The Perfect Princess

(The scene opens with EMMA, a nine year old girl, in a living room containing a TV. Her mother calls from off stage.)

EMMA’S MOM
Just sit down and watch your show sweetie, Daddy will be home soon and I have to get dinner ready.

(EMMA takes the remote and turns on the TV. A children’s show about a princess appears on the screen.)

EMMA
Ok Mama!

(EMMA plops herself down on the floor in front of the TV. On the screen the PRINCESS is speaking.)

PRINCESS
Hello children! What a beautiful day it is! The sun is shining, the birds are singing, and it’s the perfect day to learn about how to be the perfect princesses. The first rule of being a princess is to be kind and respectful to everyone around you.

EMMA
(EMMA frowns and wonders out loud, not expecting an answer.)
But what if they’re mean to you first?

PRINCESS
You should still show them kindness, it’s a very mature thing to turn the other cheek.

EMMA
(EMMA jumps with surprise.)
Can you hear me?

PRINCESS
Of course I can, I have Princess Magic! It’s my job to help guide as many young girls as I can through my program. I want to make sure that each girl has the best opportunity of reaching her full potential as a princess!
EMMA
Wow that’s amazing! You think I could be a princess?

PRINCESS
I believe that any girl who truly listens to my advice and tries her best to adhere to it can have a happily ever after. Now back to the first lesson, a princess must be kind to everyone she meets.

EMMA
Well what about when Jack pulled my hair at recess? That wasn’t very nice of him. Why should I be nice back?

PRINCESS
Oh silly! When little boys pick on little girls it means they like them! Boys don’t know how to talk about their feelings like you and I do because they don’t mature as quickly. We have to be a good example for them.

EMMA
But I don’t want boys to like me! They’re gross!

PRINCESS
Oh you’ll think differently one day, don’t worry. Every princess needs a prince!

EMMA
(Shrugging.)
I guess.

PRINCESS
Wonderful! That leads me to the second rule of being a princess. You must never be bossy or loud, a princess is quiet and agreeable. Emma, do you ever put on little plays with your friends?

EMMA
Yeah! Every day at recess!

PRINCESS
Wonderful! That’s a perfect example. How often do you and your friends disagree over who gets to direct?
EMMA
All the time. Usually it’s me, Hannah, and Jack who want to do it. Mostly we take turns but sometimes we fight because Jack wants to direct when it’s not his turn.

PRINCESS
Keep in mind what I said about boys not maturing as quickly as us girls. It’s not very ladylike to get into arguments, is it?

EMMA
But Jack’s the one not being nice, he won’t share!

PRINCESS
(Starting to get angry, voice raised a little bit with a stern tone.)
It certainly isn’t ladylike to blame others, especially when you partake in the arguments as well Emma!

EMMA
But Jack-

PRINCESS
(Slightly more angry.)
It doesn’t matter how anyone else behaves, a girl must be an example of the proper behavior in every situation! If you are not well behaved at all times no one will like you and you will never find your prince!

(Throughout PRINCESS’s outburst EMMA is backing away from the screen in fear. After the outburst the screen cuts away from the princess show and to a commercial)

AD
Are you tired of things not fitting quite right? Slims Shapewear fits seamlessly under any outfit. With Tummy-to-Thigh control, no unwanted movement rolling up or down, and no visible panty lines, our shapewear shapes, lifts, and smooths in seconds. Feel better about your body with Slims.

(The screen cuts back to the princess show. PRINCESS has visibly calmed down. She takes a deep breath and resumes her show.)

PRINCESS
Welcome back everyone! I’m so excited for you all to learn how to be the perfect princesses. I am committed to making sure all of you learn how to behave most appropriately in every situation so that you all find your princes and have your own happily ever afters. I just know I could never be happy without my prince! Now, the third rule of being a princess is that you must always be presentable.

EMMA
Does that mean I have to wear dresses and stuff all the time? Even to bed?

PRINCESS
Of course not, that would be silly. There is appropriate attire for every situation. You wear your pajamas to bed and that’s ok, but if you were to wear them to school that would be wrong, correct?

EMMA
(Giggling)
Yeah!

PRINCESS
Well there are other rules like that when you get older. For example, right now you can wear almost anything to school, right? Jeans, skirts, dresses, leggings?

EMMA
Yeah.

PRINCESS
Well that changes when women grow up. When you get older and have a job, start dating, and start going to certain events you will have to start dressing up, wearing skirts and dresses and makeup.

EMMA
But I don’t know anything about makeup! Mama doesn’t let me wear any.

PRINCESS
That’s alright! All beautiful women wear makeup, you’ll learn eventually. And you’ll learn how to take care of and do your hair as well. You know, it looks messy like that. You should try straightening it.

(EMMA holds a strand of her hair and looks down at it sadly.)
EMMA

(Looking back up.)
Why don’t boys have to wear makeup though?

PRINCESS

That’s just silly! Boys don’t wear makeup.

But why-

PRINCESS

(Sharply.)
It’s just not the way things are done and it is simply not appropriate to entertain the thought any further. Now moving on-

EMMA

It’s not fair!

(EMMA stands and crosses her arms.)
Why do I have to be nice all the time? Why do boys get to do all the fun stuff? I want-

PRINCESS

It does not matter what you want. If you do not comply with these rules you will stick out among your peers and they will stop spending time with you. You will be ostracised by other girls and rejected by boys. Your future will be over before it’s even begun.

(The screen cuts away from PRINCESS and to an AD)

AD

Kurbo from Weight Watchers is proven to encourage children and teens to eat healthier, move more, and feel great! Our traffic light system will help your family build healthy eating and lifestyle habits. Try Kurbo for 7 days free and be connected with a personal coach to guide you through your healthy eating journey!

(The screen cuts back to PRINCESS who still looks stern.)

PRINCESS

(Deep breath.)
There are certain expectations of girls that boys just don’t have to face. Regardless of whether or not it is fair is not the purpose of this program. I am acting as a guide to help young girls such as yourself adapt to these expectations so that you may succeed in society. I am performing a
service to young women everywhere and I will not tolerate any more of your disrespect, do you understand?

EMMA

(EMMA nods her head quietly.)

PRINCESS

Good. Now the final rule of being a princess is that you must take care of your body. In order to do that you have to eat healthy and exercise frequently. It is recommended to eat smaller portions more frequently throughout the day and more than half of your diet should consist of fruits and vegetables. You should exercise for 60 minutes every day. It’s important to keep your body in tip-top shape so that you feel good about yourself. Think about how good it would feel to know that when people look at you they see a beautiful young girl!

EMMA

I thought staying healthy was about what I think of myself?

PRINCESS

Well it is, in a way. Doesn’t it make you feel good when you can… outrun someone else?

EMMA

(EMMA sits up straighter.)

Yeah!

PRINCESS

Or when you do better than someone on a test?

EMMA

Uh-huh.

PRINCESS

It’s the same for being healthy. You feel good because you know that you’re doing better than someone else.

EMMA

But how can I tell if someone is healthy or not? Is it something you can see?

PRINCESS
Well… it is a little more difficult, you’re right, but think about it this way. What happens when you only eat sugar and junk food?

EMMA

Um… Mama said it’s not nice to say.

PRINCESS

It’s ok, it’s only us here.

EMMA

You get…

(EMMA looks around the room.)

… bigger.

PRINCESS

Exactly, very good! And what happens if you don’t exercise?

EMMA

(More confidently.)

You get bigger!

PRINCESS

Wonderful! So wouldn’t you be able to assume that if someone is bigger then they’re not making healthy decisions?

EMMA

Oh I get it now! The skinnier you are the healthier you are?

PRINCESS

Perfect! You are so smart, you’re going to grow up and be a beautiful princess and any prince will be lucky to have you. I’ve taught you all you need to know for you to have your own happily ever after! If you follow my advice you will grow up to be a beautiful and well liked young woman.

EMMA

Wow, thank you!

PRINCESS

You’re very welcome!
EMMA’S MOM

(From off-stage.)
Emma! Dinner time!

EMMA

I have to go now. Goodbye!
(Grabs the remote.)

PRINCESS

Goodbye!

(EMMA turns off the TV and the screen goes dark. She runs off stage towards her mother.)

Six Months Later

(EMMA’S MOM is setting the table for dinner.)

EMMA’s MOM

Emma! Come to the table, it’s time to eat!

EMMA

(EMMA runs on stage and sits at the table.)
What’s for dinner?

EMMA’s MOM

Grilled cheese and tomato soup, and I made extra because I know it’s your favorite.

EMMA

(Less excited)
Thanks, but I don’t think I’m gonna eat a whole lot.

EMMA’s MOM

Why not? Don’t you like it?

EMMA

I do, but we had pizza for lunch at school today. That’s already a lot of carbs.
EMMA’s MOM
Oh! What a healthy decision. I’m so proud of you for taking an interest in what you eat, the better you are about it now the less you’ll have to worry in the future.

EMMA
Thanks Mama!

EMMA’s MOM
Well we have to wait for Daddy before we can eat, so why don’t you tell me about your day?

EMMA
First we did reading, then science and math. In science we learned about the states of matter, then in math we took a quiz on math facts, and I only got one wrong, but Emily and Lauren got three wrong, so when we went over the answers I helped them.

EMMA’s MOM
That’s great! It sounds like you had a busy day. What about recess?

EMMA
Jack and Lauren were fighting because Jack wanted to direct the play, but it was Lauren’s turn and she wanted to do it. So I told them they should share and that they could be co-directors and both get their way, but Lauren said it was her turn and it wasn’t fair and she wasn’t going to share. I told her that sharing was the nice thing to do, but she didn’t want to play with us anymore so she left and we did the play without her. I feel kind of bad that Lauren didn’t want to play anymore.

EMMA’s MOM
Emma what you did was very mature, you came up with a compromise so that everyone could have fun. You can’t control Lauren’s decisions, but maybe when she realizes it’s no fun to hang out by herself she’ll come back and want to cooperate. You know, you’ve really started to make some good decisions and I’m very proud of the level of responsibility you’re showing. How about after dinner we go and see that new Disney movie? As a reward.

EMMA

(EMMA runs and gives her mom a hug.)
Really?! Thank you so much!

THE END
“The Undo Button”

(Stage curtains open revealing LIAM and MIA in the middle of a conversation. They are sitting in a school cafeteria across from each other at a lunch table.)

MIA
I was thinking I might try to become a doctor. I heard they make a lot of money. The only thing is that I also heard that it’s a ton of memorizing long words and confusing diagrams.

LIAM
Oh yeah, that seems like a good idea. Plus, if it doesn’t work out you can always go back and try something else.

MIA
I guess, it just doesn’t feel right doing it. I mean, don’t get me wrong, it’s great and all, but I almost feel bad for everyone who doesn’t go to Pinewood High. They’ll never know what it’s like to just hit the undo button.

(MIA does air quotes around “hit the undo button”)

LIAM
To be honest, I don’t think people will ever get used to it. They’re so set on determination and perseverance and they won’t realize how much easier it is to just go back whenever you screw it up.

(LIAM mocks the words “determination” and “perseverance” in an old, shaky voice)

MIA
Maybe I’ll go for something simpler, or I could try sports!

LIAM
I think you should go for the gold. So what if it doesn’t work out? If it ends up putting you on the streets, just go to high school again and try something else.

MIA
You’re right I guess, I mean at this point I can get into any college I want to. Anyone from our school can.

LIAM
I still don’t get the rule about not using the undo button on schoolwork. The teachers can’t even tell the difference!
MIA
Honestly, me neither. Missed a homework, no problem! Failed a test, retake it. It’s not fair! I bet people have even rewritten college essays when they don’t get accepted. Part of me almost wishes I didn’t go to this school. Doesn’t it feel weird knowing we’re being used for an experiment?

LIAM
I mean, I guess it does a little. But doesn’t it also make you excited knowing that we’re part of something big? Think about it. Our highschool is the first group ever to be implanted with the undo button. Isn’t that crazy? We’re like………time travelers!

MIA
(MIA laughs when he mentions “time travelers”)
Wow don’t you think you’re exaggerating a bit?
(LIAM is about to answer but he is cut off by the bell signaling the end of lunch. They stand up and start picking up their backpacks.)
Oh shoot! I’m starving and I completely forgot to eat! Thanks a lot Liam.

LIAM
Hey, it wasn’t my fault!

MIA
Whatever.
(MIA looks down and pulls up her sleeve, revealing a small metal band on the bottom of her wrist. As she begins to type in a time, she lifts her head and sees a student walking by doing the same. She looks back down once more and presses one last button. The lights on the stage dim and light again showing the same scene as the opening.)
Yeah, I was thinking I might try to become a doctor. I heard they make a lot of money. The only thing is that I also heard that it’s a ton memorizing long words and confusing diagrams.
(MIA munches on a carrot as she listens to LIAM)

LIAM
Oh yeah, that seems like a good idea. Plus, if it doesn’t work out you can always go back and try something else.
(The curtains close and open to show LIAM and MIA walking through the hall together. The phone in LIAM’s pocket buzzes and lights up.)
Oh no, not again. Bella has been texting me nonstop all day about math.
(He reaches into his pocket and pulls out his phone. However, his new shocked expression severely contradicts how annoyed he seemed just seconds ago. He stops walking and MIA turns to face him.)

What in the world? Mia, you have to see this. Here, take out your phone.

(MIA obeys him, reaching into the side pocket of her backpack, pulling out her phone. Surprise is clear on her face just as LIAM had seemed moments before.)

MIA

There’s no way I read that right.

(As MIA rereads the message out loud, she speaks slowly as if she’s trying to understand it.)

The government has temporarily banned the undo button due to recently discovered complications with the original design. This has prompted many safety concerns that have caused us to prohibit the use until further notice.

(April 13 as if on cue, just as she finishes, the bell rings through the hallway and an administrator comes on the loudspeaker.)

ADMINISTRATOR

Sorry for the interruption but, as I’m sure many of you just heard, the undo button is not currently safe for us to use. Students and faculty are not allowed to use it until it is declared safe again. Out of an abundance of caution, teachers and staff will be monitoring any use of the undo button and will not hesitate to give out detentions. Thank you for your patience.

MIA

They’ve got to be kidding, right? I mean this can’t actually be serious. I don’t know how to do anything without it.

LIAM

Good luck, you’re going to need it.

MIA

Um, excuse me. What’s that supposed to mean?

LIAM

I don’t know. I mean you do use a lot. No offense, but you probably use it the most in our class.

MIA

Hellooo..?! You went back like three times yesterday! Even I don’t screw up that much!
LIAM
Well you can hardly consider it my fault when YOU spilled YOUR chocolate milk on top of MY homework!

MIA
Not when YOU hit MY elbow! Ugh, I can’t deal with you anymore!

(Furiously, MIA pulls up her sleeve and types the time from a couple minutes ago. Stage lights dim again and the scene is reset to when they found out the news.)

MIA
They’ve got to be kidding, right? I mean this can’t actually be serious. I don’t know how to do anything without it.

LIAM
Good luck, you’re going to need it.

(MIA closes her eyes and takes a deep breath as they continue walking.)

MIA
Thanks, you too!

(MIA and LIAM walk into their separate classrooms just down the hall from each other. The curtains close and open again, revealing MIA and LIAM walking down the hall together again.)

LIAM
Last period was awful! Bella would not stop bothering me again in math AND I got yelled at for telling her to go away. And to make it worse, we got our tests back. You won’t believe how bad I did!

MIA
It can’t be that bad. There’s no way you did worse than me.

LIAM
Oh really?

(MIA leans over and whispers in his ear.)

Nevermind then.

MIA
Oh come on.
(MIA giggles as she gives LIAM a playful shove.)

It’s fine. I’ll take it again. It’s not a big deal.

LIAM

Um, hate to break it to you but you can’t really do that anymore.

MIA

Don’t be a wuss! I literally just did it last period and nothing happened. They said they were banning it out of an abundance of caution.

(MIA does air quotes around the words “abundance of caution”.)

Here, I’ll show you. It’s not that big of a deal.

(MIA slowly stops walking and reaches for her sleeve and begins to type again. Just as she

is about to enter the time, she is interrupted by a loud, booming voice behind her. She

whips around to see who it is.)

ADMINISTRATOR

Mia, what do you think you are doing?

MIA

I-

ADMINISTRATOR

My office. Now!

(MIA looks back at LIAM with a blank expression on her face. LIAM shrugs helplessly at her. MIA turns back again and follows the administrator off stage as the curtains close. They open again moments later showing MIA walking into a small room as the ADMINISTRATOR holds the door open. The two are completely silent as MIA sits down, followed by the ADMINISTRATOR after shutting the door. He rests his elbows on the desk in front of him and clasps his hands.)

I thought I made it crystal clear that this is a very serious situation. We cannot have students using the undo button limitlessly if we know that complications are likely possible.

MIA

I know. I know. I just--, I--, I used just a little bit ago and it worked completely fine.

ADMINISTRATOR
It might have worked fine that one time. But, as an administrator here at Pinewood High, I have to make sure that the safety of every student is my primary concern. I can’t have you putting yourself and, frankly, everyone else at risk for danger.

(MIA nods and embarrassment is visible on her face.)

MIA
(MIA looks down sheepishly at her lap. She is trying to sit still but can’t help but pick at her fingernails. Her knee bounces up and down just slightly as well.)
I’m sorry. I didn’t think it would be a big deal. I do it all the time.
(The ADMINISTRATOR leans closer to MIA and speaks in a low, cool voice.)

ADMINISTRATOR
Hey, I can trust you, right?
(MIA appears a little surprised by the question.)

MIA
Yeah?

ADMINISTRATOR
Okay, good, because I have some information that you cannot tell ANYBODY. Is that clear?

MIA
Mhm.
(MIA nods and seems completely perplexed by the sudden change of atmosphere.)

ADMINISTRATOR
So, you understand how this whole undo button thing is just a test, right?
(The ADMINISTRATOR gestures with his hands.)
There is no guarantee that it will actually be used. Well, some of my superiors have been discussing this idea and have come upon a problem.

MIA
Okay, so what does this have to do with me?

ADMINISTRATOR
Yes, I’m getting there. The point of experimenting on the kids here at Pinewood High is for a sort of case study. We want to be sure of how it will affect society before it becomes open for
public use. But, if there is a problem, there has to be a way for us to be able to stop the use of the undo button.

(MIA continues nodding along as the ADMINISTRATOR speaks.)

Now, they have decided to limit the use of it so if the occasion were to ever arise, we would know how to handle it. So here’s the thing. There is functionally nothing wrong with the undo button.

(MIA gasps as she hears this.)

MIA

So now you’re just messing with us?!

ADMINISTRATOR

(The ADMINISTRATOR’s voice suddenly becomes stern.)

You have to understand that this is still part of what you originally signed up for and you can’t tell ANYONE about this. We need as accurate results as possible and another source of error won’t help us.

MIA

And so you’re just going to lie to every student in the building?

ADMINISTRATOR

They CANNOT know. It is imperative that we keep the experiment authentic.

MIA

Okay. Fine. I won’t tell anyone. But I really do have to get to class soon, especially since I can’t just go back and listen to what I missed.

(The ADMINISTRATOR speaks as he leans back again and opens a drawer. He pulls out a pass and signs it for MIA.)

ADMINISTRATOR

Alright, here’s your pass then. Oh god, I can’t remember the last time I used one of these!

(MIA laughs at the joke, stands up, and reaches out to take the paper from the ADMINISTRATOR’s extended arm.)

ADMINISTRATOR

Thank you. I’ll see you later!

(MIA heads out through the door and off stage as the curtains close. They open and MIA is talking to LIAM in the hall again. They are standing in front of her open locker and she is
LIAM
And…what’d he say once you got to his office?

MIA
Surprisingly, it wasn’t that bad. I think he calmed down a bit and then he told me the strangest thing!

LIAM
Really?

MIA
Yeah, he yelled at me at first, but he got weirdly calm after that. And…

(MIA pauses, clearly pondering something. After a few moments she speaks decisively.)

...he let me off with a warning.

(Stage lights dim and the curtains close.)
Safe
(The scene is set in a parking lot of a school and the stage is clear, all except for MOM 2 who stands center stage. MOM 2 has tears in her eyes and is clutching a tissue in her hand. A car can be heard screeching to a halt and MOM 1 enters from stage right in a hurry. She is wearing a blazer and dress pants and drops an expensive looking bag on the ground as she approaches, scurrying to pick it up before tripping over her high heels and stumbling a bit.)

MOM 2
(To herself) Pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death, Amen. (Crosses herself and begins muttering another prayer.)

MOM 1
(Approaches MOM 2) Have there been any updates?

MOM 2
(Shakes her head, beginning to cry again) I-It’s been quiet. Absolutely quiet. (Pulls a cellphone from her pocket with trembling hands, showing the screen to MOM 1) My daughter sent this to me twenty minutes ago, but she isn’t responding now. She-She’s probably okay, right? Her phone is just… it’s just on silent… She’s okay right?

(MOM 1 nods, not knowing what else to say; MOM 3 enters from stage left in a hurry, holding a phone up to her ear)

MOM 3
(scoffs) Remain calm? You want me to remain calm?! I’m sorry, Robert, but our son is in that building right now, and for all I know he could have a bullet in him, or worse! (Pauses, listening to the other end. She takes a deep breath and calms down.) You’re right, worrying won’t do me any good. I’ll see you soon. (Hangs up phone, then moves tenderly towards MOM 2) Any word back from Gloria?

(MOM 2 shakes her head, resuming her sobs; MOM 3 eyes MOM 1)

Are you Victor J.’s mom?

MOM 1
(Shakes head) No, Andrew Long is my son.

MOM 3
Have you heard from him?
MOM 1
(Stammering) N-No, I heard that something was going on and I came from work. What’s happening?

MOM 3
All we know is that someone sent their kid to school with a machine gun.

MOM 2
(Sobs louder) Oh God… I didn’t… I didn’t drive her to school this morning! She was upset with me and took the bus and I… I shouldn’t have let her leave without a hug!

(MOM 3 hugs MOM 2 who shakes with sobs as MOM 1 watches from beside them; MOM 1 considers for a moment, then moves towards them, placing a hand on MOM 2’s shoulder)

MOM 1
Your daughter knows you love her. No morning argument can change that love, trust me. (Takes MOM 2’s hand which clutches the cell phone and lifts it so she can see the screen.) You got a text, that has to mean something.

MOM 2
(Nods as she pulls away from MOM 3, wiping her eyes) You’re right, I’m thinking too much. How are you so calm? You haven’t even heard from your son!

MOM 1
(Pulls away) He doesn’t text me during work, I’m usually busy.

MOM 3
Busy? What could you possibly be doing that’s more important than your kid? (Scoffs)

MOM 1
(Meekly) Nothing is more important than my son. He knows that he can text me if something ever were to happen. Always.

MOM 3
Well something happened, and maybe you should check your phone again.
MOM 2

(To MOM 3) Stop it! Just stop! We need to keep an eye out for them. It could be any minute now. (Begins crying again) I should’ve never let her leave… Schools are too dangerous these days… Too dangerous… She needs to stay with me… She’s safe with me…

(MOM 1 and MOM 3 place an arm around her shoulders. They eye each other for a moment, but their tension breaks and they comfort MOM 2 tenderly.)

MOM 1
All of our kids will be safe, I know it. It’s a mom instinct.

MOM 2
(Shakes her head) I wish I had that feeling right now.

(MOM 1 smiles at her before letting go of her shoulders. MOM 3 continues to comfort MOM 2 inaudibly as MOM 1 walks stage right, pulling out a cell phone and dialing a number. She waits a few moments before speaking.)

MOM 1
Hi sweetie, it’s mom. If somehow you catch this in the middle of all of this, I want you to know that I love you so much. (Looks down at her feet, considering at a moment.) Please be safe, I can’t go on if you’re not okay. Just get out of this in one piece so I can give you a hug. I love you, Andrew, I’ll see you outside.

(She takes a deep breath before hanging up then going back over to the other moms)

MOM 3
I just don’t understand why someone would do something like this! Jesus, isn’t there any sympathy left in the world? Any good?

MOM 1
(Sighs) I just don’t know what goes through kids’ heads. These kids in Andrew’s class, they have been bugging him forever. Don’t they get that their bullying affects him? Affects me? I have to watch him suffer every day, and it’s not fair to him. I could see them doing something like this.

MOM 3
(Scoffs) I mean, I get boys being jerks, especially teenagers. They’re all trying to figure it out and they make mistakes along the way, but you have to be more than a jerk to open fire on your classmates. At that point, you’re just plain evil.
MOM 2
Oh God, oh… When I get home, I’m taking our guns apart and smashing them into pieces! I don’t care what my husband says, we will defend ourselves with knives, baseball bats, fists! If my daughter ever got her hands on one...

MOM 1
Keep them locked up in a safe, out of anyone else’s hands but your own. Owning guns isn’t a bad thing as long as you’re sensible about it.

MOM 3
(Rolls her eyes) My husband and I are sensible enough to not own guns at all.

MOM 1
I’m a lawyer and I have made many dangerous enemies over the years; you can never be too careful.

MOM 3
Well I’m a mother, and I don’t take jobs that could possibly put my child in danger.

(MOM 1 clenches her fists and takes a deep breath angrily, then releases her hands. All three moms are silent for a few moments as they look out into the audience.)

MOM 1
(Sighs) Just think about it, the kid that did this was once a baby. A mother was handed this innocent child, and now that child is doing this? How does that happen?

MOM 3
When that mom held that baby, she didn’t know what was inside its head. She didn’t know that it was sick. Maybe if she did, she would’ve given it back.

MOM 2
(Shakes head) It’s not the child’s fault, it’s never the child’s fault. My oldest son had it all, depression, anxiety, Aspergers, you name it, but instead of letting it destroy him, I pushed him every day to do better. I showed him love, I got him help, I listened to him. He got through it with a little help. If you raise your kid like they aren’t worth the time, they will start to believe it. The mother who held that baby for the first time knew what she was getting into, she just didn’t put in the effort.
MOM 1

Is that ever enough?

MOM 3

(Nods) You make it enough. The day I stop loving my son is the day that I fail both of us. He-He’s all I have.

(The three moms are silent, looking offstage in contemplation. MOM 2 perks up, her eyes growing wide suddenly)

MOM 2

I see someone! Look!

(MOM 3 rushes downstages, looking out into the audience)

MOM 3

There’s a big group coming out… I can’t make out any faces yet.

MOM 2

Will they let us go see them? Can I look for her?

MOM 1

No, we have to meet them at an evacuation site.

MOM 3

Bullshit! If I don’t have my son in my arms the minute he steps out, I’ll-

(Her face starts to relax as realization sets in, and tears begin falling from her eyes.)

Oh my god, I see him! Malachi! Sweetheart! Mom is over here!

(MOM 3 runs off stage right.)

MOM 2

(To MOM 1) Do you see my daughter? Gloria? Is she with the group? She’s beautiful… My height… Brown hair… P-Please tell me she is there…

(MOM 1 searches anxiously, pacing back and forth on the stage with her eyes peeled. Suddenly, she stops in her tracks and begins to breathe heavily.)
MOM 1
I can’t… I… Oh… Oh no… I mean… They are carrying someone out… They aren’t moving… Her hair is almost black… and… and… wet. Why is it wet?

(MOM 2 runs to MOM 1’s side, looking out into the crowd to try and see what she is talking about. Her face drops and knees buckle as she begins to scream and cry. MOM 1 holds her shoulders as she falls to the ground.)

MOM 2
Gloria! Gloria, no! Not my baby! No! No! No!

(MOM 1 stares down at MOM 2 in disbelief as she continues to sob, unsure of what to do. She looks from MOM 2, into the audience, then back down. There is nothing she can say. She continues in this state of disbelief and panic before leaving MOM 2 to her agonies, rushing back downstage as she looks out into the crowd.)

MOM 1
(To herself.) Please, Andrew, please come out… After this is over… After this is over, we can be together… You will be safe… Just get out, get out in one piece-

(Suddenly, she runs back towards MOM 2 and clutches her shoulders.)

I just heard someone say the shooter came out, we need to go, we need to take cover somewhere.

(MOM 2 doesn’t budge and continues to sob as if MOM 1 weren’t there.)

MOM 2
Sh-She’s gone! My baby girl is gone!

MOM 1
(Holds MOM 2’s face, level her eyes with hers) You’re still here! You need to live for her! We need to go! Now!

MOM 2
(Shakes her head) Not without my girl… I can’t…

(MOM 1 gives up and begins to run off stage left, but stops in her tracks, looking out into the crowd.)
MOM 1

Oh thank god! *(Yells into the crowd)* Andrew! It’s mom, Andrew! What are you doing?! Run towards the officers! Andrew! I’ll see you at the evacuation site! Listen to me! Don’t run that way! And-

*(Her voice falters as she comes to a realization. MOM 2 stops in her sobs and looks up slowly at MOM 1 as she shakes in disgust. Her mouth hangs open as she looks from the crowd, to MOM 2, and back into the crowd.)*

MOM 1

No… No… It can’t… can’t be… I-It’s in a locked safe… in the safe…

*(Lights dim.)*
Scatterbrained

A Ten Minute Play
# Cast of Characters

**Ethan Alexander:** A kind, impatient, and stressed 17-year-old junior; shows signs of early-on development of DID (dissociative identity disorder); he means well and wants to make his family proud.

**Julian:** One of Ethan’s two alternate personalities; Ethan’s creative and positive personality inspired from his right brain.

**Maximillian:** The other of Ethan’s two alternate personalities; Ethan’s logical and negative personality inspired from his left brain.

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**Scene**

Ethan’s home (bedroom) in Upstate New York.

**Time**

Present-day.
ACT:

Scene:

SETTING: (We are inside of ETHAN’s bedroom, part of a rather small home in Upstate, New York. There is a desk with a lamp, books and tons of papers center stage, a couch with two pillows on stage right, and a bed and mirror on stage left. It is currently midnight.)

AT RISE: (ETHAN ALEXANDER, a 17-year-old stressed-out junior, is sitting alone on his desk with his stacks of papers and books, trying desperately to memorize his material.)

ETHAN (yawning) Alright. Next question: “What is the difference between vaporization and fusion in terms of heat?” I should know this by now.

(MAXIMILLIAN enters from behind the curtain and sneaks up to ETHAN as ETHAN continues to think then looks at the clock.)

It’s midnight already? I should probably go to sleep. Why study at this point…?

(ETHAN goes to stand up but stops and sits down.)

I mean, it would make my father and brother proud if I passed all of these tests…today! Ugh! Why did my teachers have to put Chemistry, World History and Geometry midterms all on the same day? I can’t remember all of this!

MAXIMILLIAN (startles ETHAN as soon as he speaks) You could potentially be accurate with that attitude. As John C. Maxwell once said, “Your attitude towards failure determines your altitude after failure.”

MAXIMILLIAN
My apologies. I only presumed that you were obviously experiencing some pressure and needed some assistance….

(MAXIMILLIAN starts to walk back to the curtain.)

Now I can presume that I’m not needed at the very-

ETHAN
No! No! Wait! I’m actually glad you’re here…
(to himself)

...for once…

(back to MAXIMILLIAN)

I can’t figure out the answer to this. Can you help me out?

(MAXIMILLIAN walks back to ETHAN’s desk as ETHAN shows him a piece of paper.)

MAXIMILLIAN
Ah, yes. The transformation of states of matter including melting, freezing, vaporization, and condensation, all involving the concept of heat energy…

ETHAN
(after a moment)

So, what’s the answer??-

MAXIMILLIAN
(turning to walk away)

No idea.

ETHAN

No hold on! But you’re my logical personality. Surely, you must know it.

MAXIMILLIAN
(turning back around)

Well, maybe you should’ve memorized these answers ahead of time. Also, please don’t call me Shirley. You know my name is Maximillian.

(JULIAN sprints on from behind the curtain, startling ETHAN yet again.)

JULIAN
(clapping for MAXIMILLIAN)

Oh, I get it! Like a millionaire! Very creative! Bravo!-

ETHAN

You guys need to stop scaring me!
MAXIMILLIAN
No, Julian. It’s needless to remind you, once again, that the definition of my name is “greatest.”
(adjusting his tie)
A rather intelligent name if I do say so myself.

JULIAN
Oh! So like “The Greatest Showman?”-

ETHAN
(standing up)
I hate to interrupt our little reunion, again, but I need to study. Maybe you can help me Julian. Do you know the answer to this?
(ETHAN shows JULIAN the paper.)

JULIAN
Oh! It’s on the tip of my tongue!

MAXIMILLIAN
Mind if I have a look inside?-
(MAXIMILLIAN attempts to open JULIAN’S mouth)

ETHAN
No, no, no! It was an expression.

MAXIMILLIAN
Damn. I’m never good at those.

JULIAN
I have an idea! Try coming up with a fun way to remember the answer! Then it should pop into your head!

MAXIMILLIAN
Julian is actually accurate for once. Introducing a memory device could be very useful as to recalling correct answers. You could use an acronym, an acrostic, a mnemonic structure! Or maybe even-

JULIAN
Easy there tiger!

MAXIMILLIAN
But I’m not a tiger-

JULIAN
Use your artistic senses! Try creating a song or a story. Ooh! Or maybe a dance! Come on, Ethan! Let’s dance!
(JULIAN fish poles ETHAN to dance to stage left.)
ETHAN
Uh, Julian? This doesn’t really help me with-

JULIAN
(singing and dancing)
Just... “Shut Up and Dance with Me!”
(JULIAN and ETHAN continue to laugh and dance separately from each other.)

MAXIMILLIAN
Julian! Don’t distract him! We do not have time for this! We need to work!

JULIAN
We’re not just working. We’re using the art of dance!

MAXIMILLIAN
(crossing to stage left)
But dancing in the middle of the night isn’t going to help Ethan answer a science question. That, in itself, is illogical! More importantly, how do we attempt to recall this particular answer if we’re clueless as to what it is in the first place...?

ETHAN/JULIAN
(ETHAN and JULIAN stop dancing, pause, and realize their flaw.)
...Ohhhh...!

JULIAN
Ooh! I love it when you talk smart! It inspires my creativity!
(puts his elbow on MAXIMILLIAN’s shoulder and gives him a noogie)
You know your facts too well, Maxi!-

MAXIMILLIAN
(pushing Julian back)
Do not call me Maxi!
(MAXIMILLIAN composes and adjusts himself as JULIAN squeals and hides behind ETHAN without touching him.)
Julian. You know I do not like being called that.

JULIAN
Aww! Come on! It’s cute! It suits you so well!
(to the audience)
Get it? He’s wearing a suit?
MAXIMILLIAN
You realize your puns are not as good as you think they are, Julian. I am not “cute”. And that name, I dare not say, does not suit me one bit! Please, refer to me as Maximillian! We’ve been over this way too many times!-

ETHAN
(going between MAXIMILLIAN and JULIAN. They both stand back.)
Enough! Both of you! I’ve been up all day and night studying my ass off and I haven’t gotten a single break!
(ETHAN crosses back to his desk and sits as he continues. MAXIMILLIAN and JULIAN end up on either side of the desk.)
I’m exhausted! I still need to work on history! I can’t even concentrate because of you two! And now, I can’t even think straight!
(Suddenly, ETHAN starts feeling a horrible headache, causing MAXIMILLIAN and JULIAN to lose balance and drop to their knees. A grand pause takes place as stress is now taking over ETHAN’s mind, causing the others to exaggerate their words and actions from here on out.)

MAXIMILLIAN
(standing back up along with JULIAN)
Well. Since you so desperately need to work on your history, let’s talk about history then. Shall we? Now, it would all start from the moment you were born-.

ETHAN
What? No! World history, not my history! Besides, you know how much I don’t want to discuss this right now. I have too much to remember already.

MAXIMILLIAN
(walking over to the mirror then gesturing to it)
That may be accurate, but just look at yourself.
(ETHAN reluctantly walks over to the mirror as JULIAN follows.)
For goodness sakes, the condition of your body is no better than your head! As you mentioned earlier, you’re exhausted. You have used your brain too many times today, and since “you can’t think straight”, maybe it’s best for you to stop thinking and let us take care of things for you.
ETHAN
(standing back from MAXIMILLIAN and going up to JULIAN.)
No! I’m not letting you do this, Maximillian! Help me out, Julian! You’re my fun personality!

JULIAN
I know exactly what you need to do, Ethan!
(JULIAN sprints excitedly to the bed and jumps on it then off of it. After, JULIAN hides behind the bed and slowly peeks out.)
You need sleep! Now let’s go to your bed, tuck into those comfy blankets of yours, and sleep!
(ETHAN reluctantly does everything but sleep. MAXIMILLIAN ends up behind the bed with JULIAN as they both uncomfortably watch and wait for ETHAN to fall asleep.)

ETHAN
(after a moment)
Hold on, Julian! I know I need sleep, but I need to study more! I don’t have anything memorized right now!
(As he says this, ETHAN gets up from his bed, walks back to his desk and sits down once again.)

MAXIMILLIAN
(walking back to the desk also)
Perfect! Since your mind is open, we can turn back time.

JULIAN
(dancing back to the desk while singing to 21 Pilot’s “Stressed Out”)
“To the good ol’ day-ays!”

MAXIMILLIAN
Enough, Julian! Your ridiculous dance moves and puns are not helping poor Ethan here recall a major part of his history:

ETHAN
Finally! Some help for once! Now, what part of history are we going to talk about?

MAXIMILLIAN
Ethan’s Dark Ages.

ETHAN
Oh, come on! Give it a rest!
JULIAN
No. You don’t mean-

MAXIMILLIAN
(walking around the desk intimidating ETHAN throughout his entire spiel)
Yes, Julian! Let’s recall the life of Ethan Alexander; a man whose intelligence lacks development, whose gullibility is unlimited, and whose apprehension often induces so much reluctance that he becomes obsessed with his constant self-evaluation.

ETHAN
(trying to fight off the horrible thoughts)
Please! Stop!

MAXIMILLIAN
Oh. Is it my words? Well, I can’t help that! I mean, I am your rational side; the one who keeps these sophisticated words in the back of your brain.

ETHAN
(shuffling through his papers to cope)
I’m aware, Maximillian, but I have work I need to memorize.

MAXIMILLIAN
Of course. It’s so necessary for you to ‘memorize’ these meaningless subjects that you’ve constantly been longing for support. In fact, you’ve always been so desperate. You’ve always wanted people to understand you, to understand us. No wonder your father left.

(ETHAN continues to struggle while JULIAN tries to find ways to comfort him.)
It’s adorable that you’re trying to fight the past, but those memories will haunt you for the rest of your life.

JULIAN
(waving his arms)
Remember! Hakuta Matata, Ethan! Hakuta Matata!

ETHAN
(standing up)
Enough of this, please! Just leave me alone!

MAXIMILLIAN
You already are!!

(JULIAN cowers, dashes to the couch, and sits and whines like a dog.)
(MAXIMILIAN)

(after a moment)
Here’s a good question: Where’s your big brother? He would’ve helped you with your homework.

ETHAN

(on the verge of tears)
Don’t you dare mention him! This whole thing is insane!

MAXIMILLIAN

That’s exactly what your brother thought... of you, at least. Your father couldn’t cope with your new behavior. And your brother? He was terrified. He thought you were a monster, an abomination. Or, we were...

(JULIAN whines again.)

But then, it got to the point where your brother couldn’t take it anymore. So, he grabbed a knife and stabbed himse-

ETHAN

(breaking down)
Don’t remind me!

(ETHAN collapses to his knees out of emotion and, after a moment, tries to compose himself.)
My father and brother are both gone. I get it. You can stop mentioning them now. I...I just can’t take the loneliness anymore. I’ve tried everything to be smart and make everyone proud of me, but I continue to fail, and everyone continues to be scared of me, just like...

(JULIAN slowly walks to ETHAN.)
The pressure of being a junior is hard enough. But having no one around to support you or to take you seriously, on top of three midterms, it’s...it’s terrifying. Maybe I was always meant to be alone.

JULIAN

(taking a knee besides ETHAN.)
Hey, Ethan. I think I know what you need right now.

ETHAN

Is it sleep? I’m already aware, Julian. You’ve told this already.

JULIAN

(gently)
I may have said and done the most random things, but you need more than sleep, Ethan. As your right-brained personality, you know that I can provide you with
(JULIAN)
creativity and fun, but you keep forgetting that I can also
remind you of the positives in your life.
(gesturing to his desk)
Look at the progress you’ve made! You may see a mess, but
what I see is effort that you chose to put in! Many people
just don’t study! And look at how far you’ve come without
your father and big brother by your side. They’d be so
proud of you, Ethan. My point is... you can’t let your past
control your future. You need to relax and focus on now,
because the present is a gift. Pun intended.

ETHAN
(getting an idea)
Relax...That’s it! I know what I have to do.
(ETHAN stands back up and sits on his desk again.
MAXIMILLIAN and JULIAN end up on either side of
the desk.)

MAXIMILLIAN
Are you going to continue reflecting on your past?

JULIAN
I think he wants to dance!
(ETHAN closes his eyes and starts to take very
deep breaths.)
Wait. What is he doing?

MAXIMILLIAN
(walking to the curtain)
He’s...he’s clearing his mind...! Damn! Why didn’t I think of
that?! Now that is pure genius, and I, for one, respect
that. With that attitude and brainpower, I think that
you’ll undoubtedly pass all of these tests. Farewell,
Ethan.

(MAXIMILLIAN exits through the curtain.)

JULIAN
(also walking back to the curtain)
Ooh, I’ve always wanted the perfect happy ending! Believe
in yourself, Ethan! Hakuta Matata! Bye, bye!!
(JULIAN exits through the curtain as ETHAN takes
one last deep breath and looks down at his desk.
ETHAN shuffles his papers and books one last time
and goes to another question on his worksheet.)
ETHAN
So where was I? Oh yes. Question 22: “What is the
definition of energy and how is it maintained?”

(thinking then writing)

‘Energy is... the capacity for doing work.’

(Stops writing)
And how can we maintain our energy?

to the audience)
Well, I know I’ve learned the answer to this the hard way.

(writing)
‘Don’t use too much of it. Save it.’

(ETHAN stops writing and looks out to the
audience.)
I know I’ll need to save mine.

(ETHAN turns off the lamp.)

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF PLAY)