

CONTROL FREAKS

A comedy in one act
by
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PREVIEW ONLY!

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SYNOPSIS

Five teenagers feel like total freaks because they're being pushed around by bullies, media, meds, parents, and hormones. In a series of hilarious scenes, each character must battle their literal personified pressures to regain their independence. From being mummified by a video game controller to a makeover by a pharmaceutical glam squad, it's a fast paced physical comedy about what happens when teenagers finally decide to stop being pushed around and take back control.

RUNNING TIME

25-30 minutes.

CHARACTERS

Entirely gender flexible cast of 5-25

CONTROL GROUP:

There are 5 main characters in the CONTROL GROUP. They are entirely gender flexible (including their names); simply change the pronouns at your discretion.

CARTER.....controlled by bullies
ASHTON.....controlled by electronics
KADENCE.....controlled by substances
MADISON.....controlled by parents
PHOENIX.....controlled by hormones

FREAKS:

There are 20 speaking roles in the FREAKS group. These roles may be assigned individually or doubled by the actors in the CONTROL GROUP. Keep in mind that it is perfectly acceptable for actors to portray any gender. TESTOSTERONE is switched to ESTROGEN if Phoenix is played by a female.

| | | | |
|--------------|----------|------------|-----------|
| COCKROACH | MOSQUITO | RAT | EARTHWORM |
| A | B | X | Y |
| PROZAC | XANAX | ALBUTEROL | ACCUTANE |
| MOM | DAD | BUYER 1 | BUYER 2 |
| TESTOSTERONE | DOPAMINE | ADRENALINE | MELATONIN |

SETTING

There are various locations in the script. The sets for these locations may be fully realized or simply suggested by using blocks that are rearranged for each scene. What's most important is that the scene changes are performed quickly, to keep the play moving forward at a steady pace.

LIGHTING/SOUND

There are suggested lighting and sound cues written into the script, but these are optional. The play can easily be produced with no special lighting or sound effects whatsoever.

COSTUMES

The CONTROL GROUP wears simple T-shirts and jeans, with remote controls hanging around their necks (using chains, ribbons, lanyards, etc). The FREAKS may be costumed elaborately or simply with T-shirts that have their names printed on them.

AT RISE: A spotlight comes up on CARTER. He has a remote control hanging around his neck on a chain and speaks directly to the audience.

CARTER

Teenagers should come with a warning label: "Caution! Contents Under Pressure." My friends are always pressuring me to do things that I know are wrong. And yet, I do them anyway. I have no idea why. It's like I lose all self control when they're around.

He pushes a button on the remote control and a spotlight rises on ASHTON. She also has a remote control hanging around her neck.

ASHTON

A person can be underwhelmed and a person can be overwhelmed. Trust me, I know. But have you ever heard of a person simply being "whelmed"? Because that sounds pretty awesome right about now. Between my cell phone and tablet and laptop and video games, my world is spinning wildly out of control.

She pushes a button on the remote control and a spotlight comes up on KADENCE. She also has a remote control hanging around her neck.

KADENCE

I have all these feelings mashed up inside of me, like tennis balls, or bubbles, or whatever. They roll around, or float around, or whatever, and make me feel all dizzy, or bloated, or whatever. So the doctor prescribed a controlled substance to make me feel better, but now all I feel is...

(shrugs her shoulders)

Whatever.

She pushes a button on the remote control and a spotlight comes up on MADISON. She also has a remote control hanging around her neck.

MADISON

When you open the door to my house, the very first thing you see are the words "Live, Laugh, Love" painted on the living

room wall. Which is funny because my parents do none of those things. What it should say is "Loathe, Lie, Leave." But that would clash with the curtains. Let me tell you, opening that door is an exercise in damage control, every day.

She pushes a button on the remote control and a spotlight comes up on PHOENIX. He also has a remote control hanging around her neck.

PHOENIX

I think I've figured it out. The world is divided into two groups. One: people who are into sports. And two: people who are into people who are into sports. I am neither of these things. But I still have urges. Impulses that wake me up in the morning, distract me all day long, and keep me awake at night. I wish there was a remote control that could turn my hormones off!

He pushes a button on the remote control and the lights quickly come up on the whole stage.

CARTER

Crowd control.

ASHTON

Cost control.

KADENCE

Quality control

MADISON

Rent control.

PHOENIX

Cruise control.

CARTER

Pest control.

ASHTON

Impulse control.

KADENCE

Birth control.

Gun control. MADISON
 Ground control. PHOENIX
 Everything but "in" control! CONTROL GROUP
 And all of this worrying -- CARTER
 Wishing -- ASHTON
 Wondering -- KADENCE
 Wanting -- MADISON
 Makes us feel like -- PHOENIX
 FREAKS! CONTROL GROUP

The CONTROL GROUP pushes buttons on their remote controls and the lights go out, except for the spotlight on CARTER. The others exit as he speaks to the audience.

CARTER
 I'm a good kid. Seriously. I'm the guy who waits for the walk signal when there isn't a car for three miles. I have a 3.8 GPA, I volunteer at the animal shelter, and I once found a wallet with a hundred bucks in it and tracked the owner down like a bloodhound. My biggest rebellion to date was eating a jelly bean in the grocery store without paying for it, and I didn't sleep for a week because of the guilt.

The lights rise around him. He's in a shopping mall food court and looks around nervously.

But look at me now. I'm standing by the fake ferns in the food

court trenches, sweating through my honour roll hoodie, waiting for the infestation to return. My friends, and I use that term loosely, decided that today is the day we claim our territory. They've spent the last hour treating this mall like a buffet, and I'm just the guy holding the tray. I keep asking myself, when did my social circle turn into a biology textbook gone wrong? We used to just play video games and argue about whether a hot dog is a sandwich. Now, it's all dares and status. It's like they woke up one morning, decided being human was too much work, and opted for vermin instead. And the worst part? I'm still standing here. Because the only thing scarier than being with them, is being the guy they're all looking at through the glass.

COCKROACH skitters onstage. He stops abruptly, his head twitching side to side. He's dressed as an actual cockroach, and wears a brown overcoat and huge sunglasses.

COCKROACH

Clear! The coast is clear. You could drop a nuclear bomb on this mall and I'd still be standing here with this.

He zips open his overcoat. A coffee maker is duct taped to his chest. He leans back dangerously under the weight.

CARTER

A coffee maker? You stole a Keurig from Williams Sonoma? You'll go to jail!

COCKROACH

(Strikes a heroic pose)

Jail? I'm a cockroach. I thrive in harsh environments. They can't catch what they can't squish. I saw the security guard. He was a big sweaty guy who smelled like onions. I just froze under a bench and he walked right past me. I'm invisible. I'm indestructible!

MOSQUITO buzzes in. She has wings and is wearing bright neon leggings. She keeps darting in and out of CARTER'S personal space.

MOSQUITO

(High pitched, rapid fire)

Did you see it? Did you see me? I was like zip zap zoom! I hovered over the jewellery counter, waited for the lady to sneeze, and bam! Buzzzzzzzz!

CARTER

(Swats at the air)

Get back! You're making me dizzy. What did you get?

MOSQUITO

(Holds up a shiny earring)

A diamond earring!

CARTER

Just one? What are you going to do with one earring?

MOSQUITO

I don't have a lot of carrying capacity. I'm built for speed, not freight. Plus, I left the other one to mark my territory.

She pokes him sharply in the arm.

Poke! Now you gotta go! Go go go!

RAT slinks in, dragging a piece of luggage on wheels. He's got a long tail and gnaws on a discarded pretzel.

RAT

Keep it down, you wing nut. You want the exterminator to hear us?

CARTER

Please tell me that luggage is empty.

RAT

Empty? It's a literal gold mine. I found a hole in the back of Walmart. Slipped right through the drywall.

He zips open the luggage.

I'm gonna live in this. It's got pockets. It's got wheels. It's the ultimate nest. I even found some half eaten nacho cheese Doritos in the pocket. Score!

He reaches into the luggage and grabs a handful of nacho crumbs that he shoves in his mouth. EARTHWORM slowly oozes onto the stage. He's wearing a cream coloured sleeping bag with armholes cut out. He's horizontal, dragging himself across the floor.

CARTER

What are you doing down there?

EARTHWORM

I'm blending with the grout. It's moist down here.

CARTER

Did you even steal anything?

EARTHWORM rolls over. Tucked into his sleeping bag is a rolled up Persian rug.

EARTHWORM

I got this rug from Home Depot. I just laid on it and rolled. And rolled. And rolled. And rolled. It took four hours. I'm exhausted. I think I have rug burn.

CARTER

(Looks at them all, horrified)

You guys are insane. This isn't a game, it's a felony. What happened to us? Last year we were obsessed with Pokemon cards and arguing over who was the best Avenger. Now you're... you're pests!

COCKROACH

(Twitches)

Evolution, Carter. Grow a shell or get stepped on.

CARTER

But we were friends.

(To COCKROACH)

You used to share your lunch with me. Now you're duct taping kitchen appliances to your ribs?

(To RAT)

And you were the lead in the school musical. You have a beautiful voice. Why are you eating discarded pretzels?

RAT

The musical is for people who have something to lose. Down here in the shadows, nobody expects anything from a rat. It's liberating.

CARTER

It's not liberating. It's gross! You're all pressuring me to be gross so you don't have to feel lonely in the sewer. When did being a jerk become a personality trait?

MOSQUITO

(Buzzes around CARTER aggressively)

Stop talking! Talking is for humans. Humans are slow. Humans get swatted. Be a bug. Suck the life out of the mall. Poke poke poke!

COCKROACH

(Looms over CARTER)

Alright, Carter. Enough with the after school special. You're the only one left. The pests have spoken. Go into that Best Buy and bring back a 70 inch flat screen or you're out of the swarm. We'll make sure everyone in school knows you're just a ladybug.

CARTER

A ladybug? Ladybugs are helpful. They eat aphids.

RAT

(Sneers)

Exactly. They're helpful. Don't be helpful. Be infesting.

CARTER

(To the audience)

I can feel it. The pressure. It's like they're crawling all over me. I look at them and I don't see my friends anymore. I see mandibles. I see stingers.

COCKROACH grabs one of CARTER'S arms. MOSQUITO grabs the other. RAT pushes from behind. EARTHWORM wraps his body around CARTER'S ankles. They begin to drag him toward the store.

COCKROACH

Move it, grub!

MOSQUITO
Steal, steal, steal!

RAT
Join the pack!

EARTHWORM
Join the dirt!

CARTER
(Screams)
No! I don't want to be a pest. I don't want to live in a suitcase. I need PEST CONTROL!

CARTER frantically aims his remote at PESTS and mashes the button. There's a loud ZAP sound. The four bullies freeze in ridiculous, distorted bug poses. COCKROACH is stuck mid-twitch, MOSQUITO is on one leg, RAT is gnawing his pretzel, and EARTHWORM is a human pretzel. CARTER pants furiously.

CARTER
I've got to get better friends. They're literal bottom feeders. I used to worry about being cool enough for these guys. But standing here, looking at these jerks, I think I'm okay with being an endangered species. I'm not joining the swarm. I'm going to find a seat in the sun, far away from the shadows, where the only thing I have to worry about stealing is a nap.

He looks back at the frozen PESTS one last time.

Check the expiration date, guys. You're starting to smell like the trash you're living in.

CARTER pushes a button on his remote control and the lights go out, as a spotlight rises on ASHTON. The others exit as she speaks to the audience.

ASHTON
I remember my first video game. I was six. It was red and blue, it was plastic, and it taught me Italian plumbers don't take

kindly to lava. It was a simpler time. Now? Now I haven't looked at the outdoors in forty eight hours. My screen time report just arrived and it told me I spent eleven hours yesterday on an app that just shows videos of people cleaning carpets. Eleven hours! I know everything about deep steam suction and nothing about my own biology homework.

A digital PING echoes from her phone. She winces.

I feel like a marionette made of fiber optic cables. My brain is a browser with fifty tabs open, three of them are playing music I can't find, and one of them is an ad for goldfish insurance. I don't even have a goldfish! I'm being programmed, updated, and rebooted by four little letters that think they know me better than I know myself. I'm not a girl. I'm a targeted demographic.

The lights rise around her. She's surrounded by A, B, X, and Y. They are buttons on a giant video game controller, each attached to ASHTON by a long bungee cord. "A" suddenly yanks his cord and jerks ASHTON forward.

A

Ding! Social opportunity. Your friend Kristy just posted a video of herself crying because she dropped her ice cream. It's trending. You must engage. Press A to accept this as news!

ASHTON

(Resists)

Kristy cries when it rains. This isn't news, it's a Tuesday.

"X" yanks ASHTON sideways.

X

Wait! Before you scroll. Press X for context. Did you know Kristy's ice cream was actually a limited edition flavour made from the milk of a rare llama? Press X to see the llama. Press X to see the llama's Instagram!

"B" snaps ASHTON backward.

B

Bzzzt! Scandal. Someone in the comments says the llama was

mistreated. Press B to back away from the llama. Press B to block Kristy for supporting big dairy!

ASHTON

I just wanted to see if I had any homework.

"Y" pulls ASHTON in the opposite direction, almost choking her with the other cords.

Y

But why do we do homework at all, Ashton? Isn't a grade just a digital cookie in the simulation of life? Press Y to change perspective!

A

(Yanks hard)

Focus! The group chat is waiting. Everyone is posting that leaked photo of the geography teacher sleeping in his car. It's hilarious. It's mean. It's viral. Press A to post. Press A to share!

ASHTON

(Stiffens)

Wait. Mr. Petlak? No. He's going through a divorce. That's cruel. I'm not posting that.

B

(Yanks harder)

If you don't post, you're boring. Press B to cancel your reputation!

"X" runs around ASHTON in circles, wrapping his cord around her over and over.

X

Did you know Mr. Petlak's car is a rusty Buick? Press X for the blue book value. Press X for his divorce records!

A, B, X, and Y begin to circle ASHTON rapidly, crossing their bungee cords, literally mummifying her as they go.

A

Share it! Everyone is doing it!

B
Don't be a loser!

X
Search for the clout!

Y
Why be moral when you can be trending?!

ASHTON struggles against the bungee
cords, which are now strangling
her.

ASHTON
Stop! You're lagging me. My brain is buffering. I can't move. I
can't breathe!

A
The cursor is hovering. Just a little tap. Press A to advance
your status!

ASHTON
(To audience, muffled)
The wires are so tight. It's easier to just press it. It's just
one post. One little click and the pulling stops.

A/B/X/Y
Three... two...

ASHTON
(Loudly)
No! System override!

She flexes with everything she has.
The tension on the bungee cords
snaps. The four BUTTONS go flying
backward and hit the floor.

A
(Twitches on the floor)
Error 404. Social relevance not found.

ASHTON
I'm going to the park. I'm going to look at a tree. A real
tree. Not a "Top 10 Trees to Watch Being Chopped Down" video.

X

(Sits up)

Wait! Before you go. Did you know that forty percent of park trees are actually hiding cellular towers? Press X to join the conspiracy. Press X to see a map of the bird drones!

ASHTON

I'm deleting you, X. You're just a letter that comes after W. You have no power here.

B

(Scuttles over to her on his knees)

It's been forty five seconds. The world has moved on. There's a new trend. We're not doing "Clean Girl" anymore, we're doing "Swamp Goblin." You're wearing a clean shirt. You're failing the vibe check. Press B to roll in some mud!

ASHTON

I like my shirt. My mom bought me this shirt.

Y

(Stands up slowly)

But did she really buy it? Or did the algorithm whisper the brand name into her dreams while she slept next to her charging port? Press Y to have a crisis in the middle of a Monday!

ASHTON

(Covers her ears)

LALALALALA. I can't hear you. I'm a closed circuit.

She starts to walk away, but her feet get tangled in the bungee cords.

A

You're walking weird! People are going to see you walking weird. If you don't record a self deprecating video about your social anxiety right now, how will people know you're authentic?

ASHTON

I'll just be authentic. To the squirrels!

B

The squirrels don't have follow buttons. They won't validate your journey. They'll just take your nuts and leave you with zero engagement.

X

(Holds up a hand like a frame)

Wait, look! The lighting. Your skin looks incredible!. We could get thirty, maybe forty likes just on the pores. Press X to capture the fleeting beauty of your youth before gravity takes over!

ASHTON

(Wavers)

It is good lighting. And I did do my hair today. It seems like a waste to let a good hair day go unreported by the cloud.

A/B/X/Y

(Simultaneous)

Yes! Report it! Archive the beauty!

ASHTON

(Snaps out of it)

No! That's how it starts. One selfie leads to a caption, a caption leads to a hashtag, and before I know it, I'm three hours deep into a comment war with a bot named MuppetFan76 about whether or not Kermit the Frog has godlike powers. You guys are going into sleep mode. Permanently.

B

She's lost it.

Y

She's gone full analog.

ASHTON

I'm putting my phone in a drawer. A literal wooden drawer. And then? I'm going to go outside and sit in the grass. And if a notification happens, like a bird pooping on my head, at least it'll be in 4K and I won't have to like it.

ASHTON pushes a button on her remote control and the lights go out, as a spotlight rises on KADENCE. The others exit as she speaks to the audience.

KADENCE

My doctor says I'm "chemically imbalanced." Which makes me sound like a pool that has too much chlorine. Like, if you jump in my brain, your eyes might sting and your hair will turn

green. So, they gave me these.

The lights rise around her. She sits on a swivel chair in front of a bathroom vanity with a circle of light bulbs around it. She faces the audience through the "mirror." Surrounding the mirror are PROZAC, XANAX, ALBUTEROL, and ACCUTANE. They are all frozen, ready to perform a makeover on KADENCE.

They're like a high fashion glam squad, but instead of fixing my hair, they're rewiring my soul. One pill makes me happy, but it also makes me forget where I put my feet. Another pill clears my skin, but it turns my face into a piece of beef jerky. I'm not sure where the real Kadence ends and the lab results begin. I'm just a walking, talking pharmacy with a mood ring that's stuck on "blurry."

The glam squad springs to life. PROZAC begins dusting KADENCE'S face with a giant brush.

PROZAC

Good morning, Sunshine! Or is it evening? Who cares! Life is a musical and you've got the lead role! I'm just here to paint on a permanent, waterproof, industrial strength smile!

She uses her thumbs to literally stretch KADENCE's mouth wide.

KADENCE

(Muffled)

I feel weirdly... glittery.

XANAX leans heavily on KADENCE's shoulder.

XANAX

Whoa! Whoa, whoa, whoa. Too much spark, P-dog. You're over stimulating the merchandise.

(Whispers to KADENCE)

Let's just sink. You're a stone in a pond. A very sleepy stone. Feel the gravity? Gravity is your boyfriend.

ALBUTEROL blows a sharp whistle,
like a referee, and begins to do
jumping jacks.

ALBUTEROL
NO SINKING! LUNGS! WE NEED OXYGEN! WE'RE CLIMBING MOUNT EVEREST
IN THE MIDDLE OF MATH CLASS!

He sticks a tube from a bike pump
in KADENCE's mouth and begins
pumping.

Inhale the future! Exhale the past! If your heart isn't beating
like a drum, you aren't living!

ACCUTANE takes out a magnifying
glass and inspects KADENCE's
forehead.

ACCUTANE
I see a pore! It's thinking about producing oil! Not on my
watch!

He pulls out a spray bottle and
repeatedly blasts her in the face
with it.

Pshhh! Desiccate! Dehydrate! I want your skin so dry that if
you smile too hard, you shatter like a porcelain doll!

KADENCE
(Dazed)
Why... is... the... room... spinning... like... a... merry...
go... round... ?

PROZAC
(Adds a ridiculous bow to KADENCE's hair)
It's the "New You Makeover!" We're hiding the sadness under
three layers of "radiant glow" and two layers of "I can't
remember my middle name!"

ALBUTEROL
(Puts a heavy backpack on KADENCE's shoulders)
Run! Run to biology! Your airways are open! You can breathe for
six people right now! Do it!

XANAX

(Takes the backpack away and hurls it to the floor)
Nah, stay. The backpack is heavy. The air is heavy. Even the
light is heavy.

ACCUTANE

(Applies "chapstick" to KADENCE's face with a
giant paint roller)
Seal the lips! If she tries to talk, she might lose moisture!

KADENCE

(To the audience)
Look at me. I'm "perfect" with a capital P. My skin is clear
because it's basically sandpaper. My lungs are open, but I'm
too tired to move. And I seem happy, but I think I'm actually
just vibrating at a frequency only dogs can hear. They're
fixing me, but I feel like a broken toy that's been glued back
together with the wrong parts.

PROZAC

Wait! I detected a hint of nuanced emotion. That wasn't in the
brochure.

XANAX

She's thinking again. I hate it when they think.

ALBUTEROL

More air!

ACCUTANE

More sand!

PROZAC

Wait! Stop!

They instantly stop what they're
doing.

I see a flicker. Is that melancholy, in the left iris? I
specifically ordered a tint without sadness.

XANAX

It's a glitch. We should have uninstalled the empathy driver
before we launched the morning dose. It's a resource hog.

ALBUTEROL

(Blows his whistle)

Lungs! We're running at 400 RPMs and her brain is still trying to think about feelings. That's wind resistance. It creates drag. We're trying to win a race here, Kadence!

KADENCE

What race?

ALBUTEROL

THE RACE TO BE THE MOST EFFICIENT BREATHER IN THE TENTH GRADE!
GO! GO! GO!

ACCUTANE

Think of a cactus. No pores, no problems. Just needles and determination. Why can't you be more like a cactus?

KADENCE

Because I'm a mammal?

PROZAC

(Gasps)

A mammal? With needs? Oh, honey, no. We're upgrading you to "automated statue."

XANAX

If she moves too fast, the sadness might settle at the bottom and turn into sludge. We want her clear, like a bottle of expensive mineral water.

ALBUTEROL

WE'RE NOT WATER! WE'RE STEAM! HIGH PRESSURE! BOILING!

ACCUTANE

Steam is moisture! Moisture is the enemy!

He pulls out a handheld vacuum cleaner and starts trying to suck the humidity out of KADENCE's head. While doing this, PROZAC paints a giant pink smile across KADENCE's entire face with lipstick.

PROZAC

If the internal reality doesn't match the external branding, we just over paint. Fake it 'til you make it!

XANAX leans on KADENCE so hard that she's nearly folded in half.

XANAX

Is she still there? I think I can hear her soul trying to ask for a snack.

ALBUTEROL

(Pumps the bike pump frantically)

NO SNACKS! ONLY OXYGEN!

ACCUTANE

Only dust!

PROZAC

Only joy!

They begin to spin KADENCE in a dizzying circle in the swivel chair.

KADENCE

I'm... losing... my... signal. I... can't... find... the... real... me.

ALBUTEROL

The real you was a beta version. We're the 2.0 patch!

XANAX

All you have to do is buffer!

They all converge on her at once, a whirlwind of brushes, pumps, and sprays. KADENCE is buried in the chaos as they spin her around and around.

KADENCE

Stop!

She mashes the buttons on her remote. The four MEDICATIONS freeze.

KADENCE

(To audience)

I know I need help. I know my brain is a bit of a mess. But I'd

rather be a little imbalanced and real than a perfect girl who doesn't know she's even there. I think it's time I stop letting the medicine cabinet tell me who I'm supposed to be today.

She wipes a streak of make-up off her cheek.

I'm taking back the "whatever." And this time, it actually means something.

KADENCE pushes a button on her remote control and the lights go out, as a spotlight rises on MADISON. The others exit as she speaks to the audience.

MADISON

My parents are real estate agents. They don't have conversations, they have negotiations. When I was five, I didn't get a bedtime story, I got a presentation on the benefits of sleeping through the night for future resale value. Then they got divorced. Now, I'm not just their daughter, I'm disputed territory. I'm a high demand listing in a seller's market.

The lights rise around her. She's at a bus stop, standing between two benches. On one bench is an advertisement for a real estate agency for MOM. A picture of her smiling face is on the back of the bench, with the words "MOM'S MANSIONS." On the other bench is an advertisement for a real estate agency for DAD. A picture of his smiling face is on the back of the bench, with the words "DAD'S DWELLINGS."

I'm waiting for the 503 Express to Rachel's house. Her parents are accountants. Beautiful, boring, beige accountants. They spend their weekends talking about deductions and accrued interest. Their house smells like unscented candles and printer paper. There are no open houses at Rachel's. No one is trying to stage the living room before I sit down. I just want to go somewhere where the most stressful thing that happens is a math error on a tax return. I need a vacation from being a prime

investment.

Suddenly, the faces on the bench advertisements pop open. They are doors on hinges. MOM and DAD stick their heads through the doors.

DAD

Madison! Don't board that bus. It's got terrible shocks. Low curb appeal. Come back to Dad's. I've just lowered the barrier to entry. No curfew. And I've re-zoned the kitchen as an all night taco stand.

MOM

Ignore the handyman special, Madison! At Mom's, we've just installed a zero tolerance study zone with high speed wi-fi. It's a premium listing for a premium daughter. If you stay with me, I'll include a guilt free clause if you graduate with honours.

MADISON

I don't want tacos or high speed wi-fi. I want a parent who doesn't describe my bedroom as a flex space with natural light. I sometimes wonder what it would be like if I could trade you both in for better models.

BUYER 1 and BUYER 2 power walk onstage. They circle around MADISON as they speak. BUYER 1 pokes MADISON's arm.

BUYER 1

Hmm. Is this a load bearing teenager? I don't want to buy into a property that's going to sag under the weight of junior year.

MOM

(Leans out her window)

She's solid oak. Fully renovated last summer. We upgraded her attitude and installed a brand new "Polite to Relatives" software.

BUYER 2 takes out a measuring tape and measures MADISON's head.

BUYER 2

What's the square footage on the brain? Is there room for an addition? I'm looking for a doctor or maybe a corporate lawyer

layout. I don't want to invest if it's just going to be a liberal arts studio.

DAD

She's a blank canvas. You can paint her dreams any colour you want. If you choose my house, I'll throw in a cool dad kickback. I'll let her stay out until 2:00AM as long as she brings me back a chalupa. No questions asked. Total as-is parenting.

BUYER 1

I don't know. The Dad house has a lot of hidden mould, mostly in the laundry pile.

BUYER 2

And the Mom house feels a bit too staged. Like if I touch a throw pillow, a silent alarm goes off.

MOM

(Offended)

It's not staged, it's curated. I spent sixteen years trying to maintain the appearance of a functional family. If I hadn't, Madison would have grown up in a house that smelled like gym socks and broken promises.

DAD

Oh, here we go. Broken promises? Is this about the dishwasher again? Because that wasn't a promise, that was a mechanical failure. Just like our marriage.

BUYER 1

Oh, look at that. Character flaws. Are these original features or did you add them during the separation?

MOM

They were pre-existing conditions. I thought I was buying into a mid-century modern provider, but I ended up with a fixer upper who spends his weekends looking for his own car keys.

DAD

At least my floor plan is open. You have so many boundaries and emotional protocols that I needed a permit just to use the guest bathroom.

BUYER 2

(Taps MADISON'S shoulder)

Question. Does the teenager come with the baggage, or is that a

separate closing cost?

MADISON

It's not baggage, it's my life! And it's currently being stored in a backpack because neither of them can decide if I'm a primary residence or a vacation rental.

BUYER 1

I'm concerned about the HOA fees. If we invest in the Mom house, do we have to attend the passive aggressive bake sales?

MOM

They're gluten free fundraisers.

BUYER 2

And what about the Dad house? Does the "No Questions Asked" policy include the time he forgot her at the dentist for four hours? That's a major hit to the resale value.

DAD

(Defensive)

I was evaluating the neighbourhood.

MOM

(Rolls her eyes)

From the inside of a sports bar.

DAD

It's called market research.

MADISON

See? They're not even arguing about me anymore. They're arguing about the comparable properties.

BUYER 1

I see some cracks around the eyes, likely from scowling. We're going to need to buff those out before the spring semester.

BUYER 2

And the opinionated tone is a definite red flag.

MOM

We can renovate.

DAD

We'll power wash the personality.

MADISON

I'm standing right here! I'm not a listing! I'm a human being who currently has a 4.0 grade average and a moderate addiction to ketchup chips. Stop talking about my foundation!

MOM

Don't mind the owner's temperament. It's just a temporary market fluctuation.

DAD

I'll counter offer. If she stays with me, I'll let you use her for tax deductible emotional support.

BUYER 1

I'll bid. I bid three designer handbags and a summer in Europe to keep her at the Mom house.

BUYER 2

I'll top that. I bid a new SUV and zero accountability for the Dad house.

MOM/DAD

(Simultaneous)

Sold! To the highest bidder!

MADISON

(To the audience)

See? To them, love isn't a feeling, it's a closing cost. They aren't fighting for me, they're fighting for the "Sold" sign without ever actually having to listen to what I'm saying.

BUYER 1

(Grabs MADISON's arm)

Come along, Listing 503.

BUYER 2

(Grabs MADISON's other arm)

We need to stage your personality for the SATs.

MADISON

(Pulls away)

No. No more staging. No more open houses. And definitely no more flex space. You want to talk about rent control? How about this. My heart isn't for lease. My time isn't a limited time offer. I'm not a split level colonial. And I'm definitely not turnkey. This property is officially OFF THE MARKET!

She mashes the remote control button. MOM and DAD's windows slam shut simultaneously. BUYER 1 and BUYER 2 freeze. MADISON speaks to the audience.

They say home is where the heart is. But I think home is actually just wherever you finally stop trying to sell yourself to people who only want to own you. I'm going to the land of calculators and spreadsheets. Rachel's parents won't try to flip me for a profit. They'll just ask me if I want a glass of skim milk and show me their 401k projections.

The sounds of a bus horn HONKS.

And honestly? That sounds like a dream home.

MADISON pushes a button on her remote control and the lights go out, as a spotlight rises on PHOENIX.

END OF PREVIEW.

For a complete script, or to apply for production rights:
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