage, Portland, Oregon (Chris Coleman, Artistic Director)

THE NORTH PLAN was developed by Steppenwolf Theatre Company, through its
New Plays Initiative and was presented as part of its First Look Repertory of New
Work at Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Chicago, Illinois;
(Martha Lavey, Artistic Director; David Hawkanson, Executive Director)

The play was subsequently workshopped at
JAW: A Playwrights Festival, produced by Portland Center Stage.

THE NORTH PLAN had its world premiere at Portland Center Stage on January 13, 2012. It was directed by Rose Riordan, and the Production Assistant was Kelsey Daye Lutz. Costume design was by Deborah Trout. The Scenic Designer was Tony Cisek, with lighting design by Colin K. Bills and sound design by Casi Pacilio. The Fight Director was Ted deChatelet. Casting was by Harriet Bass, and the Dialect Coach was Stephanie Gaslin. Jeremy Eisen was the Stage Manager. The cast was as follows:

TANYA SHEPKE	Kate Eastwood Norris
SHONDA COX	Ashley Everage
CHIEF SWENSON	Tim True
CARLTON BERG	Brian Patrick Monahan
DALE PITTMAN	Fredric Lehne
BOB LEE	Blake DeLong

CHARACTERS

TANYA SHEPKE

SHONDA COX

CHIEF SWENSON

CARLTON BERG

DALE PITTMAN

BOB LEE

SETTING

A police station in a small town in southern Missouri.

In Act I, a back room.

In Act II, the main room.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

The slash (/) indicates the point at which an overlap begins. That is, the actor with the next line will begin speaking at this point.

To Karen

ACT ONE

(A police station holding area. It contains two holding cells—wire-mesh cages, each about five-feet-square—and a desk. A door, currently open, leads off to the main area of the police station.)

(SHONDA COX, an administrative officer, sits behind the desk, trying to read a pre-law textbook. “Trying,” that is, because one of the cells is occupied by TANYA SHEPKE, whose voice we’ve been listening to since before the lights came up.)

TANYA. I shouldn’t be here if I turned myself in. If I turned myself in, I should be rewarded with a pat on the wrist. I told the dude out front, “I’m hear to report someone driving drunk.” He’s like, “Who is it?” I’m like, “Me.” He’s like, “You? Did you have an accident?” I’m like, “No.” He’s like, “Why are you telling me this?” I’m like, “I’m a good citizen, dude, if I see a crime, I’m obligated to report it and shit, right? By law. And I fucking witnessed *me* driving all the way home drunk out of my fuckin’ mind, dude.” He’s like, “Do you want to sleep it off?” I’m like, “Dude, I fuckin’ *slept* it off, this was last night.” He’s like, “Last *night*? What do you want me to do for you?” I’m like, “I want some credit for reporting a crime and turning myself in, you know? ‘Cause that shit was out of control.” And he’s like, “I’ll tell you what. As long as you got home safe and everything, I’m just gonna let you off with a warning. Now don’t you...” Oh, he goes, “What’s your name?” I go, “*Tanya*.” “Now don’t you do it again, *Tanya*, I’ll let you off with a warning.” Like, dismissing me, like I’m fucking feeble or whatever. And I’m like, “Fine. But I turned myself in and that negates the, that clears off the slate, dude.”

SHONDA. (*skeptical*) Actually, / that's...

TANYA. Yeah, and he goes, "Are you Catholic?" With like this smirk or whatever, and I go, "What does my fucking religion got to do with it, dude?" Not "fucking," but what does my religion got to do with it, and he goes, "You're thinking of a priest, or whatever. It's not like when you confess in *church*." And I go, "Whatever, dude. *Officer*. I just want to sign something. Anybody calls you up and says, 'Tanya was fuckin', you know, loaded on... I seen her drink six Long Island teas and jump behind the wheel' or whatever, you can just be like, 'Sorry dude, she turned herself in and cleared the slate on that one. She paid her debt.'" He's like, "Who's gonna call?" I'm like, "Officer, I don't know, but I gotta go to work, you know? So could we, you know?" He's like, "What's your name again?" I'm like, fuckin', "*Tanya. Shepke*. Okay?" He goes, "Just a minute," and he goes to the computer or whatever, and I'm standing there waiting for fucking forever, and then he's coming toward me with the fucking handcuffs in his fucking hand. And I'm like "No. Fucking. Way. You cannot fucking do this." He's like, "You have the right to remain..." "Fucking *shit*. I turned myself *in*." "Well, you got some outstanding warrants, Tanya, meh meh meh." You fucking asshole. I was on my way to *work*, goddammit. If I turn myself in, I should be rewarded or whatever. Shit.

Do you know him?

SHONDA. What?

TANYA. Do you know that cop?

SHONDA. We got four people who work here. So yes, I know him.

TANYA. Do you like him?

SHONDA. I don't know him *that* good.

TANYA. 'Cause that's a shitty-ass thing to do, don't you think?

SHONDA. I have no opinion on this. I am just supposed to sit here and / supervise your...welfare.

TANYA. Because thanks to that fuckin' cop, that...
douchey...fuckin' *cop*, no offense... 'Cause / I know...

SHONDA. No offense taken. I'm not a police officer.

TANYA. You're not?

SHONDA. I'm an administrative officer.

TANYA. What's the difference?

SHONDA. I answer the administrative line. I do filing and stuff. I sit in here when we get a female prisoner, which now is the first time.

TANYA. Fuckin' *huh*? I'm the first chick ever got in trouble in Lodus, Missouri?

SHONDA. I've only been here a few months. We don't get many prisoners anyway. Most people just get booked and then they run 'em over to the county facility.

TANYA. Well, then let's fuckin' *go*, man. What the fuck am I doin' here?

SHONDA. We haven't got anybody to take you right now, probably. We got an officer out in the National Guard, with all the stuff goin' on, he might *never* be back. Chief Swenson is always patrolling now, since we been in Threat Level Red...so...

TANYA. (*derisive; she's heard this phrase a lot lately, and it isn't about her*) "Threat Level Red. Threat Level Red."

SHONDA. Yeah. So it's mostly just me and Chris.

TANYA. Who the fuck is Chris?

SHONDA. (*patiently*) The officer. Who booked you.

TANYA. Fuckin' *Chris*. Asshole. Asshole Chris.

SHONDA. Yeah. So we been short-handed with all that's been goin' on. I heard over the radio someone said there was army tanks coming up I-70. They said / there was...some people...

TANYA. That fucker is gonna cost me permanent custody of my kids to my ex-shithead, who's just been waiting for me to go to fucking jail again, which now I fucking *am*, thank you Chris, / you cocksucker Chris.

SHONDA. Ma'am. *Ma'am*.

TANYA. Uh oh. Yes, ma'am? You're / gonna fuckin'...

SHONDA. Can you just keep it down now, for awhile?

TANYA. You're gonna fuckin' "ma'am" me? Mammy?
Mammy ma'am me?

SHONDA. *What?*

TANYA. Should I call you Mammy?

SHONDA. I don't wish to speak to you anymore. Do you understand?

TANYA. Oh, you don't wish to? Well, if you don't *wish* to. Sorry. What's your name, then? If you're so offended by nicknames. That are...intended to be jokes. Or... fuck it, just let me the fuck out of here, then. Let me the fuck out of here and you won't have to fucking hear me at all.

I'll call you another name / in a minute.

SHONDA. If you don't be quiet... Now I've been nice to you, I've sit here and listen to you go on, but if you don't shut your mouth, I'm gonna call that officer in here and mace you.

TANYA. Go ahead, bitch, I'm immune to that shit.

SHONDA. (*standing*) Excuse me?

TANYA. Whatever. Sit the fuck down. I'm not interested in talking to you anyway.

I don't know why you need to get all worked up.

Sit down. Nobody's callin' you nothin'.

SHONDA. You got *that* right.

TANYA. (*mocking, but mildly*) "Eh eh eh eh."

Whatever. I'm just fuckin' tired.

(*SHONDA sits, but warily.*)

Real sympathetic, by the way. You're really so warm the way you sympathize with my problems, while I'm going to jail for trying to do the right thing. Nice. Because my fucking in-laws are gonna have a fucking field day with taking total fucking custody of my kids now. My ex-shithead's dumbass retard of a friend: *Larry Carney*.

La-a-rry Ca-a-rney. Fucker walks in, hasn't said shit to me in years, "Hey, Tanya, let me buy you a drink, Tanya. Whatta ya havin', da duh da duh duh." Finally, I'm leaving, he's like "Don't get another DUI, Tanya." I'm like "Don't *you* get one, dumbass." I'm halfway home, I'm like, that fucker's gonna call the cops on me, that's why he was buying me all them Long Island teas, get me drunk and testify against me in a court of law. I took the back roads all the way home, like three miles an hour, all up on the steering wheel, you know, staring through the window, the "windshield," stopped every ten minutes to run around the fucking car, get some oxygen, what the fuck did *that* look like, do you think. I woke up this morning, I'm like Larry Carney is trying to fuck me over for Gene's in-laws, / I mean Gene's family, *my* in-laws.

(CARLTON BERG and CHIEF SWENSON are heard from beyond the doorway. This dialogue is fragmented and largely indistinct.)

SWENSON. (off) Just come over / here. Stand there.

CARLTON. (off) Why don't you acknowledge what I'm saying? / Can't you see how important this is?

SWENSON. (off) Hold on. Chris, take this.

CARLTON. (off) Officer:

TANYA. Gene, my / murdering ex-shithead.

SWENSON. (off) Hold on. Take it all / straight in there.

CARLTON. (off) This is the most important thing anyone will ever say to you, *ever*:

SWENSON. (off) Yeah, I'm listening.

CARLTON. (off) You are arresting the one man in this country who can / prevent the persecution of thousands of innocent people.

TANYA. He tried to kill me in the bathtub, you know. Gene did. He / tried to fuckin'...

SWENSON. (off) Spell your name.

TANYA. ...drown me in the bathtub one time, and I'd be dead now, except he / fuckin' pussied out.

SWENSON. (*off*) Come on, now.

TANYA. Got me all drunk and held my head under. I saw white fuckin' lights, dude. I saw the fuckin' / tunnel, you know?

CARLTON. (*off*) C-A-R-L-T, while I'm / spelling "Carlton Berg" for you, they're drawing up arrest warrants for half the country.

TANYA. Finally, I just twisted all around till I got my mouth up out of the water and I'm like, / "Please Gene don't fuckin' drown me," and he lets me go.

SWENSON. (*off*) I've heard you tell it plenty of times now.

TANYA. He's all like, / "I can't do it, I can't do it, boo hoo huh huh."

CARLTON. (*off*) And why aren't you listening?

TANYA. I'm like, / "You tried to kill me, you cock." He's like, "I *know*."

SWENSON. (*off*) It isn't my concern.

CARLTON. (*off*) Not your *concern*?

TANYA. So you know what / he does?

CARLTON. (*off*) Do you know what's happening up at Fort Leonard Wood? / They've got special forces units ready to deploy to St. Louis and Memphis.

TANYA. He takes me to the fucking carnival. I kid you not.

SWENSON. (*off*) I heard all that, / during the longest car ride of my life.

TANYA. He's like, "I'm so sorry, now here's some cotton candy." Whatever. "Now let's go on the...fuckin' / ... tilt house thing."

CARLTON. (*off*) You don't know what you're doing.

SWENSON. (*off*) (*calling*) Hey, Chris.

CARLTON. (*off*) Officer.

TANYA. But I'm the one who / can't have my kids, right?

SWENSON. (*off*) Drop that in the tray, Chris, and go on home.

TANYA. From "All These Legal Problems" which / is like one...

SHONDA. *(to TANYA)* Excuse me.

SWENSON. *(off)* Thanks.

TANYA. One problem all spread / out...

SHONDA. Excuse me.

TANYA. You're / fucking excused.

CARLTON *(off)* Let me make / my phone call.

SHONDA. Can you just be quiet? Please. Something's /
going on out there.

SWENSON. *(off)* Can't do it.

TANYA. Oh, that's great, bitch. Fuck you, too.

(SHONDA hovers in the doorway.)

CARLTON. *(off)* Officer, I'm going to tell you one more
time:

SWENSON. *(off)* I'm gonna tell *you* one more time, it's
"Chief." And don't do me any favors.

CARLTON. *(off)* I have knowledge of a vast network...

SWENSON. *(off)* What is it, Shonda?

SHONDA. What's going on?

SWENSON. *(off)* Well, we're trying to work that out. Who's
in there?

SHONDA. That lady Chris called you about.

TANYA. *(shouting off)* It's a MISTA-A-A-A-KE!

SWENSON. *(off)* You'd better keep an eye on her.

TANYA. *(again)* YOU FUCKED U-U-U-UP!

(SHONDA returns, reluctantly, to the desk.)

CARLTON. *(off)* I have knowledge...

SWENSON. *(off)* Hold on. Sign that for me, Chris.

CARLTON. *(off)* I have knowledge of a vast network / of
well-placed criminals...

TANYA. Do I have to lay down on the floor in here?

CARLTON. *(off)* ...who have been plotting the overthrow
of the United States / government for weeks, if not
months...

SHONDA. If you have to lay down, you do, yes.

CARLTON. *(off)* ...even before / the current crisis.

TANYA. I'm wearing my clothes for work. I / have to look presentable, Whatever-your-name-is...

CARLTON. *(off)* Do you understand the significance of that?

TANYA. ...for my liveli- My... Don't you have a fucking cot?

SHONDA. No, we do not. Someone / will take you to the county facility shortly.

TANYA. What about a fucking blanket, then? The floor is fucking cold.

(SHONDA gets a couple of blankets.)

CARLTON. *(off)* I'm asking you again for that phone call.

SWENSON. *(off)* That's up to the feds.

CARLTON. *(off)* It's not up to the feds. It's my right.

SWENSON. *(off)* You know that ain't true.

CARLTON. *(off)* I'm an American citizen.

(SHONDA pushes the blankets through the cage's access slot.)

TANYA. Fuck / you very much.

SWENSON. *(off)* We'll see what the feds say about that, too. I'll see ya, Chris. Be careful.

(TANYA lays one blanket on the floor, pulls the other one over herself, and lies with her face to the wall. She becomes yet another disembodied voice.)

(SHONDA hovers at the doorway.)

CARLTON. *(off)* Okay, maybe it's time to take your job / seriously, Chief? You're on the wrong side of this. Big fan of the feds, huh? You do everything the feds say?

TANYA. I'm just tryin' to explain to you the...circumstances that have brought / me here. All I did was miss one or two court dates.

SHONDA. Can I...?

SWENSON. *(off)* Now you hold on a / second. I've had about enough of you.

(SHONDA's phone rings.)

TANYA. I didn't try to kill anybody or somethin', like my ex-dumbshit Gene, / the fuckin...dumbshit machine.

SWENSON. *(off)* I'm gonna put you in holding, and we might could / talk later. Or not.

TANYA. I'm / just tryin' to get some goddamn justice.

SHONDA. *(on phone)* Public Services Police / how may I help you?

SWENSON. *(off)* Get up now. Come over here.

TANYA. I / only missed my court dates 'cause I had to work.

SHONDA. *(on phone)* No, we can't do that. No.

(CARLTON enters, followed by SWENSON.)

CARLTON. This is America, Chief. You can't arrest / people for political crimes.

SHONDA. *(on phone)* Because we're in an emergency protocol.

SWENSON. Is stealing government property a political crime? 'Cause if it is, I can arrest / you for that.

SHONDA. *(on phone)* It means that / we have to concentrate on serious crimes right now.

CARLTON. There is no government right now! There's no legitimate government!

SHONDA. *(on phone)* No, / there aren't right now, in Lodus, no, but that...

TANYA. Excuse me, but what in the / fuck is going on?!

SWENSON. *(to CARLTON)* Get in there. *(to TANYA)* Who / are you?

(He locks CARLTON into the other cage.)

SHONDA. *(on phone)* It's / because of the emergency situation.

CARLTON. You have to think about / what you're doing, Chief.

TANYA. Okay, my name is Tanya Shepke, and your boy / Chris out there...

CARLTON. *(to TANYA)* Excuse me, ma'am. / Just one second, okay?

TANYA. ...has got me totally trumped on a charge, here, / officer.

CARLTON. Excuse me...

TANYA. You're totally excused, now shut the fuck up. (to SWENSON) Officer, can you call Bitter's Tire and Glass, and tell 'em I can't come in 'cause I'm sick?

SWENSON. (to SHONDA) Didn't she get her call?

SHONDA. She used it up already, tellin' somebody "F you."

SWENSON. (to TANYA) I'll look into your situation.

TANYA. Thank / you, sir.

SHONDA. (on phone) It's / not us, it's the *county* that's doing it.

CARLTON. What about *my* phone call? Huh, Chief? What / about...

SWENSON. Look: You're wearin' me out fast, pal. As far as I know we still got a Homeland Security, and they want to talk to you about some things. So / you're gonna stay right here in my jail until somebody tells me different.

SHONDA. (on phone) Because we rely on their support. Well, / I'm sor—

CARLTON. What am I charged with?

SWENSON. I'm / not entirely sure, at this time.

SHONDA. (hanging up) Thank you.

SWENSON. Shonda?

CARLTON. I want my phone call.

SWENSON. Not at this time.

CARLTON. I'm entitled to a phone call.

SWENSON. Not now.

CARLTON. This is like something out of Kafka.

SWENSON. That's right. And you're the cockroach.
Shonda?

SHONDA. Yes, Chief?

CARLTON. / Chief?

TANYA. Sir?

SWENSON. I'm gonna put a gag on both of you in a minute.
I swear I am. You think I don't have 'em? You think I
don't have gags here?

TANYA. You don't need to *gag* me, you just need to open
your ears. *Sir.*

SWENSON. You can't help yourself, can you?

TANYA. I'm trying to *explain* my / *situ-*

SWENSON. Gag her. Where's the / gag? Where is it?

TANYA. Okay okay okay.

(She hides under the blankets.)

SWENSON. Shonda:

SHONDA. Yes.

SWENSON. Anybody calls about him, you send it to me,
okay? You don't say anything about him. Right?

(This is unusual—for both of them.)

SHONDA. Okay.

SWENSON. You don't know anything about him.

SHONDA. All right.

SWENSON. That's how they want it, for now. Up at DHS.

(A beat, while she takes this in.)

SHONDA. Okay.

TANYA. *(a voice from under the blanket)* I'm just trying to make
my case known, you understand? This was entrapment.
I was entrapped into making a confession that was
held against me. This is totally a political crime.

SWENSON. I'll see if we can't get her out of here.

SHONDA. *Thank you.*

CARLTON. *(to SWENSON)* So they don't want you to talk
about me. *That's* kinda weird, huh?

(SWENSON exits.)

CARLTON. *(to SHONDA)* I'm sorry, what was your name?

SHONDA. Ms. Cox.

CARLTON. Ms. Cox, do you know what's going on out
there?

SHONDA. Well, they're not calling it "martial law." They're calling it a "transitional action," or something?

CARLTON. Okay, I was being *rhetorical*. I *know* what's going on out there. I was asking, like, "Do you know, Ms. Cox, what is going *on* out there," and then, you know, I would make a *point*. About it.

SHONDA. I'm just about fed up with all of y'all today.

CARLTON. You care about civil rights, don't you? You care about individual freedom?

SHONDA. Sir, I'm going to ignore you.

TANYA. (*under the blanket*) Ms. Cox?

SHONDA. Ma'am, don't even start.

TANYA. Ms. Cox...

SHONDA. Don't *start*.

CARLTON. I am in possession of important information. Information that this illegitimate government intends to use against its citizens. They're going to arrest innocent people. I'm only the first. The first of / millions.

TANYA. (*under the blanket*) I'm the first.

CARLTON. (*to SHONDA*) Do you hear what I'm saying?

SHONDA. No, I do not.

CARLTON. I'm saying *millions*. That's not an exaggeration. I have the list.

(*TANYA emerges from the blankets.*)

TANYA. I'm the first innocent, arrested person. You might be the second one, but I'm the fucking first one.

CARLTON. Ms. Cox...

TANYA. Shonda, do you believe that that hoosier could try to murder me, and then take me to the fucking *carnival*? Can you believe that?

CARLTON. They're gonna start rounding people up. Anyone they consider a threat. Protesters, artists, lawyers, journalists, / gun—

TANYA. Fuckin' lawyers.

CARLTON. Gun-owners, / immigr-

TANYA. Fuckin' protesters, for that matter. *Fart*.

CARLTON. Immigrants...

TANYA. *Journalists*.

CARLTON. Um...

TANYA. Fuckin' artists, too. "Artistes." *Fart*.

CARLTON. It's... Ms. Cox, it's REX 84. Readiness Exercise
1984. You can look it up if you don't believe me.

SHONDA. Look it up where? On the internet?

CARLTON. Yes.

SHONDA. If I can look it up, how is it a secret?

CARLTON. It's happening now, though, is what I'm saying.
They're putting this plan into action.

SHONDA. I don't know anything about that.

CARLTON. Well, I'm *telling* you about it.

SHONDA. Well, I don't *want* to know anything about it.

TANYA. Dude, she didn't want to hear my shit, neither, and
my husband tried to drown me in the bathtub. I'm /
not shitting you.

CARLTON. (*to SHONDA*) If you don't get me out of here, a
lot of innocent people are going to be persecuted.

SHONDA. Let you *out* of here? How I'm supposed to do
that?

CARLTON. Just get the key and open this cage.

TANYA. If you let him out, you better let me out, too.

SHONDA. I'm not lettin' anybody out. You must be crazy.

TANYA. *All* the artists is crazy.

(*SHONDA considers.*)

SHONDA. I mean, I can look up *anything* on the internet.
Doesn't mean it's true.

CARLTON. Okay. Sure. But, do you know who I am?

SHONDA. No.

CARLTON. I work for the State Department. The U.S.
Department of State. Do you know what that is?

SHONDA. Are you being rhetorical again?

CARLTON. What?

SHONDA. Are you straight-up asking me if I heard of the State Department?

CARLTON. Well, *have* you?

SHONDA. Where do you think you are?

CARLTON. Where do I...? Where do *you* think you are? Because a little while ago I saw a guy roll off an actual turnip truck.

SHONDA. You did not. That's / really rude.

CARLTON. He had a... He had a jug that said, "XXX."

SHONDA. That's stupid.

CARLTON. So forgive me for, you know...

TANYA. That's supposed to be where they keep their moonshine.

CARLTON. What I'm trying to tell you... *Sorry*, okay? For... What I'm trying to tell you is I actually work for the State Department, okay? The *government*. So, this is not just another rumor, you see? I'm an actual... I'm a *reliable source*. I have committed no crime, you understand?

TANYA. Join the club, buddy. They don't care about that here.

CARLTON. It's called Main Core. It's a database of databases. They've profiled the membership of every organization they don't trust. It was part of Ollie North's plan, from back in the eighties, the Continuity of Government Plan, in case of a national emergency. Well, here it is, here's the emergency, and, goddammit, Ms. Cox, they're not just tracking us anymore. They're making the arrests.

SHONDA. Who are they arresting?

TANYA. Me.

CARLTON. The whole list. *Everybody*.

TANYA. And I didn't do shit.

SHONDA. (to CARLTON) That does not seem realistic.

CARLTON. Have you turned on the TV lately? Have you been watching all the recent *realism*?

TANYA. TV is bullshit. There ain't nothin' on but the emergency, anyway.

SHONDA. All I know is, maybe everybody needs to calm down is all.

CARLTON. Oh, okay. Hey, on another topic, do you belong to any organizations? Donate money to anything, or... No?

SHONDA. I don't know why you're bothering me with this.

CARLTON. Because I have that database. We have to get Main Core out there. You and I. You want to help people, don't you? Ms. Cox? You want to fight back, don't you?

SHONDA. Fight who?

CARLTON. Fight *who*? The provisional government! These criminals who have taken over Washington!

SHONDA. Those people are trying to restore order to the, to the country after what happened.

CARLTON. *Oh!* Naïve, much?! Shit! (to himself) Why didn't I drive north?! I could have gone *north!* (to SHONDA) They're not restoring anything! They don't want anything restored! They've just taken over, that's all! They're arresting people. They're censoring the media. The army is surrounding major cities. You don't see a problem here?

TANYA. Same shit, though, / different day, right?

SHONDA. It's been ten days, sir, okay? I'm *not* naïve, but I'm not gonna lose my head and start lettin' people out of jail and runnin' around startin' revolutions because of ten days of an emergency situation.

CARLTON. But I have the Enemies List. I have the names. They've put the North Plan into effect. Not kinda sort of, but for real. People need to know. They need to be warned.

SHONDA. Sir...

CARLTON. Stop! I'm not just some guy trying to catch you up in his crazy theories. I am... I stand before you, a high-ranking m- Okay, more of a, sorry, a *mid-level*, to be perfectly honest, a mid-level member of the State Department and I'm telling you, if you've been wondering what those camps are going up outside your cities, I have the names of the people who will soon be living in them!

TANYA. That's what *I've* been trying to fuckin' say, man, all this fuckin' time. I've been railroaded into fuckin' jail, here, man, by a bunch of moonshine-drinkin' fuckin' hoosiers. Amen to that.

CARLTON. (*despairing again*) Oh, my God. What have I done? Why am I trying to save this ignorant fucking country?

TANYA. Exactly. Fuck this country. Let's wipe the slate clean, you know? Start with some all-new shit. We had our laughs, but it ain't funny no more. This country don't give a shit for me, I'll tell you that. Are you really with the government or were you just shittin' her about that? Seriously. Are you? 'Cause when you do the new money, here's who you should put on it: Skynyrd. I'm serious, dude. 'Cause the Founding Motherfuckers can kiss my ass.

SHONDA. (*to CARLTON*) Where's the list?

CARLTON. I can't tell you that.

SHONDA. Then how am I supposed to help you?

CARLTON. Just let me go. I know who to give it to. I have a friend.

TANYA. That seems unlikely, just kidding.

SHONDA. There's no way I'm gonna just let you go. So why don't you just give us the list?

CARLTON. How can I give it to you if I'm in here?

SHONDA. Why not just tell the Chief where it is, and let him look it over?

CARLTON. And he just hands it over to DHS, right? Because, I'll tell you, I don't think the Chief is on my side.

SHONDA. But you think I might be.

CARLTON. I think I've got a better chance, yeah.

SHONDA. Why?

CARLTON. Because you're a poor black woman.

SHONDA. What?!

CARLTON. Oh, was I not supposed to notice? Which part, the color of your skin or the minimum-wage civil servant job?

SHONDA. You think you can predict my behavior / because of the color of my skin?

CARLTON. Apparently not, because I predicted you wouldn't be so complacent about / a bunch of greedy assholes taking over your country.

TANYA. Hey, man, don't start bringing race into this. What / do you do for a living? Smartass.

SHONDA. Well, I'm black enough to try to give you a chance to hand over that thing before it's too late.

TANYA. Probably work in a bank, or some shit.

CARLTON. A bank? Five seconds ago, / I said...

TANYA. Bank of America. Fuckin' mortgage department.

(SWENSON enters.)

SWENSON. How's it going back here?

TANYA. Chief, I've been waiting / patiently for some...

SWENSON. Hold on a second.

TANYA. For some response / to my concerns.

SWENSON. Hold on. One at a time. Mr. / Berg... M-

TANYA. Whatever. I'm tryin' to keep my kids.

SWENSON. (to TANYA) Where are your kids?

TANYA. With Gene and that...f-in'...Stacy, b-word.

SWENSON. All right.

/ Mr....

TANYA. "Bitch."

SWENSON. One at a time, okay? Mr. Berg, I wanted to let you know that DHS is sending some agents to pick you up.

CARLTON. I want to go to court first. I want to see a judge.

SWENSON. They don't want that.

CARLTON. I want to go into the system. I have a right to be put in the system.

SWENSON. The feds have requested that we not do that.

CARLTON. There are no "feds." There has to be something "federal" in order to have "feds." They're just a gang of thugs.

SWENSON. You're talking to a Marine, Mr. Berg.

CARLTON. So?

SWENSON. So, if this was a gang of thugs, as you say, I don't believe they'd have the backing of the military.

CARLTON. But they *don't*, Chief. They *don't* have that backing. Not completely. Did you hear about General Hernandez? Of course not, because the news channels aren't allowed to carry it, and on the internet it's just one more unsubstantiated rumor. But I'm telling you it's a *fact* that Hernandez was arrested for not committing his command to the siege on Washington. He's disappeared, Chief. He can't be found in the *system*. Right now, as we speak, an American Army division and an American *Marine* division are facing each other from opposite ends of Pennsylvania Avenue. Nobody wants to fire the first shot, Chief. But that standoff isn't gonna last forever.

SWENSON. Which side are the Marines on?

CARLTON. They're on my side, Chief.

SWENSON. Is that a fact?

CARLTON. Honestly, I don't know. It's an extremely confusing situation. Please let me talk to a circuit judge. They're going to make me disappear.

SWENSON. I'll call 'em back, and tell 'em what you say.

TANYA. / Excuse me.

CARLTON. Who? DHS?

SWENSON. That's who I been dealin' with.

TANYA. / Hello-o-o.

CARLTON. Call 'em back and tell 'em what I *say*? How is that a plan? How do you foresee that working out?

SWENSON. Give me a little credit, why don't you?

CARLTON. Why?! Because of our years on the *road* together? Because of your familiarity with the works of Kafka?

SWENSON. That'd be a start. Also, you don't have any choice. Plus, if you're so much smarter than the rest of us, how come you act like I can't hear you yellin' at Shonda in here?

TANYA. He ain't / smarter than the rest of us. He just thinks he is.

SWENSON. You know, I'm just sittin' right out there. Tell you the truth, I'm glad you don't work for the government anymore, 'cause you can't keep a secret worth a damn. Is it in that laptop of yours?

CARLTON. What.

SWENSON. That Enemy List thing.

CARLTON. No. That would be kind of obvious, wouldn't it?

SWENSON. I don't know where else you could put millions of names, except a computer.

CARLTON. I never said I had it with me.

SWENSON. Okay. Well, those agents'll be here before long. I expect they'll care more than I do. Shonda?

SHONDA. Yes, Chief?

SWENSON. Don't let him go, now.

SHONDA. I was never / gonna let him go.

SWENSON. I'm just teasing you. You need anything?

SHONDA. Do I have to stay back here?

SWENSON. Yeah.

TANYA. Excuse me!

(SWENSON *exits.*)

TANYA. (*cont.*) Excuse me excuse me excuse me!

Did you hear him say “one at a time” and then fucking ignore me? Like I’m invisible. Asshole!

(**SWENSON** *appears in the doorway.*)

There you are. Listen, sir, do you remember saying “one at a time”?

(**SWENSON** *closes the door. It is as the closing of a tomb.*)

(*pause*)

TANYA. Sittin’ in here, while Gene and Stacy teach my kids to hate me, like I’m a monster.

CARLTON. Shonda.

SHONDA. I’m going to read this book now, all right?

CARLTON. What is it, Pre-Law?

SHONDA. I’m just going to read it.

CARLTON. Because, don’t bother. Because in a few weeks those books will all be rewritten.

SHONDA. I heard all this before. I remember when people were Nazis if they wanted health care.

CARLTON. This is different. Did you hear what I said about those soldiers in Washington? That’s a real thing, Shonda.

SHONDA. I’m not looking at you. I’m not listening to you. I don’t even hear nothin’.

TANYA. Hey, man, *what’s* your name?

CARLTON. Carlton.

TANYA. “Carlton.” Douche name. No offense. But I wanted to ask you, if my joint custody situation is contingent on not getting a DUI, and then I get a DUI and miss a court date but then the father is found to be, you know, equally guilt-ridden with his joint custody agreement, does that even up the board, like, wipe the slate clean, you know?

CARLTON. Who do you think I am?

TANYA. Well, I *think* you're Carlton McFuckbag Douchynname, aren't you? But as long as we're in here, I thought we could shoot the shit. So sorry, dickweed.

CARLTON. Have you not surmised from the preceding conversation that I have some problems of my own?

TANYA. We all have problems, dude. I'm in fucking *jail* right now, for example. How about you?

CARLTON. Well, let me see now, *yes*, it appears I'm also in jail. Hm. And I'll probably be sent to a secret prison somewhere in eastern Europe and never be seen again.

TANYA. Oh, Mr. Big Shot. Big fuckin' deal. Good / riddance.

SHONDA. I need the both of you to be quiet now.

TANYA. I have the right to talk if I wish. I have the right to remain silent, and I have the right not to remain silent.

SHONDA. I'm telling you to remain silent.

TANYA. I have the right to remain silent, don't I?

SHONDA. I just *told* you to remain silent.

TANYA. If you *make* me remain silent, then it's not a *right* anymore, is it? It's a *requirement*. It's only a *right* if I also have the right *not* to do it. So if you *make* me remain silent, you take away my right *not* to remain silent. And you and me and everyone knows I got the right to remain silent. So I can talk all I want. What do you got to say to that shit?

(SHONDA storms out, leaving the door open.)

Fuckin' right. I guess so.

CARLTON. That was actually kind of awesome.

TANYA. Don't try to kiss my ass now.

CARLTON. Look... *What's* your name?

TANYA. Tanya.

CARLTON. Tanya, we don't have much time. You've got to listen to me. You heard my situation, right?

TANYA. More or less.

CARLTON. If you get out of here before I do, you've got to get that information.

TANYA. What information?

CARLTON. Main Core. The Main Core database. It's on a flash-drive.

TANYA. *What, now?*

CARLTON. Oh, my God. Did you not hear *any* of that?

TANYA. Yes, I fuckin' heard it. You stole some Russian Marine shit or something and then you just whine like a baby until all I think about is how you should shut the fuck up. Right? *Got it.*

CARLTON. Look, she's gonna be back any second. We have to figure out how to communicate with each other when she's not looking. We have to come up with some kind of code.

TANYA. They already have that, stupid. It's called "sign language."

CARLTON. You know sign language?

TANYA. Why would I know fucking sign language?

CARLTON. Then why w- ? Never mind. We just need to employ a simple alphanumeric substitution system.

TANYA. Exactly.

CARLTON. Right. A is one, B is two, and so on.

TANYA. Right. Just hold up twenty fingers for Z, genius.

CARLTON. You know the binary system?

TANYA. (*noncommittal*) The binary sitsm.

CARLTON. You must remember the binary system from school: Zeros and ones. On-off. Up-down. Right? (*raises his right hand*) So, first position is ones, that's your pinky. Up is one, down is zero. Second position is twos, middle finger is fours, then eights, thumb is sixteens. So, if you wanted to say "Hi," you'd go "H," (*raises index finger*) "I." (*adds pinky*) See? So twenty-six, Z, would be sixteen, (*thumb*) Plus eight, (*adds index finger*) Plus two. (*adds ring finger*) Get it?

TANYA. Yeah, that's perfect. What letter is this?

(She shows him her middle finger.)

CARLTON. *(tolerantly)* "D."

TANYA. *(shows it again)* What about this?

CARLTON. "D."

TANYA. *(again)* What about this?

CARLTON. "D."

TANYA. *(again)* What / about this?

CARLTON. All right! Never mind! What was I *thinking*?! I must have been out of my mind to pin the future of this nation on some meth-addled hayseed! You could have done something with your...

(SWENSON appears in the doorway.)

/...miserable, your miserable...fucking...!

(He's weeping now.)

SWENSON. Hey. Hey. Hey. You're gonna keep it down in here, or I'm gonna put you both in restraints. We're out here right now tryin' to figure out what to do with you. I'll / put you both down a dark hole if I have to.

TANYA. I didn't say a goddamn thing, officer.

SWENSON. Quiet. And I've had enough of the language, too. We're gonna keep a civil tongue in our heads from here on out. Is that understood?

(SWENSON exits.)

TANYA. *(a little softer now)* What is the matter with you, Carlton? You're kind of acting like a girl. And I ain't on meth. I don't do meth, you hear? *(testing)* Can you hear me, Chief? Hey, Chief? Hey, I found some weed in here, man. This is some weed. "Fuck." "Shit." "Fuck." He can't hear us right now.

Are you listening to me, crybaby? All I'm sayin' is all that time you wasted with the fuckin' math-fingers, you coulda just told me where the Russian Marine thing is.

CARLTON. It's in my laptop.

TANYA. The computer information thing is on your *computer*? You must be the best secret agent of them all.

CARLTON. No, it's *inside* of it. I took it apart and stuck it in there, under the motherboard.

TANYA. Okay. So where is the laptop?

CARLTON. In that locked room out there.

TANYA. What the fuck, dude?

CARLTON. I know. That's why I need that Shonda to get it. She's got to do it before those DHS guys get here, or it's too late. If I can't make her do it, *you've* got to make her do it.

TANYA. How am *I* supposed to make her do it?

CARLTON. Do you see why I wanted to talk to you with the math fingers? Because we've got a lot to cover here. They're gonna come back in here any minute and you still don't understand the first thing about this situation!

TANYA. Take it easy. I get it. The new government guys want to put the reporters and stuff in prison.

CARLTON. And I have the list.

TANYA. Okay. Let me see it.

(A beat, wherein CARLTON marvels at her density.)

CARLTON. The thing that I put in the computer is the list. The Enemies List. That's what you need to get.

TANYA. Great. What do I do with it?

CARLTON. This is very important. I really need you to listen to this part.

TANYA. Don't talk to me like I'm a fuckin' baby, dude.

CARLTON. You can't give it to just anyone in the media. Not the way things are now. So I'm just going to give you one name of someone I trust. We can keep it simple that way. You only have to remember the one name.

TANYA. Let's *have* it.

CARLTON. There's a man in Houston. He's a writer. Here is his name.

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