

Brand New Script

a short, dark comedy about drama, denial & permission
by Jennie Webb

Characters:

INTENSE GIRL: Intentionally quirky, definitely not popular but smart and probably could be if she set her mind to it. Or maybe not.

OPAQUE GIRL: A bit more awkward than her friend and a lot more clueless. Could never instinctively approach cool but might learn.

DINA, DANA & DEANA: Three inseparable girls known as Triple-D. Dina's the leader. Deana does the legwork. Dana gets caught in the middle. Together, they define top tier teen.

Setting: On campus, a space between classrooms

Time: During the school year

Synopsis:

***Brand New Script* is a short, dark comedy about drama, denial & permission that takes a slightly absurdist look at the role of prescription drugs on campus.**

CASTING NOTE: One or more of the teens who comprise Triple-D could be played by Trans, non-binary or male actors who are comfortable playing characters who identify as female.

Written as part of the immersive project, "Hall Pass," performed at San Diego and NYC high schools

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From a distance, we see two very young women hurrying across a space on a high school campus. They have left a classroom and head toward us. The first girl appears quite intense; she is followed by another girl who is hard to read, like she's opaque. The first girl is a little "cooler" than the other, but neither of them would be picked first for any team. They speak and move with a heightened immediacy.

OPAQUE GIRL:

Hey! Wait up! Where are you—?

INTENSE GIRL:

(interrupting) Just leave me alone, okay?

OPAQUE GIRL:

I don't understand... Slow down!

INTENSE GIRL:

I should not have to explain myself to you, or to anyone!

OPAQUE GIRL:

No, no, no. I get it. But—

She's interrupted by the intense girl stopping in front of us. Perhaps the opaque girl runs into her.

INTENSE GIRL:

You just said you didn't.

OPAQUE GIRL:

What?

She is trying to catch her breath.

INTENSE GIRL:

Understand. You said you didn't understand. You "get it," but you don't understand?

Pause. The two girls look at one another. Then the intense girl takes off again.

OPAQUE GIRL:

Wait! No...

She hurries after the other girl.

I mean, yes! Please, stop.

We follow them as the girls move to a different part of the space.

INTENSE GIRL:

I'm not the one who needs to stop. They need to stop.

OPAQUE GIRL:

What? Who?

INTENSE GIRL:

Who do you think? Man! Stop following me. I want to be alone!

OPAQUE GIRL:

Okay, I know. But I... Hey! Please! I don't want to be alone, either!

INTENSE GIRL:

No! I said I *want* to be alone. Leave me alone! Go away.

OPAQUE GIRL:

No. No pleeeeeeeaaase! I can't...

The intense girl stops. The opaque girl looks as if she might collapse. She breathes hard for a bit as the intense girl watches and the audience begins to catch up with them. Then,

INTENSE GIRL:

Are you going to be okay?

OPAQUE GIRL:

Yeah.... Yeah...

INTENSE GIRL:

Okay. So you have to admit it: what they did was completely inappropriate.

OPAQUE GIRL:

What did they do?

INTENSE GIRL:

Hello? Were you there or not?

OPAQUE GIRL:

Well, yeah! I was sitting—

INTENSE GIRL:

(interrupting) Oh, my god. You are so Aspergers. Are you ever there is the question.

OPAQUE GIRL:

You mean about Noah?

INTENSE GIRL

Yes. About Noah. What was all that?

OPAQUE GIRL:

I...

Very short pause.

I don't understand.

INTENSE GIRL:

Everyone loves Noah. Noah's fantastic. Let's all talk about Noah and his awesome peccs and how he almost slipped out of his Speedo at the last swim meet!

OPAQUE GIRL:

Okay...

INTENSE GIRL:

Can we just move on from Noah? Or at the very least, take an afternoon Noah break?

OPAQUE GIRL:

Well, yeah...

INTENSE GIRL:

Thank you!

OPAQUE GIRL:

I mean, he is dead.

Pause.

INTENSE GIRL:

I know he's dead.

OPAQUE GIRL:

And that's why everyone's—

INTENSE GIRL:

(interrupting) I know! This is precisely my point. Enough already talking about dead people. Why is everyone so in love with death and tragedies around here? Can't we have organized discussions about nice things? About people who are still alive and it matters to?

OPAQUE GIRL:

It matters to the rest of us. It helps us process.

INTENSE GIRL:

In theory, anyway. But this is like... we're not getting help dealing with horrible events, we're drowning in them. Who does that help?

OPAQUE GIRL:

A lot of people.

INTENSE GIRL:

Oh. Like Triple-D? What's that about? My god. Prime time. Could not shut them up.

OPAQUE GIRL:

They were very close to him.

INTENSE GIRL:

As close as they get to anyone besides themselves.

OPAQUE GIRL:

No. Dina, Dana and Deana: They all really loved him.

INTENSE GIRL:

You think? They're probably the ones who gave him the pills.

OPAQUE GIRL:

Why would you say that?

INTENSE GIRL:

Please! They're always talking about having scripts for everything and anything. "What's wrong? Swallow this!" He OD'd on prescription painkillers and now he's dead. You think they'd admit it was them?

OPAQUE GIRL:

What? No. It definitely wasn't them. They said.

INTENSE GIRL

Like I'd believe anything that comes out of Triple-D's collective mouth.

OPAQUE GIRL:

No. Everyone said: he got them from his dad.

Short pause.

INTENSE GIRL:

The pills?

OPAQUE GIRL:

Yes. His dad has cancer.

INTENSE GIRL:

Noah's dad? That's terrible!

OPAQUE GIRL:

I know.

INTENSE GIRL:

Has cancer or had cancer? Is he going to...? Oh, god, never mind. Puppies and rainbows. That's all I want right now. Keep your tragic updates and death toll to yourself, please.

She looks straight at us, aware of the audience watching and listening to her for the first time. Then she heads through the middle of the audience to find another space, speaking as she moves.

(to the audience) Excuse me. *(making her way through)* I didn't know we'd started crowdsourcing mourners on campus.

OPAQUE GIRL:

(to the audience) Sorry, she's... *(to the intense girl)* Wait up! *(to the audience)* Excuse me. Sorry...

She hurries through the audience after the intense girl. As we turn around to follow them we see that the intense girl has already encountered three girls who define top tier teen. This is Triple-D.

There is a moment strained silence as the intense girl stands silently in front of them. The opaque girl is still with us, in the audience. When Triple-D speaks, it's as if from one mind—no air between dialogue.

DINA:

(to the intense girl) Hey.

DANA:

(to the intense girl) Hi.

DEANA:

(to the intense girl) So?

INTENSE GIRL:

How did you—? I thought you were still in class, keening for Noah.

DINA:

Ooooooooooooooh we could not be more sad.

DANA:

Sooooooo sad!

DEANA:

So incredibly, incredibly sad!

INTENSE GIRL:

I can tell. So why are you out here? They ran out of Kleenex?

DINA:

The question is, why are *you*? Should we worry?

DANA:

We were worried.

DEANA:

We were really, really worried when you left.

INTENSE GIRL:

Really? Well, you can always worry. But I'm fine. I had no idea my abrupt departure would cause such grave concern. No pun intended. I just needed to be alone. To get away from...

She turns back around and sees the audience again. The opaque girl steps forward.

OPAQUE GIRL:

(to Triple-D) Hi, guys. How's it going? I'm really sad, too. Noah was a great guy.

Triple-D can't quite make sense of the opaque girl. They then turn back to the intense girl.

DINA:

(to the intense girl) It's such a tragedy.

DANA:

A real tragedy.

DEANA:

His family's been through so much already...

DINA:

(to the intense girl) You know about the cancer?

DANA:

His father's got cancer.

DEANA:

Almost lost him last year.

DINA:

And the mother? Arthritis. Rheumatoid. It's crippling

DANA:

She had to have both hips replaced.

DEANA:

Lots of pain in that house.

DINA:
His older sister? Migranes.

DANA:
Soooo much pain in that house.

DEANA:
It's all too too too too much. For anyone.

INTENSE GIRL:
What does that mean?

She turns and looks to the audience, as if for help.

(to the audience) I did not ask for this and I don't need to hear it. This is Noah's family, not mine. It's none of my business!

OPAQUE GIRL:
But it is! It's all of ours, they said: his mom and dad. It was like he was one of us, and we're all going through this together. And they brought cupcakes! But it's still very... *(to Triple-D)* Like you said. Sad.

Triple-D considers this. They then turn back to the intense girl.

DINA:
(to the intense girl) We thought you might be depressed.

DANA:
It's easy to get depressed.

DEANA:
Really easy. I think I'm depressed.

DINA:
You're depressed?

DANA:
(to Deana) You didn't say you were depressed.

DEANA:
I know. But I feel it coming on. I think I have PTSD.

DINA:
I definitely have PTSD.

DANA:
I think the whole school has PTSD.

DEANA:

Well, that's depressing.

DINA:

You can get a script for that.

DANA:

PTSD?

DEANA:

No, depression.

DINA:

No, both. They go hand in hand.

OPAQUE GIRL:

Because they're cause and effect. PTSD causes depression. And anxiety. And many other symptoms, including antisocial behavior on occasion.

Triple-D finally acknowledges the opaque girl, albeit briefly.

DINA:

Huh. *(to Dana)* Do you feel anxious?

DANA:

Not really. Not so much.

DEANA:

But do you feel antisocial? Would a cupcake help?

This hangs in the air. Triple-D then breaks out into hysterical laughter. The intense girl grabs the opaque girl and they move away.

INTENSE GIRL:

(to the opaque girl) Let's get out of here.

DINA:

No! Don't go.

Triple-D follows the two girls, gesturing for the audience to join them.

Like she said, we're all in this together! *(to the audience)* Come on!

OPAQUE GIRL:

(to the intense girl, on the move) See?

INTENSE GIRL:

You don't wanna know what I see.

DEANA:

(to Dana, pointing to the opaque girl, as they move) Look at her. There's no way she's not on the spectrum.

DANA:

You think?

DEANA:

Or obsessive compulsive.

The opaque girl stops.

OPAQUE GIRL:

What?

DEANA:

OCD? You can take something for that.

INTENSE GIRL:

Cut it out.

DINA:

Hey! We're only trying to help, here!

OPAQUE GIRL:

(to the intense girl) It's okay.

INTENSE GIRL:

It is not! *(to Triple-D)* Just leave us alone.

DINA:

You really think that's safe? We saw how you were in class.

DANA:

You looked anxious.

DEANA:

Do you have a panic disorder?

DINA:

My mother has a panic disorder.

DANA:

She does?

DEANA:

So does mine. She got it after my stepfather died.

DANA:
Really?

DINA:
That's right! Talk about rare diseases.

DEANA:
He couldn't figure out what to take!

DINA:
That would give me a panic disorder!

DANA:
My mother's bipolar.

Very short pause.

DINA:
Yes. We know.

DANA:
I'm just saying. It makes it very difficult. At our house.

DEANA:
Does she go off her meds? If she's manic depressive—

DANA:
(interrupting) Not the same as bipolar.

DINA:
Are you sure?

DANA:
Yes! It's my mother!

OPAQUE GIRL:
Actually, bipolar is just a newer name for manic depression. They both refer to the same disorder, a cycle of highs and lows, and medication is designed to even things out but sometimes a patient will quit taking the medication and then, in a manic episode which only others may recognize as dangerous, convince themselves that there's no need for pills at all.

Pause.

DINA:
Wow.

DANA:
Yeah.

DEANA:

Okay. So who in your family...?

OPAQUE GIRL:

Oh. No one. I just read about it.

DEANA:

(to Dana) What did I say? *(to the opaque girl)* Aspergers, right?

DINA:

Definitely Aspergers.

DEANA:

(to the opaque girl) What are you on?

OPAQUE GIRL:

What am I on?

INTENSE GIRL:

Listen. Have loads of Big Pharma fun, girls, but we're out of here.

OPAQUE GIRL:

No, it's okay. *(to Triple-D)* I'm actually not on anything. We tried beta blockers but my therapist decided I was better off without them.

DEANA:

But you're ADHD, aren't you?

DINA:

Who isn't ADHD?

DANA:

I'm not ADHD.

DINA:

Why not?

DEANA:

It doesn't matter. You can get a diagnosis anyway.

DINA:

(to the opaque girl) I can give you some of my pills. They'll help you focus.

OPAQUE GIRL:

My brother's ADHD.

DEANA:

So you're set!

OPAQUE GIRL:
Why am I—?

DINA:
(interrupting) You can just take his!

OPAQUE GIRL:
His pills? But he's the one with ADHD.

DEANA:
And you're the one who clearly needs help.

DINA:
Why don't you try 'em?

DANA:
They're just pills.

DEANA:
It never hurts to try!

INTENSE GIRL:
Hello? Did you hear what you just said? Or do you never even listen to yourselves?

Triple-D can't quite process this. The intense girl then turns to the audience.

(to the audience) So obviously I'm the only one with a problem here!

She starts to leave again.

DINA:
(to the intense girl) Wait! Are you in pain, sweetie?

The intense girl turns back to the opaque girl.

INTENSE GIRL:
(to the opaque girl) Are you coming with me?

DANA:
Don't leave us!

DEANA:
Let us help you.

INTENSE GIRL:
You can't help me! I am in pain because terrible things are happening in our lives, in the world. Life sucks and it's like all you want to do is sit around, wrapping yourselves in its suckage!

DINA:

That is totally untrue!

DANA:

And totally unfair!

DEANA:

And you don't have to be in pain! You can get any prescription you want.

DINA:

Or you can use one of ours.

DANA:

Did I tell you I have lupus?

DEANA:

Since when?

DANA:

And fibromyalgia.

DINA:

Ooooooh! Now we're talking chronic pain! They have great stuff on the market. You have a new script yet?

INTENSE GIRL:

(to the opaque girl) Now do you understand what I mean? What's going on around here? Now do you get it?

OPAQUE GIRL:

I understand... but I don't get it.

INTENSE GIRL:

Believe me, neither do I. I don't want to live in a one pill fits all society, thank you very much.

OPAQUE GIRL:

But where do the pills come from?

INTENSE GIRL:

Two words...

DINA, DANA & DEANA:

Medicine! Cabinet!

Triple-D again breaks out into hysterical laughter.

INTENSE GIRL:

That isn't what—

OPAQUE GIRL:

(interrupting, to Triple-D) But whose? Any medicine cabinet?

DINA:

Ask your mother.

DANA:

Ask your father.

DEANA:

No! Ask your brother!

INTENSE GIRL:

I was going to say a doctor needs to—

DINA:

(interrupting) Oh, believe me: a doctor's always in charge. And our parents are all on board.

DANA:

Totally on board.

DEANA:

Yours will be, too!

INTENSE GIRL:

(to Triple-D) So it doesn't matter what you take? Do you not want to feel the pain, or do you not want to feel anything?

Triple-D considers this.

(to the opaque girl) They don't care about making stuff better around here, they're just looking for something to take them away from it. Pretend like everything's safe when it's not!

OPAQUE GIRL:

And how is that any different than running away?

INTENSE GIRL:

What?

OPAQUE GIRL:

You said all you wanted was puppies and rainbows. Which are great—especially puppies—but there's so much more than that. Even if it does suck. Or isn't safe and doesn't make sense. Sometimes especially if it doesn't make sense then it's way more interesting but it makes it worse to run away because then you have to go back and figure it out while everyone else is way ahead of you. That really sucks.

Short pause. The intense girl looks at the audience. Then,

INTENSE GIRL:

Let's go back to class.

She heads back through the audience, followed by the opaque girl and Triple-D.

DINA:

Ooooooooooh, I'm so glad we could help! Like she said, so much right now doesn't make sense.

DANA:

It's hard. It's sad.

DEANA:

But take it from us: the problems don't go away all by themselves.

DINA:

You need a prescription!

INTENSE GIRL:

(moving away) Right. *(to the opaque girl)* Maybe there are still cupcakes.

DANA:

And if not, we'll find you a something good.

DEANA:

I've got a brand new script that will take care of anything!

OPAQUE GIRL:

(moving away, to the intense girl) That does not sound safe.

DINA:

Oh, it's totally safe! I looked it up on the internet. It's all online.

The intense girl suddenly turns back around to face the audience and Triple-D.

INTENSE GIRL:

You know what else you can look up? Our friend Noah. Who is now dead!

Short pause.

You have a brand new script that will take care of that?

Triple-D, now surrounded by the audience, considers this and for the first time, can't even begin to come up with an answer.

End of Play