BURIED (A FEMINIST EXPLORATION)

A Play in One Act

by

Beatrice Owens

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Advisor: Ingrid De Sanctis
Readers: Meredith Conti
        Zachary Dorsey
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Cast of Characters

Angela
Charlie
Male Chorus
Female Chorus
Scene 1

(At rise, ANGELA is alone on a bare stage. Her clothing is torn and she stands with her back pressed into a corner. An animal, caged.)

ANGELA

How did... Was it my fault? (Beat.) Maybe I shouldn’t have...no. No. Maybe. I...

(A long pause.)

Did he...? (Beat.) Gone. He’s gone. He left.

(ANGELA looks cautiously around the room and tenderly steps away from the corner.)

I’m alone. (Beat.) He left me alone.

(She looks down at her torn clothes.)

But the damage is done, right? (Beat.) I mean...I’ve been assaulted. Right? That’s what this is, isn’t it? This --

(She pulls on her torn shirt.)

This is what it’s supposed to look like. (Beat.) Isn’t it? (Beat.) Is this my fault? Did I let this happen? Was it the way I smiled at him? I didn’t mean that as an invitation, I didn’t... I just saw him and I thought...

(The sounds of a party occurring in the distance, laughter and a moment of music fade into the space before disappearing. The lights come up for a moment on the CHORUS on the opposite side of the stage, watching ANGELA. ANGELA looks around as if trying to place the sounds around her.)

I saw him.

But isn’t that how it always is?
Someone you know, right?
It’s not the stranger who stalks you at night.

FEMALE CHORUS

No, it’s him.
It’s always him.
The friend.
The boyfriend.
The person whose supposed to make you feel safe?

(Lights up on CHARLIE standing across from ANGELA. Lights fade out quickly. Lights come up and remain up, but dimly on CHORUS.)

ANGELA

Charlie.

MALE CHORUS

Charlie.
ANGELA

Charlie.

ANGELA
I saw you.
I saw you when I walked in tonight.
Looking to the entire world like a man of honor.
I saw you grab that extra beer as you walked towards me.
A gentleman, who comes bearing gifts.
Someone I should

ANGELA

CHARORUS

Charlie.

ANGELA

Trust.

(A pause.)

ANGELA
And I did.
I spoke to you.
I laughed at your jokes.
I thought this is how friends behaved, right?
You flattered me.
Or were you just sizing me up?
Testing the waters?
Laying the bait?

ANGELA

FEMALE CHORUS
I saw you eyeing me. I saw you eyeing me.

ANGELA
Your eyes like arrows finding their target in my breasts.
And I didn’t object.
Just boys being boys, right?

FEMALE CHORUS
Typical behavior.
Nothing to be done.

ANGELA
But I saw you.
I saw you extend your hand and ask me to follow.
I saw there was something hiding behind your eyes.
A secret?
A joke?
An attack.
I saw you.
And I went with you.
I followed you up those stairs and into your room.
I let you close the door and turn towards me, 
I continued to smile. 
I continued to laugh. 
As the panic rose up in my throat like searing hot hands. 
Strangling me. 
(The FEMALE CHORUS mirrors “strangling me” 
by placing their hands around their necks, choked.) 
Warning me. 
(A long pause.) 
This is the danger. 
This is the news story we read at night once we’re safely 
in our beds. 
This is the statistic. 
Will I become a statistic? 

FEMALE CHORUS 
Am I a statistic? 

ANGELA 
What is assault? 

MALE CHORUS 
How do I know? 

ANGELA 
When does it happen to me? 

ANGELA FEMALE CHORUS 
And when is it just a boy 
doing something stupid that I don’t like? 

ANGELA 
And when does it become something more... 

MALE CHORUS 
Serious. 

FEMALE CHORUS 
Is it always serious? 

ANGELA 
(Picking up speed, frantic.) 
How many times have I just written something off as stupid 
behavior because I was scared to admit what happened to me?
(ANGELA slumps to the floor and the CHORUS approaches her, surrounding her. Their voices overlap, creating a frantic crescendo.)

CHORUS
Is it my fault?

ANGELA
Why did I think I could just walk upstairs with him?

CHORUS
Is it my fault?

ANGELA
Why didn’t I consider the danger of the situation?

CHORUS
Is it my fault?

ANGELA
Why wasn’t I able to say no right away?

No.

CHORUS

No.

ANGELA

No.

CHORUS

No. No. No.

ANGELA

No! (Beat.) Why didn’t I say “no”?

MALE CHORUS FEMALE CHORUS
My fault. No, no, no.

ANGELA
Why did I think this situation was so normal?

MALE CHORUS FEMALE CHORUS
My fault. No, no, no.

ANGELA
Why did I think I would be able to defend myself?
MALE CHORUS                         FEMALE CHORUS
My fault.                           No, no, no.

ANGELA
Why did I smile at him?

MALE CHORUS                         FEMALE CHORUS
My fault.                           No, no, no.

ANGELA
Why did I take his hand? (Beat.) Why?

Why?

ANGELA                         CHORUS
Why?

Why?

(The sounds of girls giggling flirtatiously emanates from the FEMALE CHORUS. ANGELA turns on them.)

ANGELA
It isn’t funny!
I saw him.
I saw him step into my way when I tried to get to the door.
I saw him stop me.
I didn’t scream.
(A long pause.)
I said please.
Please.

MALE CHORUS
Please.

ANGELA
I saw him step towards me.

ANGELA                         MALE CHORUS
A man intent on taking what    A man intent on taking what
he wanted.                     he wanted.

ANGELA
And I said please.
Please.

ANGELA                         FEMALE CHORUS
I said please.                    I said please.
ANGELA
I saw him taking what he wanted.
From me.
At my expense.

ANGELA
From my body.
My soul.
My being.

CHORUS
My soul.
My being.

ANGELA
And I said please.
I didn’t see myself demand him halt.
I didn’t see that power I pride myself on possessing.
I didn’t see a woman in that room.

FEMALE CHORUS
A woman. Woman.

MALE CHORUS
A woman.

CHORUS
In that room.

ANGELA
I saw an animal.
Caged.
Defenseless.
Hopeless.
And I said please.

(She breaks down.)

I said please.

(The CHORUS turns their backs to ANGELA and spread out throughout the room. They form a large circle facing outwards, still containing ANGELA in the middle of the. Music begins to play. ANGELA stays crouched on the floor.)

(END OF SCENE)
Scene 2

(Lights change. The CHORUS still in their extended circle begins to walk slowly, circling ANGELA as they speak.)

FEMALE CHORUS
Walking home at night alone, keys jingling between clenched knuckles.
A makeshift weapon.
Ready.
Waiting.
Just in case.

MALE CHORUS
The fraternity house.
The jungle, a trip back to the primal world.
Pack mentality leaves us blinded.

CHORUS
How have we become so different?
Or has it always been this way?

FEMALE CHORUS
A sea of images.
Bodies crafted to be perfectly imperfect.
Media crafted to shame those vessels of our hearts and minds.
Not good enough.

MALE CHORUS
Not good enough.

CHORUS
How can we be good enough?

FEMALE CHORUS
Open palms.
Soft touches.
Gentle kisses.
Become fists, slaps, and teeth.
Tearing into our very beings.

MALE CHORUS
We are in the midst of a war.
But in this war we are both the oppressor and the oppressed.
The aggressor and the defenseless.
The victimizer and the victim.
There is no way out that we can see.

FEMALE CHORUS
The night is too dark for that.
We have lost our way.

MALE CHORUS
There are no battle lines.
No rules of engagement.

FEMALE CHORUS
Only the confusion of a generation wrestling to know itself.
Tearing itself apart from the inside.

MALE CHORUS
Children of the millennium.
Whose patience YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram has eroded entirely.

FEMALE CHORUS
Who would rather get straight to the point but can’t even begin to fathom what that point might be.

(ANGELA stands but remains at center.)

MALE CHORUS
Love?

FEMALE CHORUS
A group of people who are so capable of love.
So ready and willing to give of themselves.
Starving for affection, kindness, and acceptance.
And yet so consistent in their choice of toxicity over love.
Poisoning the waters before even testing them.

CHORUS
We are at war, but with what?

MALE CHORUS
A concept?
An ideal?
A person?

FEMALE CHORUS
Feminist.
A person who believes in the social, political, and economic equality of the sexes.

A definition?
Is that where this war begins?
Is this the catalyst?

MALE CHORUS
A textbook definition.
A definition that exists within the realm of simplicity.

CHORUS
A definition that doesn’t work for us.

FEMALE CHORUS
Of course, as an ideal, it’s perfect.
Simple.
Of course, equality.
Social.
Political.
Economic.
Of course.
Simple.

CHORUS
A lie.

MALE CHORUS
The definition that refuses to discuss our world.
As it is.

CHORUS
As we exist in it.

(Charlie enters from the back of the stage and steps forward into the circle created by the Chorus. They break apart and stand half and half on either side of the stage. Charlie stands behind Angela just off center.)

FEMALE CHORUS
The taboo.
Taboo.
Feminist.
(ANGELA turns to face CHARLIE. They watch each other silently. The sound of an unidentifiable pop song slowly fades in.)

FEMALE CHORUS
And so we paint our faces.
We step into our armor.
We prepare.

MALE CHORUS
For battle.
For turmoil.
For destruction.

FEMALE CHORUS
In the hopes that through our destruction, through our self-analysis and self-harm maybe we can know ourselves.

CHORUS
Maybe we can begin to make peace.

(ANGELA and CHARLIE clasp forearms, the physical gesture lives somewhere between a friendly taking of arms and the beginning of a fight.)

MALE CHORUS
The oppressor and the oppressed.

FEMALE CHORUS
The aggressor and the defenseless.

MALE CHORUS
Victimizer and victim.

CHORUS
Gone.
Replaced with something whole.

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)
Scene 3

(The room is dimly lit and throbbing with the bass line of an unidentifiable pop song, perhaps a continuation of the song from the previous scene. The CHORUS and CHARLIE re dispersed through the room. ANGELA enters.)

ANGELA

Charlie. (Beat.) Charlie!

(To the entire room.)

Where is he?

FEMALE CHORUS

What’s up with her?

MALE CHORUS

Yeah, she’s acting weird.

ANGELA

(To herself.)

Why did nobody see me? Did nobody hear anything? Why did no one go upstairs?

(To the CHORUS.)

Didn’t you witness anything? You’re here. You were here the whole time.

FEMALE CHORUS

Something’s wrong.

CHARLIE

Don’t worry, guys, she’s just –

No.

ANGELA

What?

CHARLIE

No, no, no. You don’t get to do that. Not now. (Beat.) You don’t get to...to...

(CHARLIE tries to take hold of ANGELA’s arm. She flinches.)

Don’t touch me. Don’t you ever –

CHARLIE

Shut up, Angela.
Typical behavior.
Nothing to be done.

No! You don’t ever get to touch me again.

Again?

Again?
When did that happen?

Charlie?

What’s she talking about?

It’s nothing. (Beat.) Angela, we should talk outside.

I’m not going anywhere with you. I saw you.

Angela, you better stop.

(To the CHORUS.)
Did no one else see anything? Why did no one see me?
(CHARLIE steps towards her.)
Stay away from me. Away.

This is the danger.
This is the news story we
Read at night once we’re
...safely in our beds.

This is the statistic.
This is the statistic.
Will I become a statistic?

I’m not going to be a statistic. I’m not going to be –
(To the CHORUS.)
Where were all of you?

CHORUS

What?

ANGELA
Where are the people to bear witness to this?

CHARLIE
Stop.

ANGELA
(Losing control.)
I will never stop!

CHARLIE
I’m being serious. You better shut the fuck up.

ANGELA
I am not going to let you walk down those stairs like nothing ever happened!

CHARLIE
Stop! Angela, nothing happened.

(ANGELA screams and throws herself at CHARLIE. The MALE CHORUS grabs her.)

ANGELA
Get off! Get off of me!

FEMALE CHORUS
Let her go! Charlie? She doesn’t need to be restrained, does she? I mean, what damage can she possibly do, right?

(The MALE CHORUS looks to CHARLIE who nods. They cautiously let her go.)

ANGELA
Look at that. Your dogs listen to instructions. (Beat.) I don’t. And if you think for even a second that I’m going to walk out of this party without making sure everyone knows what you did to me --

(Charlie approaches ANGELA. She spits in his face, he wipes it away and leans in close so only she can hear.)
CHARLIE

(Whispering.)
It’s your word against mine bitch. You really think anyone is going to believe you? This is my house, my party, and no one is going to turn on me over some dumb little --

ANGELA
Everyone will believe me. I’ll tell everyone.

CHARLIE
I swear...if you don’t stop I’m going to fucking make you.

ANGELA
Fuck you!

CHARLIE
I believe you already did.

(The color drains from ANGELA’s face and she slumps against the CHORUS.)

CHORUS
Caged.
Defenseless.
Hopeless.

CHARLIE
(To MALE CHORUS.)
She needs to go. (Beat.) But she’s not leaving here. (CHARLIE gestures to the closet door in the back corner of the basement.) Put her in the closet.

(The MALE CHORUS approaches ANGELA.)

(END OF SCENE)
(The MALE CHORUS begins to grab ANGELA. She fights back violently. The FEMALE CHORUS and CHARLIE watch.)

ANGELA
Fuck! Let go! No. Charlie, I saw you.

CHARLIE
Do it.

ANGELA
I saw you! This isn’t going to stop that.

CHARLIE
I said fucking do it!

MALE CHORUS
(To ANGELA.)
Stop fighting.

CHARLIE
Put her in the closet. Now.

FEMALE CHORUS
This is wrong. Charlie, this has to stop.

CHARLIE
Now.

(ANGELA breaks free of the MALE CHORUS and tries to escape the room. Everyone else surrounds her.)

ANGELA
You can’t do this to me! I won’t! Someone. Stop. Help!

FEMALE CHORUS
Caged.
Defenseless.
Helpless.

(The CHORUS moves towards ANGELA as she tries to fight her way out.)

ANGELA
Let go of me. Now! This isn’t going to change anything.
(The CHORUS grabs her and tries to drag her to the closet door. She claws and punches at them but she cannot get out of their hold.)
How can you be a part of this? You’re letting this happen!

MALE CHORUS
Charlie, this isn’t a good –

CHARLIE
We can’t control this any other way. She can’t tell...

FEMALE CHORUS
We’re responsible.

MALE CHORUS
Charlie? This can’t be happening. (Beat.)

FEMALE CHORUS
Are we letting this happen?

ANGELA
You think this will change anything? Everyone knows, Charlie.

CHORUS
Charlie?

CHARLIE
Do it.

ANGELA
No! Fuck this! Let go of me!

(The CHORUS shoves ANGELA through the door and shuts it. CHARLIE approaches. He takes a key from his pocket and locks the door. A fist pounding on the door can be heard.)

CHARLIE
The door stays locked. Got it?

(The pounding and muffled yells continue to punctuate the room, almost rhythmically with the music. The CHORUS stays standing outside the door. CHARLIE exits.)

(END OF SCENE)
Scene 6

(The CHORUS stands outside the closet door. ANGELA’s muffled yells and constant pounding can be heard through the door.)

MALE CHORUS
That noise, it’s...it won’t...why won’t she stop?

FEMALE CHORUS
We trapped her, locked her away in there. And for what?

CHORUS
Caged.
Defenseless.

FEMALE CHORUS
Helpless.
(ANGELA pounds against the door.)
We have to let her out.

MALE CHORUS
No. We can’t.

FEMALE CHORUS
We did this to her. Aren’t we responsible?

MALE CHORUS
We let her out now and we all go down. We all take the fall for this.

FEMALE CHORUS
But weren’t we all complicit in this?

MALE CHORUS
It’s not our problem.

FEMALE CHORUS
What?

MALE CHORUS
This is between her and Charlie. (Beat.) It’s her problem.

FEMALE CHORUS
How can you say that? If she hadn’t been here —
MALE CHORUS

But she was. And if she hadn’t been here she wouldn’t have gone upstairs with him.

(Muffled through the door we can hear
ANGELA. The pounding increases.)

ANGELA

(Muffled.)
You were there. You saw. Why didn’t you help me?

CHORUS

We saw. We saw. (Beat.) What did we see?

MALE CHORUS

There’s no way for us to know.

FEMALE CHORUS

We can all make a pretty clear assumption.

MALE CHORUS

But how do we know?
How do we know?
How can we ever know when there are no clear guidelines to follow?
A party.
A rape.
A miscommunication.
There is no black and white.
It’s all grey.
How can we know if it’s grey?
You don’t make a black and white decision for grey space.
You don’t make assumptions.
You don’t put your neck on the line for some girl who doesn’t know what she’s saying.
No one saw what happened upstairs.
No one went to look.
No one wanted to look.
We don’t want to know.

FEMALE CHORUS

Don’t want to know?
You don’t want to know?
You would rather agree with the man accused than the woman who pleads for an open hand but receives a fist.
We brutalized her.
We made an assumption.
We acted in the black and white.
She is the grey.
You rejected the grey.
We.
We rejected the grey only to settle in the easy.
The comfortable.

MALE CHORUS
This is comfortable?

(There is a pause as the pounding continues.)

FEMALE CHORUS
This is wrong.
This isn’t comfortable.
This is inexcusable.
We haven’t chosen to help anyone but ourselves.

MALE CHORUS
Ourselves.
Ourselves.
We have to think about ourselves.
We can’t just make choices without understanding the consequences.
This could ruin us.
All of us.

FEMALE CHORUS
This has already ruined us.
All of us.
We are all tainted with this.

(ANGELA continues to pound against the door.)

CHORUS
Tainted.

(The CHORUS remains standing around the door.)

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)
Scene 7

(A spotlight comes up on ANGELA. She is in the closet, which is represented by the framing of a box with hinges on the front around her. The rest of the stage remains dark. Faint sounds of music and a party echo around her.)

ANGELA

Locked away!
Buried alive in this...this...makeshift cage.
And for what?
For what?

For using my voice.
For taking up space.
Crushed under the weight of the illusion that I am at fault for speaking out against my attacker.
This illusion that resisting, defending my honor, is to bring about endless shame.
I am meant to be ashamed.
Shut away.

Shut away.

Confined within the four walls of my role as woman.
Told not to take up space, placed in a room in which I have no option but to shrink.
How many people want to see me shrink?
Out of existence.

Men.
Women.
Friends.
Lovers.
Family.

Waiting for me to dwindle into this...expectation. I am not an expectation! I am not made to be what you all want me to be! I am flesh and blood, a force of nature. Endowed with the will of the world, made fierce through trial by fire, and you ask me to shrink? Disappear?

I cannot disappear anymore than the sun.
And though I may disappear from your sight for a time my light burns just as bright.
Do you hear me? I will not be confined.  
I blaze just as brightly as the sun and trust me. 
If you get too close… 
You will burn.

(CHARLIE enters into the spotlight slowly 
and sits against the frame.) 

(END OF SCENE)
Scene 8

(The stage is still dark except for the spotlight that illuminates ANGELA within the framing and CHARLIE seated in front of it. She knocks against the frame to continue the pounding. ANGELA speaks out to the audience and not to CHARLIE.)

CHARLIE
This is a fucking nightmare.
(ANGELA bangs against the door.)
Can you stop for one minute?
(She bangs again.)
Just one minute...
(She continues to bang.)
Angela, please.
(The banging gets louder. CHARLIE begins to lose his temper.)
Just cut it out, okay?
(ANGELA bangs louder. CHARLIE snaps and rounds on the door. He glares at ANGELA as he sits on his knees and pounds against the outside of the frame.)
Stop! God dammit! Just give it a rest, Angela! This is not all my fault.

(CHARLIE stops pounding on the frame. He kneels with his forehead against it, both hands grasping either side, as if in prayer or mourning.)

ANGELA
Fault. My fault. (Beat.) There has to be fault.

(CHARLIE puts his head in his hands and sits back down with his back against the door. ANGELA softly thuds against the doorframe.)

CHARLIE
I saw you too, you know?
I saw you smile at me.
(Slight pause, then with more confidence.)
You smiled at me.
Remember?
Or was that a trick?
ANGELA
I smiled at him.

CHARLIE
(With growing enthusiasm, almost child-like.)
See?
You wanted me too.
I know you did.
You went upstairs with me.
You laughed at my jokes.

CHARLIE              ANGELA
This is how friends behaved. This is how friends behaved.
Right?

CHARLIE
And you were so beautiful.
The way you tucked your hair behind your ear and smiled at
the ground.
I felt like a man.
You did that for me.
You made me feel powerful.
Why couldn’t you just go along with it?
I didn’t want to hurt you.
I don’t want to hurt you.
Why didn’t you just go along with it?
Just let me...
Have you.

ANGELA
I walked upstairs with him.
I smiled at his jokes.
I did.
I did...
And then I wanted to leave.
Something changed.
Something...shifted.
And I wanted to leave.
I wanted to leave.
But I couldn’t.
I tried to.
But he put his hands on me.
Grabbed me.
Pushed me against the wall.

CHARLIE
Why didn’t you just go along with it?
Just let me...
Have you.

ANGELA

And I froze.
I couldn’t move.
I couldn’t scream.
All of those instincts.
Fight back.
Scream for help.
Do something!
And I couldn’t.
I was just there.
I didn’t try to fight back.
I just kept thinking...
I don’t want to die tonight.
I don’t want to only have had twenty-one years to live.
This can’t be it.
This can’t be the end.

CHARLIE

Let me have you.

ANGELA

I heard the party happening around me.
The sounds of music and laughter.
People running up and down the stairs.
Those stairs.
Why did nobody think to look for me?
Did no one see me go upstairs with him?
I was so close.
Why could I not call out for help?
I was empty.
It was almost as if I left my body in that moment.
But that’s impossible.
I felt...
Everything.
There was no escape.
Caged in my own body.
Captive.
A prisoner.
(Beat.)
But if I could just stay alive.

CHARLIE

You wanted me Angela.
We all want to be wanted.
And in that room, at least at first, you wanted me.
I could see it in your eyes.
The need.
The desire.
The hunger.
To be wanted.
To be desirable.
It’s human we all feel it.
I know you felt it.

ANGELA

I felt nothing.
I felt everything.
There was no escape.

(She finally directs her attention to CHARLIE.)
And then you walked out.
Out of that room.
That cage.
As if nothing had happened.
It wasn’t unusual.
It wasn’t a trauma.
You left me there.
Broken.
Alone.
And I thought, “What just happened to me?”
Am I a statistic?
What happened to me?
What…
Happened…

(ANGELA’s voice fades out as she recedes into her own thoughts. CHARLIE notices and attempts to engage with her again.)

CHARLIE

I just thought we could want each other.
We could need each other.
And you wouldn’t let me.
So I…I took it.
I took that because that’s what we all need.
I took it.
I took it.
I needed it…
We all need it.

(There is a long pause.)

Angela?

(ANGELA knocks against the door.)

I saw it in your eyes.
(ANGELA knocks harder.)

Just tell me that I wasn’t wrong.

(Another knock.)

Tell me.

(Another knock.)

Stop that. Talk to me.

(More knocking, louder this time.)

Cut it out.

(Knocking.)

Angela.

(Knocking.)

Fuck you! Stop that fucking knocking.

(Knocking continues.)

Just give me an answer!

(ANGELA continues to knock against the door. CHARLIE stands up and begins beating against the doorframe in anger.)

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)
Scene 9

(The lights come up on CHARLIE in the same position but the door is now solidly in place, blocking ANGELA from view. The knocking continues. As CHARLIE’s frustration builds he begins beating against the door violently.)

CHARLIE
(Still pounding on the door.)
I just need an answer! You have to tell me it wasn’t just me! (Beat.) Fuck, Angela! We all need to be wanted, we all need to be wanted, we ALL n—

(The CHORUS enters and immediately tries to get a hold of CHARLIE.)

FEMALE CHORUS
Charlie.
Charlie!

CHORUS
You can’t do this!

(The MALE CHORUS grabs and restrains him.)

MALE CHORUS
Stop it, man. Just stop, okay?
(CHARLIE stops resisting.)
Good. Let’s just step away from the door.
(They move away from the door.)
Yeah, yeah. That’s better okay. Just let it be for a minute.

CHARLIE
She wouldn’t...she was talking to me and then she just stopped. (Beat.) I thought she would...

FEMALE CHORUS
She’s in a closet because of you. Can’t blame her.

(There is a long pause where they all listen to ANGELA pounding against the door.)

CHORUS
You did this.
CHARLIE
No! You can’t put this on me alone. Don’t pretend like you tried to stop it. You were all here with me. This isn’t just me. This was not just me.

MALE CHORUS
We did this.

(The knocking gets louder.)

FEMALE CHORUS
I can’t stand that sound...

MALE CHORUS
The constant thumping.
Fist against wood.

FEMALE CHORUS
Trapped.

MALE CHORUS
Caged.

CHARLIE
She has some responsibility too. She did this too.

CHORUS
We have to fix this.
We have to let her out.

CHARLIE
Out?
We can’t let her out!
She’ll ruin everything.
She’ll destroy us.
Destroy me.
And for what?
She did this.

FEMALE CHORUS
You did this, Charlie.
You are responsible for your actions.
We put her in there.
You tried to hide your shame.
This is not what she wanted.
This is not what anyone wants.
Violence.
Anger.
To be locked away.
Hidden from sight.
Because of what?
What did she do to you?
What could you possibly want from her that you haven’t already taken?

CHARLIE

(Exploding.)

What do you want from me?
What do women want?
I thought I knew.
I thought I could give them that.
But...
But here I am.
Clueless.

(He rounds on the closet door.)

What did you expect from me when you come here?
Wearing a skirt that barely covers your ass.
Shirts that don’t hide a thing.
Clothing already falling off as you walk through the door.
You want to be looked at.
You know what you’re doing.
You know what reaction you’ll get.
And then it changes.
Then the attention is suddenly too much.

(Turning back to the CHORUS.)

How do I know when that shift happens?
I can’t tell.

(To the MALE CHORUS.)

Can you tell?
Do you know?
Where are the guidelines?
Battle lines.
What are the rules of engagement?

FEMALE CHORUS

Can’t stand that sound…
The constant thumping.
Thumping.

MALE CHORUS

“Let her out.”
It says.
“Let her out.”
CHARLIE
We can’t let her out.

CHORUS
We have to.

MALE CHORUS
Can’t keep her in there forever.

CHARLIE
Letting her out doesn’t fix it.

FEMALE CHORUS
How can this be fixing it? Haven’t we done enough? Haven’t we made this enough of a nightmare for her?

CHARLIE
A nightmare?
This is my nightmare.
I’m ruined.
She’s ruined.
We are all ruined.
And for what?
I wasn’t made to be like this.
You all made me like this.
Expected me to be a man.
Toy with us by the way you walk.

FEMALE CHORUS
No.

MALE CHORUS
No. Fault. My fault.

FEMALE CHORUS
Our fault.

CHORUS
There has to be fault.
(The knocking grows more passionate, violent.)
See? She needs out.

CHARLIE
She’ll ruin us. She’s ruined.
CHORUS
This is only making it worse. We have to act now. We did this.

CHARLIE
No one is innocent.

FEMALE CHORUS
A group of people who are so capable of love.
So ready and willing to give of themselves.
Starving for affection, kindness, and acceptance.
And yet so consistent in their choice of toxicity over love.
Poisoning the waters before even testing them.

(To CHARLIE.)
There is no innocence.
But it’s not about innocence.
It’s about justice.
It’s about truth.
That’s not what happened here tonight.

CHORUS
We’re all responsible.
We’re all ruined.

(The knocking grows louder. The door begins to shake.)

FEMALE CHORUS
Someone let her out before she hurts herself. She’s going to hurt herself.

(The door splits.)

CHARLIE
Shit!

(ANGELA proceeds to break the door apart.)

(END OF SCENE)
(ANGELA breaks down the door as CHARLIE and the CHORUS watch. She frees herself and lunges at the CHORUS. The music cuts off.)

ANGELA

I’ll kill you!
All of you!
I swear to god I will fucking murder you!
(The CHORUS cowers back from her. She looks around at them with disgust.)

Cowards.

(She walks slowly around the room, looking at the powered off sound system.)

It stinks out here.
Like stale alcohol and piss.
Better than in there though...

(She looks back at the closet.)

That dark room.
Small, dark room.
Four tiny walls.
A prison.
A cell.

(She turns to CHARLIE.)

You locked me in there.
You had me put away to hide your shame.
Your mistake.
Your violent act.

CHARLIE

Angela, I –

ANGELA

No!
You have silenced me enough.
Now you will stand here.
In silence.
You will witness me.

(There is a long pause.)

I thought I might die tonight.

(She approaches the closet again.)

A tomb.

(She gingerly touches the shattered facing of the door.)

My tomb.
That’s what it became, right?
That’s where you buried me.
Buried.
You buried me alive.
Locked me away.
Inside those four small walls.
My tomb.
And you left me there.
  (She shouts at the CHORUS.)
To what?
Rot?
Die?
Think about my actions?
Like a child placed in time out.
  (She pounds the frame.)
I am not a child!
Punished for a mis-deed.
  (She moves to center.)
What crime did I commit to be punished in this way?
To whom do I plead for justice?
What God was looking down on these actions tonight?
  (There is a long pause.)
There was none.
I was alone.
  (She looks around once more.)
I am alone.
Just like before.
Alone.
Always alone.
No one listened to me.
There was no one to hear me.
To witness me.
  (She yells in frustration.)
I had to listen to you.
All of you.
I witnessed you.
Through that door.
I had no choice.
You gave me no choice.
Listen to you talk.
Listen to you question.
Listen to you argue.
About me.
My fate.
What you were going to do to me.
Your actions against me.
I listened.
I had nothing but my ears.
Pressed against the door to my prison.
Pressed against that cold, unforgiving surface.  
As if against stone.  
Except I could hear every word.  
And not a word to save me.  
Not a friend amongst any of you.  
Too scared to act against the crowd.  
Too scared to do the right thing.  
No action for my benefit.  
Inaction.  
Anger.  
Confusion.  

(She stops and breathes, collecting herself.  
She walks to the doorway of the closet and stands on the threshold.)

I gave no consent.  
To anyone.  
I begged for him to cease.  
What possible transgression could I have made?  

(She looks down at her clothing.)

We all want to be needed.  
We need to be needed.  
Desired.  
Touched.  
Loved.  
But there was no love here tonight.  
Only pain.  
Only desires taken at the expense of hate.  
Only touches fueled by violence.  
Only actions taken to hide the truth.  
Self-loathing.  
I hate myself.  

(To CHARLIE.)

You made me hate myself.  

(To the CHORUS.)

All of you.  

(A pause.)

You killed the girl that came here tonight.  
When I was locked in that cage.  
The walls sealed around me.  
I died.  
No escape.  
That girl did not emerge from that closet.  
She died.  
You killed her.  
I killed her.  
We.  
We all killed her.
(She steps out of the threshold.)

CHORUS
Gone.
Replaced with something whole.

ANGELA
Whole?
How can you expect me to be whole after this?
There is a hole in the very fabric of my being.
You have ripped me open.
Exposed me to the world.
Shunned me from the edges of your consciousness.

But like the sun after a long night, I continue to rise.
There is no stopping the reaches of my light.
I continue to shine.
Even after being obstructed by the night.
I rise above this.
I ascend.
Wounded, yes.
But wounds I can heal.
Shame will dissipate.
This place can become just a place.
I give this place power over me.
Or I take that power back.
I do.
I take that power back.
And I rise.

(Chorus gives a long look to the CHORUS and CHARLIE and then begins to leave the room.)

Now away from the musky smell of old coats and discarded boots.
Away from this basement sticky with beer and the dark places we pretend don’t exist within us.
I’m leaving her behind in here.
She died within those four walls.
That cage.
That place you tried to hide away with your shame and regrets.
But I emerge.
Damaged.
Ripped.
Ruined.
But free.
(She walks towards the stairs out of the basement. The CHORUS and CHARLIE remain in the basement, watching her.)

Free.

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SHOW)