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Gen Z Does College

A Play in Playlets by

Jon Jory

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Gen Z Does College

by Jon Jory

CAST OF CHARACTERS

10 women, 3 men

All the characters in *Gen Z* are between 17 and 21 years old.

CHLOE; *female*

HAZE; *female*

SOFIA; *female*

MARISA; *female*

RAFE; *male*

SOSI; *female*

POSH; *female*

MARIANN; *female*

JOELLA; *female*

LOLO; *female*

TUCKER; *male*

TREVOR; *male*

FLAME; *female*

RUNNING TIME

Flexible: 35-50 Minutes

For Competition under 30 Minutes, Cut "Tipping Point" Playlet

PRODUCTION NOTES

All costumes are current contemporary.

No set necessary. Could be played flat on the floor with platforms.

Furniture: outdoor picnic table, two seat sofa, same sofa with a ragged throw over it and plain old bed pillows with terrible patterns.

Can be played without blackouts. Furniture is changed by cast members in sight.

Gen Z Does College
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1. THE LOWERING WILDERNESS

AT RISE: *Three girls camping. They have sleeping bags.*

CHLOE
Where's the big dipper?

HAZE
Who knows?

SOFIA
Who cares?

CHLOE
Why would I go camping if I can't see the big dipper? I mean, what else is out here?

HAZE
Peace and quiet.

CHLOE
I'm done with peace and quiet. High school was nothing but peace and quiet.

SOFIA
That's because you were a committed goody-goody.

CHLOE
Okay Sofia, right, you have a point – I'll grant the point. I was. I bought into the idea that I should be the valedictorian...

HAZE
You weren't the valedictorian, Chloe.

CHLOE
I came close, there were only nine people in front of me.

HAZE
I stand corrected.

CHLOE
Anyway, I thought grades were the deal and that I should have a murderously churchy boyfriend. I did that.

SOFIA

Warren the boring.

CHLOE

He was respectful. Possibly to the point of insanity.

HAZE

Did he ever touch you?

CHLOE

After we would hang out, he would always shake hands.

SOFIA

(Shaking her head)

Way worse than I thought.

CHLOE

I respected my mother.

HAZE

And how did she repay that?

CHLOE

She ran off with a guy who was polling for Bernie Sanders. I had a part-time job selling weed until they legalized it. I did everything right... and it was not only gobsmackingly boring but it made entirely the wrong resume for an Ivy League college.

SOFIA

None of us got into an Ivy League school, Chloe.

CHLOE

Well...

SOFIA & HAZE

You had to remind us!!

They fall back on their sleeping bags.

CHLOE

But luckily I'm going to the University of Tampa which has a really bad reputation as an unforgivable party school and I am going to be so bad, so wild and heedless that Egon Schiele will paint me.

SOFIA

Who's Egon Schiele?

CHLOE

He's the wickedest, dirtiest painter who ever lived.

A pause.

HAZE

Well, that sounds entertaining.

Silence.

SOFIA

I'm scared.

HAZE

Of what, Sofia?

SOFIA

Of everything. High school was just my speed. It was like... manageable. At these colleges they want to know what you're going to major in before you show up on campus. I'm supposed to know this week what I'm supposed to do for the rest of my life? From what I can see from my parents and their friends, life is really depressing.

HAZE

Like how?

SOFIA

Okay, it's repetitious. It's all about money and buying crap. You get to look forward to loveless marriages and raising children in a world of rising seas, unlivable heat and tribal rivalries, and dying of something you weren't vaccinated for.

CHLOE

Well, when you put it that way.

SOFIA

And you have to go into tech. If you don't go into tech you have no entre to the future but you can't go into tech because the whole industry hates women.

CHLOE

Well yeah, but it's become obvious that men have failed and women are going to take over the earth. That's a given, right?

HAZE

It's pretty clear.

SOFIA

Yeah, but it's going to take fifty years and we'll be little warlike grandmas driving armored Subarus in a failed state.

CHLOE

Yeah, but on the other hand I'm going to the University of Tampa which is already like a failed state, so I'll get plenty of practice.

A pause.

SOFIA

But I won't have you guys. You're my safety net. What will happen to me?

CHLOE

The whole, utter, complete point of college is that you don't know what will happen to you. What will happen in those four years is the biggest surprise you ever get short of Publisher's Clearing House giving you \$5,000 a week.

HAZE

Yeah, my sister went in aiming for med school and came out an unemployable actress.

CHLOE

I didn't say it was just good surprises.

SOFIA

What if I find out I'm nothing but Pavlovian responses to television ads?

HAZE

Then you have to marry money.

SOFIA

How do you marry money?

HAZE

You stand by really expensive cars in parking lots until someone marries you.

SOFIA

That's so 18th century.

HAZE

The 18th century lives.

A pause.

SOFIA

Is it still fixable?

CHLOE

What?

SOFIA

The earth?

HAZE

We have no choice but to play it as if it is.

A pause.

CHLOE

Ten days 'til we go.

SOFIA

We'll still be best friends though, right?

HAZE

Probably not.

CHLOE

Doesn't really work that way.

HAZE

We'll meet again as crones at the 50th reunion and push the quarterback around in his wheelchair.

SOFIA

That's so sad.

CHLOE

Hey, we'll live a life.

HAZE

Less than we hoped, but more than we expected.

A pause.

SOFIA

You guys so suck! I can't believe you! This was supposed to be send-off not a cremation. We're smart, we're energetic, we're killer workers, some of us are even attractive.

CHLOE

Which ones?

SOFIA

I'm not telling, but one of them's me. Come on! This is a launch, we ought to break a bottle of Hawaiian volcano water over our prow or whatever it is.

HAZE

You said you were scared and that got us scared and now you're giving us a pep talk?

SOFIA

Well I am scared, but I'm trying to claw my way out by indulging in false optimism.

CHLOE

But it's so obviously false optimism.

SOFIA

Yeah, okay, but if we all agree to be falsely optimistic we can get through this. My sister was a mess in high school so she didn't apply and she spent a year being a hotel room maid, which was beyond depressing. So my whole family – uncles, aunts, cousins, did an intervention based on false optimism and right away she went to college!

CHLOE

How'd she do?

SOFIA

After six weeks she emigrated to Australia.

HAZE

Oh good.

SOFIA

She loves it! She works on an ostrich farm in the outback.

HAZE

I don't want to live on an ostrich farm, Sofia.

SOFIA

You don't know that.

HAZE

I do know that Sofia, now stop it!

SOFIA turns upstage facing away from them. CHLOE goes downstage and hunkers down looking over our heads.

SOFIA

(After a pause)

Well, I'm sorry I'm ruining everything. *(A pause)* Am I ruining everything?

HAZE & CHLOE

Yes!

SOFIA

But we're still friends, right?

HAZE & CHLOE

Yes!

HAZE

Just be quiet. We can be friends who don't talk to each other because we piss each other off.

A pause.

SOFIA

(Quietly)

We might meet somebody.

CHLOE

Like who?

SOFIA

Aquaman.

CHLOE

I'm not going to respond to that.

HAZE

Well, let's not dismiss that idea without at least a cursory examination. I mean that dude is seriously ripped.

SOFIA

He is. I'm not saying he doesn't have problems.

CHLOE

He does. Plus you would have to live underwater.

HAZE

All men have problems and we are their Tylenol.

SOFIA

But if Vulko, the royal counselor will help him, Aquaman can retrieve the legendary trident of Atlan and embrace his destiny as protector of the deep.

HAZE

Works for me.

CHLOE

I think there's a distinct possibility we're not ready for college.

HAZE

(Stands up quickly)

Something's out there.

SOFIA

Out where?

HAZE

(Pointing out to the audience)

Out there. I heard rustling.

Wrestling? SOFIA

Rustling. As in bushes rustling. HAZE

Where? CHLOE

HAZE
(Pointing at a specific spot out front)
There. Shhh. Hear that? *(The other two nod.)* Oh no. No, no, no, no, no.

What? SOFIA

Maybe five feet to the left. HAZE

Oh, that is so cute. Isn't that cute? SOFIA

What? CHLOE

In front of the rock. It's a bear cub. SOFIA

Uh-huh. HAZE

That is so cute. Isn't that adorable? SOFIA

Look behind the rock. CHLOE

What? HAZE

Look behind the rock. CHLOE

It's the mama. HAZE

SOFIA
She is very big. Very, very, very, very big. She is standing up and she is looking at us.

CHLOE
And that look is not approbation.

SOFIA
She'll kill us.

HAZE
Let's split and run on three.

CHLOE
No, no, no. Kinda speak calmly, stay together so we look bigger. Look the bear in the eye.

HAZE
I'm looking the bear in the eye.

CHLOE
Now, on three, yell, "Get out of here."

SOFIA
You're kidding?

CHLOE
After that we start backing up slowly.

SOFIA
Those that are left.

CHLOE
(Calmly)
Do what I tell you. Ready.

HAZE
Oh sure.

CHLOE
One, two, three.

ALL THREE.
(Yelling)
Get out of here bear!!

A pause.

HAZE
She's turning around. *(Pause)*

SOFIA
She's leaving with the cub. *(Pause)*

CHLOE
She's gone.

SOFIA
She's gone.

They exhale.

HAZE
(To CHLOE)
You are the genuine article.

CHLOE
Saw a video.

A pause.

SOFIA
I confronted a giant, fear maddened beast, saliva dripping from its panting mouth. Its claws shining in the moonlight. Twenty feet tall, wild eyed, shifting from foot to foot, making direct eye contact with me. Ready to tear me limb from limb – but the determination and ferocity it saw in my eyes sent it whimpering back into the primeval forest, daunted and dominated by my cold, clear, powerful interior life!!

CHLOE
Are you alright, Sofia?

SOFIA
(A primeval howl)
Bring on college I'm ready!!!

BLACKOUT.

2. TIPPING POINT

AT RISE: *An outdoor table on a college campus. A young man enters. A young woman sits at the table.*

MARISA
Hey.

RAFE
Hey.

MARISA
Thanks.

Thanks for what?
RAFE

For standing there.
MARISA

Logan said you wanted to talk to me. She gave me your note.
RAFE

And you're here.
MARISA

I'm not usually on campus on the weekend.
RAFE

But you're here.
MARISA

Yes, I'm here.
RAFE

I didn't think you'd come.
MARISA

I'm here. What is it you want?
RAFE

You don't know what I want?
MARISA

I don't know you. I know your name because it was on the note.
RAFE

Do you ordinarily know the names of the women you rape? *(He turns and starts to leave.)*
If you leave you better be on your way to get a good lawyer.
MARISA

You were assaulted?
RAFE

Yes, I was raped.
MARISA

That's terrible.
RAFE

It is, yes.
MARISA

RAFE

Have you gone to the police?

MARISA

It happened in your room at the frat.

RAFE

My room?

MARISA

It had your name on the door.

RAFE

When?

MARISA

When you guys threw the winter solstice party.

RAFE

That was on the 21st. I'd already gone home for Christmas.

MARISA

And your family will testify to that?

RAFE

You leave my family out of this.

MARISA

That's what we're trying to do here, Rafe. I woke up in your room with only my bra on. I remember being in a room, I think there were three guys. I was really wasted.

RAFE

Getting stone drunk at a fraternity party that's kind of asking for it.

MARISA

I was asking to be raped?

RAFE

It sounds like you put yourself in a dangerous position.

MARISA

So that would be a misjudgment?

RAFE

Yeah. Yeah, that would be a misjudgment.

MARISA

You were there, my friend Sofia took a picture of us playing beer pong.

RAFE

Okay, I was there in the early part of the evening. Maybe 'til around ten or ten-thirty then I got in my car and drove back to Montana to be with my family. When did this happen to you?

MARISA

I don't know. I remember the party was breaking up and I fell asleep on a sofa in the game room.

RAFE

You said you were in my room.

MARISA

I woke up in your room. It was just getting light. My clothes were all over. I only found one shoe. I threw stuff on and left.

RAFE

Your friends just left you in the game room?

MARISA

They just thought I had left.

RAFE

Nice friends.

MARISA

Shut up about my friends.

RAFE

Look, you're upset and obviously you should be upset. I'm upset as you can tell. If you were raped...

MARISA

I was raped.

RAFE

Did you get tested?

MARISA

You mean a rape kit?

RAFE

I guess.

MARISA

Yes, I did.

A pause.

RAFE

So you did go to the police?

MARISA

And I have pictures of bruises and cuts.

RAFE

And are you pressing charges?

MARISA

I took pictures of your room.

RAFE

Are you pressing charges?

MARISA

And in the bed I found your UCLA identity card.

RAFE

I lost that. You better not be pressing charges.

MARISA

I better not?

RAFE

I said that the wrong way. Look, I have one of the few single rooms in the house. When I left to drive home I gave the key to a friend so he could use the room and get some studying done.

MARISA

Who?

RAFE

He wouldn't do something like this.

MARISA

Who?

RAFE

I'm not going to tell you that.

MARISA

I'm not feeling well, Rafe. I'm really sad and I cry all the time. I'm not back in school. My parents think I am, but I'm not. You know what I do when they think I'm in school? I play miniature golf. Crazy, huh? I play seven, eight, nine rounds. It seems so... manageable. That's the world I like to live in now... miniature golf. I can't seem to get right.

RAFE

Look, you should probably take this to court. I see that. I promise you, on the Bible, that I didn't do this. And this would, as it should, get huge publicity. It's the right moment. And you might find out who was in the room or you might not. And this would go on for months and this whole thing will be your identity and my identity. You'll be the girl who was raped and I'll be the rapist, or maybe the rapist. And what happened to you is unspeakable and it will always be there. And I'll end up as the maybe rapist and that's who I'll always be. Look, you're the victim. You're the victim. But the way this will roll is that I'll end up as a victim too. I'll be right and truly screwed. For life. Because it's going to end up unclear nobody is going to come out well. Please don't do it. Please.

MARISA

Nice speech.

RAFE

What do you want?

MARISA

I want to feel better, Rafe. And while I was playing miniature golf, I figured out the only way to feel better was to go to court and put a college rapist in jail so that a bunch of drunk guys on college campuses see the cost – feel the cost.

RAFE

That's pretty abstract.

MARISA

Abstract?

RAFE

Do you have dreams?

MARISA

Of course I have dreams.

RAFE

Do your dreams cost money?

A pause.

MARISA

Don't embarrass yourself.

RAFE

Don't be naïve. My family has money. Name a figure.

MARISA

I don't want your money.

RAFE

A hundred thousand? (*Silence*) Half a million? Name a figure! (*Silence*) You know there's an infallible tell?

MARISA

You should stop now.

RAFE

People who wear really cheap shoes don't have money. Now before you make a righteous speech think it over. You know the people who make ketchup? Heinz. Those are the people who make ketchup. My mom's a Heinz. How about a million?

MARISA

No.

RAFE

Three million?

MARISA

Stop it.

RAFE

Five. That's the top.

MARISA

(*Rising*)

We're done now.

RAFE

Your mom and dad couldn't use a couple of million? I didn't rape you, that's what you'll find out. So you'll have ruined my life for nothing. What happened to you is intolerable. In the end you won't feel better for doing me harm. I have dreams too. I'm a human being with dreams and I didn't rape you.

MARISA

You know what else I sort of remember? A scar on the guy's shoulder.

RAFE

Yeah, well I'm not stripping for you.

MARISA

Some good irony there, huh?

RAFE

I see how you might think that. So, money is off the table?

A pause.

MARISA

Yes.

RAFE

You don't like guys much, do you?

MARISA

Not much. But that's not this.

RAFE

I hope not.

MARISA

You can count on it. I think we're done here, Rafe.

RAFE

Can I ask you one last thing?

MARISA

Yes.

RAFE

Give me two weeks. Grab a cup of coffee with me every day for a half hour.

MARISA

Why would I do that?

RAFE

So at least you'll know the person you destroy.

MARISA

There are things people do where it really doesn't matter if you know them or previously liked them or had a nice latte with them. Rape is a transcendent act. Look at me. You and those other guys shouldn't be on the street. The way I'll get well is to take you off the street. That's how I can stop playing miniature golf. I asked you to come out here because I needed to see you. Now I've seen you and heard you and I am... unmoved. I wasn't sure until you wouldn't take off your shirt.

RAFE

I'll take off my shirt in court. *(He starts to go and turns back.)* When I'm acquitted I'm going to sue you and your family and I'll take your house and your car and your dad's car and his golf clubs and your mom's tea set and your cat. I hope you do well on your next round of miniature golf.

He exits. MARISA looks after him. Then she takes out her phone and punches in a number.

MARISA

Dad? No, nothing's changed. Listen, I know you should be at work but will you still take me down to the police station? You're sure? Thank you, daddy. No, thank you. What do you wear to go down to the police station?

She laughs. Up until then she has never smiled.

MARISA, *Continued*

Armor, right. I'll be home to change. *(Puts the phone away)* And life changed.

BLACKOUT.

3. STUDENT UNION

AT RISE: *A girl sits on a two-seat sofa in the new student union. She is studying a psychology textbook. A second girl enters and plops down beside her.*

SOSI

(Sits down)

Hey, Posh.

POSH

Hey, Sosi.

SOSI

It is so hot. What is it a hundred and seven? How can it be a hundred and seven in October?

POSH

Everybody is in here for the air conditioning.

SOSI

It is so cold in here. What do you think the wind chill factor is?

POSH

It's really cold. I think they turned it down to prevent overcrowding.

SOSI

You know what they spent on this new student union?

POSH

It has Jai alai courts. What's Jai alai?

SOSI

I heard it cost a hundred seventeen million.

POSH

Meanwhile my teacher for this criminal psychology class is a lecturer who makes \$3,500 for the class. I was talking to him and he says he and his wife are teaching eleven classes this semester at seven different colleges in New York and New Jersey to make enough to live in Brooklyn. He's fallen asleep twice while he was teaching.

SOSI

There are three different swimming pools in here, hot, cold, and salt water.

POSH

What are you going to do with your life?

SOSI

I have no idea.

POSH

Me either.

SOSI

See ya.

POSH

Bye.

SOSI exits. As she leaves another girl enters and sits.

MARIANN

This taken?

POSH

My boyfriend was sitting there, but I broke up with him.

MARIANN

Sorry.

POSH

Yeah, he completely ran out of conversation and we've been sitting in complete silence for almost a month.

MARIANN

I've had twenty-four boyfriends so far this month.

POSH

What?!

MARIANN

Well, tuition's up to thirty-eight thousand so the only way I can cut it is to work for an escort service.

POSH

Yeah, I did that my first year, but my brother said I got more injuries than he did playing wide receiver.

MARIANN

They were like violent?

POSH

No, they just wanted to try stuff.

MARIANN

You know they have seventeen restaurants in here? I'm kind of into Togolese curries.

POSH

Where's that from?

MARIANN

West Africa. I find the student union more culturally informative than my classes. I'm Mariann.

POSH

I'm Posh.

MARIANN

Come on down to the sex workers union organizational meeting on the quadrangle at midnight.

POSH

Definitely be there.

MARIANN

(Leaving)

Bring a covered dish.

She exits, passing another girl who sits.

JOELLA

You know anything about the Dakotas?

POSH

What Dakotas?

JOELLA

South Dakota and North Dakota? I'm graduating in the spring and I want to move to a state that won't be unlivable because of global warming.

POSH

I don't know. I'm going to work in the private space industry so I can get off the planet.

JOELLA

Thanks anyway. Do you know where the quietude room is?

POSH

What is it?

JOELLA

It's set up for stress reduction. You lie on these really comfortable single beds and these women dressed in grey shroud like whatsits sits on stools and whisper 18th century poetry into your ears.

POSH

I'll say one thing for college, it has a great menu.

JOELLA

Maybe it's like a really upscale asylum. I didn't even know I needed help until I got here. (*A bell rings*) Oh, that's the sunset bell. Want to go see a really incredible sunset?

POSH

Isn't it only like three o'clock?

JOELLA

You haven't been to the sunset room? They have a different sunset every hour. (*Pulls out a brochure*) Three o'clock is a sunset just after a typhoon in the Galapagos Islands.

POSH

I have to study.

JOELLA

Why?

POSH

It's always been my fantasy about college that I would finally study.

JOELLA

That's so sweet. Gotta run.

POSH

Who are you?

JOELLA

I'm Joella. And if I see you again, I'll lie to you about my background.

POSH

That rocks.

JOELLA leaves. Another girl sits.

GRETA

Hi, I'm Greta.

POSH

I'm Posh.

GRETA

Would you be interested in hearing about the healthy benefits of being a fascist?

POSH

No thanks. I do yoga.

GRETA exits. Another girl sits.

LOLO

Are you stressed?

POSH

All the time.

LOLO

At three thirty there's a mock graduation. It will make you feel you made it through. Cap and gown, the whole deal. You'll listen to a taped graduation speech given by Zeus.

POSH

I did that yesterday.

LOLO

Did it help?

POSH

It got me through dinner.

LOLO

(Patting her)

We need our small victories.

POSH

Word.

LOLO leaves.

POSH, *Continued*

I love the student union.

BLACKOUT.

4. FLAME

AT RISE: *Two guys sitting on a ragged sofa watching TV and drinking beers.*

TUCKER

So, uh, what are we doing?

TREVOR

We're hanging.

TUCKER

Right, right. Remind me again what hanging means?

TREVOR

We are taking each other in and making sense of the universe in concert, without a time frame, in an induced state of relaxation, while watching a Lakers game.

TUCKER

Word. While drinking a beer, right?

TREVOR

The beer is a given.

TUCKER

What's the difference between hanging and avoidance?

TREVOR

Avoidance is a positive term, meaning a successful concentration on good feelings. Hanging is a perpetuation of good feelings as one might steel a rubber band to enjoy the rubber band in all its permutations.

TUCKER

Remind me of your major again.

TREVOR

I was pre-med but that led me to musical theatre.

TUCKER

The Lakers don't play much defense.

TREVOR

It's a generous instinct.

TUCKER

Do I misremember or did we just fail a midterm?

TREVOR

You are speaking of our foray into the psychology department by taking the class "feelings."

TUCKER

It is an honor to fail a class named "feelings". In fact it is tantamount to a necessity.

TREVOR

What does tantamount mean?

TUCKER

Not knowing gives its usage a little thrill of living dangerously.

TREVOR

I read that in fifteen years many parts of America will be uninhabitable because of extreme heat. Twelve cities will experience disastrous flooding. Eight cities will have high winds that will destroy buildings over forty floors high and tornadoes will mean mass migration from Midwestern states.

TUCKER

That's why I've accepted a job in Sacramento.

TREVOR

You're not worried about crippling boredom?

TUCKER

I've actually become a fan of crippling boredom here at college. It's in line with my hobby of exploring low expectations.

TREVOR

I believe the game is over.

TUCKER

How can you tell?

TREVOR

Do the Lakers appear in *Gone with the Wind*?

TUCKER

I don't believe so.

TREVOR

Then the game's over.

Did anyone win? TUCKER

Does it really matter? TREVOR

I see your point. (*Leaning over and holding a spoon like a microphone*) Tell me, Trevor, what do you feel about sex? TUCKER

Could you spell that for me? TREVOR

S-e-x. Sex. TUCKER

Oh, sex. Well, it's run out. There was a crop failure so supplies were limited. Then, of course, came the rationing. And then finally there just wasn't any more. TREVOR

Then you might say "sex is history". TUCKER

Always has been. Best embodied by Anthony and Cleopatra. TREVOR

Yes. TUCKER

Yes. TREVOR

So there we are. TUCKER

Yes. TREVOR

Did he come today? TUCKER

Who? TREVOR

Godot. TUCKER

Ah Godot.

TREVOR

Silence.

Well?

TUCKER

He came yesterday.

TREVOR

Was I asleep?

TUCKER

You almost always are. But hopefully he'll come again tomorrow.

TREVOR

Ah.

TUCKER

Have you read *Alice in Wonderland*?

TREVOR

Can't say that I have.

TUCKER

"Jam yesterday and jam tomorrow but never jam today."

TREVOR

That's horrific.

TUCKER

I know.

TREVOR

Studied closely it predicts that we'll never have jam.

TUCKER

My god, I didn't see that.

TREVOR

There is a knock at the door.

He's here!

TUCKER

Who?

TREVOR

Godot with the jam!

TUCKER

The door opens and FLAME enters. She wears jeans and a stupid t-shirt.

FLAME

Hi. Sorry to just walk in but I could hear you talking in here.

TREVOR

That's cool.

FLAME

I'm from the escort service.

TREVOR

That's wonderful news!

FLAME

If only it were true. I just moved in upstairs. I can see your disappointment, but the good news is I have jam.

TUCKER

What kind?

FLAME

Lemon-ginger.

TUCKER

I'm allergic.

TREVOR

I've never had jam.

FLAME

You are frigging fooling me!

TREVOR

No, we were a no-sugar family so we put mashed potatoes on our toast.

FLAME

No you didn't.

TREVOR

You're right, we didn't.

FLAME

You have names?

TREVOR

I'm, uh, Trevor. And this... I'm sorry, I forgot your name?

TUCKER

We're roommates.

TREVOR

Then obviously we wouldn't be on a first name basis.

TUCKER

I'm Tucker.

FLAME

Tucker and Trevor? Wow. That sounds like an animated kid's show about merry field mice.

TREVOR

And what would your name be?

FLAME

It's a conversation starter.

TREVOR

Go for it.

FLAME

Flame. That's not a nickname, it's on my birth certificate. My father named me.

TUCKER

Because he wanted you to burn brightly?

FLAME

No, because he had a weasel named Flame when he was six.

TREVOR

I like your father. Are you like a student?

FLAME

No, I'm a plumber. I went to college for one year. I was an ancient languages major. Then my toilet overflowed and the plumber hit on me so I felt free to ask him how much money he made and he said \$75,000 a year, so when he left, which was two days later, I looked up the average income of ancient language majors and it just had a laughing emoji. So I'm a plumber. Which brings me to my point. As I said I'm just moving in upstairs, but the bitch of it is I have a king-sized mattress and I can't haul that baby up there on my own. So, analyzing you guys as losers, I thought if I did a little harmless flirting and told you the truth which is what I want to do when I go to a new city – which happens quite often as I am easily bored – that I usually opt for a transitional boyfriend for a fourteen day period while I make more permanent decisions which have a strong economic basis.

TREVOR

Transitional boyfriends?

FLAME

Yeah.

TREVOR

And you feel we would qualify as candidates?

FLAME

More or less. Not both of you obviously. Transitional boyfriends do not, of course, have full privileges but, within limits, they can mess around a little bit.

TUCKER

And we have to haul the mattress up there?

FLAME

That would be a given, right?

TREVOR

This is a tremendous opportunity – one might even say unexpected – but we would have to give that a no.

TUCKER

We would?

TREVOR

Tucker, lad, Gen Z doesn't do physical labor, it's beneath us. (*To FLAME*) I exempt plumbing, of course, because it is more like a chess game with pipes. The key to the Gen Z mindset is cool products over cool experiences. Let us dwell momentarily on the mattress.

TUCKER

The mattress, yes.

TREVOR

We would like to create a mattress that sings you to sleep but we would not like to haul the mattress.

TUCKER

Ah.

TREVOR

The Gen Z problem, Flame, is a short attention span and a lack of focus, and dragging the mattress up two flights around sharp corners would bring both into play. Gen Z is entrepreneurial, we don't lift things. Lastly, Gen Z'ers are nothing if not realists and one profound realization is, we don't have muscles. We deal in climate change not mattresses.

TUCKER

(*Applauding*)

Bravo!

FLAME

So would it be fair to say that you prefer the idea of me to me myself?

TUCKER

No.

TREVOR

Yes.

TUCKER

Sorry, I meant yes.

FLAME.

And as cool exemplars of Gen Z you prefer me as a product rather than an experience?

TREVOR

Well, that's a tough one.

TUCKER

Tricky.

FLAME

Isn't it? Because Gen Z women have moved way, way, way, way, way, way, way, way, way, past the cool product stage. You get that, I'm sure?

TREVOR

Ah.

TUCKER

Huh.

FLAME

So with a soupçon... (*French for a dab or hint*) ...of regret, I must leave you, gentlemen. We pass, as they say, like ships in the night.

TUCKER

We do?

FLAME

I fear so. I have other depths to plumb, as we plumbers say. I wish your generation *bon chance*.

TREVOR

But it is not your generation?

FLAME

Based on your own definition I must reply in the negative. I am my own generation. More in the Clint Eastwood vein. Rock on, boys.

She exits.

TREVOR

(After a pause)

Well...

TUCKER

Well...

TREVOR

A nice little ramble, eh?

TUCKER

An excursion at the cliff's edge.

TREVOR

A departure but not an arrival.

TUCKER

Pity.

TREVOR

There's always a Lakers game.

TUCKER

Or a replay.

TREVOR

The replays are a comfort.

TUCKER

Are we missing a class?

TREVOR

I hope so.

They sit; a pause.

TUCKER

Did he come today?

TREVOR

Whom?

Godot. TUCKER

No. TREVOR

But he'll come tomorrow? TUCKER

Of course. TREVOR

They watch the TV.

LeBron dunked. TUCKER

Of course he did. TREVOR

BLACKOUT.

5. KAPUT

AT RISE: *We are back at the camping site where we started the evening. Only two sleeping bags this time. CHLOE and HAZE sit on the sleeping bags. They are in full graduation gear. They are eating hot dogs. It is night.*

CHLOE
Wow. Hot dogs are such a forbidden drug.

HAZE
And ballpark mustard. How did you get ballpark mustard?

CHLOE
My dad took me. I just pumped mustard into a doggy bag and here we are.

HAZE
Why is it the things that are bad for you taste so freaking good and the things that are good for you are Brussels sprouts?

CHLOE
Because if the good looked good and tasted good there would be no evil and thus no pleasure in rejecting it. We wouldn't have to strive and striving opens up your senses.

HAZE

I don't think I've looked at the sky since the last time we did this.

CHLOE

Still no big dipper. But look where I'm pointing? That's the Great Bear.

HAZE

I'd forgotten the bear! God, the bear.

CHLOE

Sofia talked about the bear for a year.

HAZE

When guys hit on her in a bar she would drive them off by talking about the bear.

A pause.

CHLOE

Hey!

HAZE

What?

CHLOE

We graduated.

HAZE

Wow, right?

CHLOE

Wow. *(They high-five.)* We weren't summa cum laude.

HAZE

Or even, magna cum laude.

CHLOE

We are in the great unwashed middle.

HAZE

But we got a seat at the table. We're players.

CHLOE

Not really, Haze. From what I see, if you start in the middle you stay in the middle. At the very best you get to be the best of the second best.

HAZE

Commodify that.

CHLOE

A hundred and fifty thousand. But that's after fifteen years and that's the ceiling.

HAZE

Sounds like a lot.

CHLOE

Yeah but... ummm, that's a 32 percent federal tax bracket which leaves maybe \$95,000. So if you're in California that could be 13 percent for state taxes... so that's another \$17,000 off, so you've got \$80,000 to spend. If housing takes a third, that's maybe 27 off leaving around 50. By the time you eat out twice a week and take a vacation in Hawaii you can never buy a house and you only save about \$5,000 a year for retirement. And you're driving a Subaru.

HAZE

Thanks.

CHLOE

Don't mention it. That's the riddle of the middle, girl.

HAZE

It's not all about the money.

CHLOE

Yeah, why didn't I think of that?

HAZE

I miss Sofia.

CHLOE

We weren't supposed to talk about it.

HAZE

I can't help it.

CHLOE

That was so random.

HAZE

So random.

CHLOE

The guy drops his cell phone, reaches down for it, sideswipes her, rolls his car, she's fine. His car's on fire, she runs over to help and gets hit by the pickup coming the other way because the driver's having a heart attack. What are the odds on that?

HAZE

Astronomical. She was having such a great time.

A breakout good time.

CHLOE

At least it wasn't cancer.

HAZE

Shut up. Sorry. Look, we graduated. That's a rung on the ladder. Now all we have to do is live.

CHLOE

We can do that.

HAZE

We can do that.

CHLOE

A pause.

What are the rules?

HAZE

No, the rules are clear. Eat a good breakfast, don't wear the same underwear, smile, don't eat standing up, do not hang out twice with a guy who hasn't read a book in a year, say your prayers and own a cat.

CHLOE

Okay, I can do that. Does the cat have to be a particular color?

HAZE

No. There's freedom of choice.

CHLOE

We'll always spend Labor Day together, right? No matter what?

HAZE

Pinky swear.

CHLOE

They do.

(Stands up quickly)
Something's out there.

HAZE

Where?

CHLOE

HAZE
(*Pointing off left*)
There. Hear that?

CHLOE
Rustling.

HAZE
Twigs.

CHLOE
Oh no. No, no, no.

SOFIA enters. She is dressed entirely in white head to toe.

SOFIA
Hi.

HAZE
Oh my god.

SOFIA
Congratulations on your graduation.

CHLOE
Sofia?

SOFIA
Hi, Chloe. Hi, Haze. Don't be frightened. You know how when you get arrested they give you one phone call? This is sort of like that.

HAZE
Holy shit.

SOFIA
(*Finger to lips*)
Shhhh. Breathe. It's all right. Really. I'm fine. It's just like an order of nothingness with something on the side.

CHLOE
Are we dreaming?

SOFIA
Sort of. It's so good to see you guys. You can be glad to see me. It's alright.

HAZE
I'm so glad to see you. We miss you all the time.

SOFIA

When you miss me it's like a phone call. I phase in.

CHLOE

But how...

SOFIA

Shhh. I only have sixty seconds left. We could schmooze or I could tell you the meaning of life.

HAZE

The meaning of life I guess.

SOFIA

Do you want to write it down?

HAZE

I don't have a pen.

CHLOE

We left our phones on purpose. I'm so sorry.

SOFIA

It's cool.

HAZE

I love you, Sofia.

SOFIA

We feel that stuff like a breeze. Oops, only fifteen seconds left. All right, all right, it's only two words.

CHLOE

Only two?

SOFIA

Slow down.

HAZE

That's the meaning of life?

SOFIA

Life has no meaning unless you do.

CHLOE

But...

BLACKOUT. END OF PLAY.