

The M.A.D.

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The M.A.D.

Characters

Tim	Honor student
Kat	Honor student
Charlie	A smart but underachieving student
Farley	another clever underachiever
Brandi	Honor student, but a rebel
Principal Weiss	The Principal and Brandi's mother
Alyssa	Student
Custodian	working late
Extras for patio and crowd scenes	

Props: Megaphone, flashlights, camo-face paint, signs protesting
 The M.A.D test, a Swiss Army Knife, or a pocket knife, plastic
 storage tubs, vinyl gloves.

Scene I

(At Rise: two students sit on the patio after lunch, enjoying a pleasant moment in the sun before class.)

Kat

I'm glad it's Friday. I can't take another day. This week has worn me down to the heel bones.

Tim

Kat, better enjoy the weekend while you can. We're in for two weeks of testing, starting next Monday! You won't have any heel bones left after that.

Kat

Oh no, more testing? Didn't we just finish brief cycles last week?

Tim

Yeah, but this is the big one, the main event! We'll be going mano-a-mano with The M.A.D. test!

Kat

I forgot about it. I don't even know what the letters stand for.

Tim

They mean the Major Assessment Document.

Kat

What're they assessing anyway?

Tim

They're assessing college, or job readiness. They want to be able to look at a kid, even a first or second grader, and say, you're on the right track and on your way to college, or you're going to be a ditch digger! *(Kids are chanting in the distance.)*

Kat

Do they want to know what I had for breakfast this morning, too?

Tim

All in good time, Kat, all in good time.

Kat

All the other testing made me forget this one. (*Charlie and Farley enter.*)

Charlie

Test?

Farley

What test?

Tim

I don't believe you guys. They've only been talking about the M.A.D. test for two months now! How can you be so oblivious?

Charlie

It takes practice.

Farley

It takes concentration.

Charlie

And a strong will. (The chanting becomes louder.)

Kat

What do you slackers know about strong will?

Farley

She doesn't get what we're talking about, Charlie.

Charlie

You're going about it the wrong way, Farley. You forgot, Kat and Tim are honor students. You need to phrase things in ways which make sense to them.

Kat

Oh boy, this is going to be good. Let's hear it.

Tim

Kat, don't encourage them.

Kat

Sorry, too late, they're already warmed up.

Farley

What we're talking about, my overachieving friends is stress.

Charlie

And how to deal with it.

Farley

You can try the hard path.

Charlie

Or, the easy path.

Farley

First, let's look at the overachiever's method to a stress free life.

Charlie

It's one of hard work and discipline.

Farley

And the path of practice is to focus your mind. (*The chanting is very close now.*)

Kat

Wait, that sounds stressful. You're only adding in more worry and work!

Charlie

But it's the perfect solution for honor student types who believe everything comes with a concerted effort and study.

Tim

What's the alternative?

Farley

Slacking.

Tim

Oh, I want to hear all about this.

Farley

You avoid practice, concentration and discipline. And by doing so, you simply allow the worries of The M.A.D. to wash over you like cool water aimed at you from a hose in Summer...no worries, no stress, just relief.

Kat

You're all wet.

Charlie

There's another option.

Tim

Really?

Farley

Just suffer like you always do.

Charlie

Hey, you hear those kids chanting?

Kat and Tim

Yeah.

Farley

They're protesting and screaming about opting not to take the test. *(Several students come in carrying signs and chanting against the test. The leader takes center stage and leads the chanting.)*

Brandi

(She is holding a cheerleader's megaphone. She is a fiery leader and is dressed in black.) Stop the Madness!

Crowd of Kids

Stop the Madness!

Brandi

Opt out!

Crowd

Opt out!

Brandi

More Learning!

Crowd

More Learning!

Brandi

Less Testing!

Crowd

Less Testing!

Brandi

Who takes the M.A.D. test?

Crowd

Who takes the M.A.D. test?

Brandi

Only the mad!

Crowd

Only the mad!

Brandi

Who takes the M.A.D. test?

Crowd

Who takes the M.A.D. test?

Brandi

Only the mad!

Crowd

Only the mad!

Brandi

Stop the madness now!

Crowd

Stop the madness now! *(Everyone cheers and applauds. Brandi signals for silence and everyone settles down to listen to her speak.)*

Brandi

Fellow students, we are gathered here during our lunch period, to raise our voices into a great shout of defiance against the Major Assessment Document, also known as the M.A.D. test! *(The students cheer. She raises her hand for silence. The students quiet down.)* We have been tested to the breaking point of our young lives. We're losing valuable instruction time with our teachers. Those of us in AP classes are losing time to prepare for our AP tests because of testing gone amok. *(The students cheer again!)* And what is the testing for in the long run, my fellow students? We're told it's about data for our teachers to see where we are. It's data to see how good of a job our teachers are doing in their classes. It's data to see if the school is doing a good job. Well? How can anyone be doing a good job if all they ever have time for is testing?

Brandi

Who's actually getting anything out of all this testing? I'll tell you who! It's the companies that write all these stupid tests. They're making money off these tests and our blood, sweat, toil and tears! *(The students boo. She raises her hand for silence again. Principal Weiss enters. Everyone becomes silent. Brandi looks at her in defiance. Principal Weiss smiles and shakes her hand.)*

Ms. Weiss

Students, I respect your right to free speech. And I'm proud that you've chosen passing period before class and lunchtime as the moment for your demonstrations. You're allowed to march around the building twice before the end of lunch, but then you must be in class before the tardy bell rings. Once again, thank you for your fine planning, foresight and clear thinking. We do require that you refrain from any vandalism and once again, that you be in your seat for your fifth period when the tardy bell rings. And please remember, the teacher who is administering your test next week is not your enemy. You might be surprised how many agree with you and who they are. If you're going to march around the building twice you're better get going now to stay within the time frame. The assistant principals are already in place and waiting to monitor your march. Thank you. *(The students applaud politely as she hands the megaphone back to an annoyed Brandi.)*

Brandi

Really, Mom that was condescending. How could you say that?

Ms. Weiss

Would you rather I had just shut it down?

Brandi

No...but...but...ugh, never mind. We're out of here. Alright, everyone, follow me around the building. *(Students cheer. Principal Weiss watches and then leaves.)* Forward, March! Stop the madness!

Students

Stop the madness!

Brandi

Opt Out!

Students

Opt out!

Brandi

Stop the madness!

Students

Stop the madness!

Brandi

Opt out.

Students

Opt out.

Brandi

Stop the madness!

Students

Stop the madness!

Brandi

Opt out.

Students

Opt out. (*The chanting trails off.*)

Farley

That is one scary lady.

Tim

Yeah, Principal Weiss can be very intimidating.

Farley

I meant Firebrand Brandi with her megaphone and troops.

Charley

I think she's kind of hot!

Kat

More like hotheaded, if you ask me.

Tim

She can't be that much of a hothead if she planned this out and had permission from the Principal.

Kat

How hard can that be when your mom happens to be the Principal?

Charlie

Do I sense envy in your tone?

Kat

Listen, you need to think about the consequences of what she's suggesting.

Farley

You opt out. You don't take the test, big deal. No skin off anyone's nose.

Tim

You opt out and you don't graduate. Haven't you guys been watching the news, reading the paper, or listening to announcements?

Charlie and Farley

No, we're slackers.

Kat

I heard the state legislators have been talking about trying to get the Governor to dump the test.

Tim

Like that's ever going to happen.

Kat

People all over the state and the entire country are protesting the test and opting out.

Tim

For us it's too late. The test starts on Monday and goes on for the next two weeks.

Kat

I could use that time to get ready for the AP test. That's really important, too.

Charlie

I wish we could do something to get rid of this crazy test.

Everybody

Why?

Charlie

I've heard some creepy stuff about it from some friends at the Charter School. *(The bell rings.)*

Kat

We'll can to talk about it after class.

Tim

I got this flyer from one of the demonstrators. They're having a meeting at 7:00 tonight in Brandi's garage. Maybe we ought to go.

Charlie/Farley

We'll meet you there!

Tim

Okay, guys. What about you?

Kat

I guess so, I haven't got anything else tonight. I'll meet you there. But as mad as I am, I'm not comfortable with this. It's a little crazy.

Charlie

You know the company that makes the M.A.D. test?

Kat

Brazen Books Ltd.

Charlie

I'll tell you what they've been up to with the students at Charter School tonight.

Tim

Okay, see everyone there tonight.

Everybody

Later.

End of Scene I

Scene II

(At rise, Brandy is sitting with two female friends in a somewhat empty garage. There are snacks available. But no one has bothered to come except for two girls.)

Brandi

I really thought we'd have more people show up. I mean we had so many for the demonstration. I thought at least half would've shown up! It isn't seven yet. I'll give them some time.

Alyssa

Look, your mom's the principal, do you think they'd come to her house to plot a meeting against a high stakes test. We should've gone somewhere else.

Brandi

Alyssa, you're so depressing. I'm sure the diehards will come.

Alyssa

Planning your meeting on the night of a March Madness basketball game wasn't what I call a smart move, Brandi. What were you thinking?

Brandi

I thought they felt like doing something about the test. I thought it would have been more important than watching gigantic grasshopper men jumping around on a wooden floor, fighting over a ball and then stuffing it into a hoop. Our cause is our future.

Alyssa

Maybe marching around the building was all they were willing or able to do.

Brandi

I wonder how anything in this country ever gets done.

Alyssa

Have you ever seen how much Congress really gets done?

Brandi

At least they show up!

Alyssa

I think that's part of the problem. *(Everyone laughs.)* Look, four people are showing up.

Brandi

Let's start the meeting now!

Alyssa

At least let them get through the door before we start.

Brandi

Welcome to our Resist the M.A.D. Test organizational meeting.

Kat

I thought there'd be people from the rally here.

Alyssa

That's what happens when you throw a rebellion together on the fly

Kat

I thought you had a lot more people in your organization.

Alyssa

Let's see things as they are. While it was probably great fun to march around the building and act defiant. Evidently, actually doing something about this test is harder than we thought. Are you four willing to make a commitment to do something about this test?

Tim

We certainly are after what we heard on the way over.

Brandi

What did you hear?

Charlie

Haven't you been on Facebook lately?

Farley

It's all about Brazen Books Ltd. They put out the test.

Brandi

Well?

Charlie

They're spying on kids who take the test, or say anything about the test on their social media...you know, Twitter, Facebook, and You Tube.

Brandi

That's really crossing the line!

Kat

I don't think there's anything we can do about it.

Tim

Opting out is as far as my thoughts go. But I want to graduate.

Kat

There must be some positive solution.

Alyssa

Like what, sending them a strongly worded warning about boycotting their products? Oh yeah, that's going to really make them stop and think.

Kat

You never know, it might.

Tim

Kat, just when did you stop believing in Santa Claus?

Kat

Oh, I think I was about...hey, wait a minute, if I was so naive I wouldn't be here tonight. You know, sometimes I think I'd like to steal the test and torch it! *(Everyone is startled, silent and staring at Kat for five beats.)*

Kat

What? Why are you all staring at me? I was just letting off some steam. *(They continue to stare for a few more moments.)*

Brandi

You just expressed a brilliant idea! What's your name?

Kat

Kat.

Brandi

Good ideas don't just drop from trees.

Tim

That wasn't really what you were thinking, was it Kat?

Kat

We shouldn't think of it as a valid solution.

Brandi

Why not?

Alyssa

We'd end up in jail for breaking and entering.

Charlie

Let's not forget about arson.

Kat

These are illegal actions you don't want to get caught doing.

Tim

I want to graduate from high school, not reform school.

Brandi

What makes you think spying on kids is legal?

Kat

I think you have a point there. But what can we really do?

Brandi

What you said, and what I'm contemplating is Civil Disobedience.

Farley

I don't like the idea of ending up in handcuffs to get a point across.

Brandi

Sometimes getting locked up is a consequence of civil disobedience. You have to be willing to pay a price.

Farley/Charlie//Alyssa

Huh?

Brandi

If we want to make them understand how much we hate the M.A.D., We have to be willing to take the fall for our actions.

Kat

I never meant we had to steal the test. I was only letting off steam. *(Everyone falls silent. Brandi is in deep thought and begins writing something on a small notepad.)*

Brandi

Look, if we steal the test, it's not about the answers. We don't want the answers. We want to make a statement about this unfair test.

Tim

I thought that was the reason for your demonstration today. You already got your point across.

Brandi

It isn't enough. On Monday ninety-nine-percent of the kids are going to take that test whether they want to or not.

Kat

There's nothing you can do about it, Brandi.

Brandi

Yes, there is! We can cause an involuntary opt-out! Can't you see that?

Kat

Okay, you're sounding insane, now.

Tim

Wait a minute, let's hear her out.

All the others

Yeah.

Brandi

Thanks...uh, your name?

Tim

Tim, just call me Tim.

Brandi

If we can get into the school, steal the tests and hide them for a couple of days the result would be kids not taking the test. Those who want to opt out won't have to take the test. Those who don't want to opt out can think about it some more. And, finally, it will be the ultimate protest.

Kat

I get you on the first two ideas, but not the third one.

Brandi

It will demonstrate the measures we're willing take to protest M.A.D. and strike a blow against Core Curriculum testing. It will mess up the scores for the state and the district.

Farley

That sounds like a big result. But it's going to get us in big trouble.

Charlie

I don't think we should do this. Besides, everything is under lock and key. You'd have to break in. That's breaking the law!

Brandi

Getting in is not impossible, and we won't get caught.

Alyssa

How do you figure that?

Brandi

We go in the dark, we conceal our identities, spray paint the security cameras, get in through a window without breaking it, sneak into the office, get into the school vault and take out the tests.

Alyssa

You're crazy.

Farley

Charlie and I could come up with a more detailed plan. But the one hook up is getting into the building.

Charlie

Unless we can get in there's no point in even bothering.

Brandi

There are certain facts about the building you aren't aware of.

Kat

What are they?

Brandi

The latches on the window to the Principal's office need to be fixed. The window isn't locked and will stay that way for at least another two weeks till the work order is carried out.

Kat

Okay, that gets us in. We don't even know where the tests are kept.

Brandi

I do. They're in the school safe. And I already know what you're going to say next, so please listen. I know the combination to the school vault.

Charlie

How'd you do that?

Brandi

I've watched my mom open it at least once a day. Sometimes she even repeats the numbers when she does it.

Kat

It's still not a good idea.

Brandi

We can keep the test hidden long enough for you to get caught up and ready for the A.P. test. What do you think? We can always put them back in the same way we got them.

Kat

That's pretty risky. But, the A.P. test...

Brandi

Come on, Kat, it's like the American Revolution! This is a good cause.

Tim

Or the French Revolution, where everyone's head got cut off!

Kat

It's against my better judgment, but okay.

Brandi

Everyone who wants in on this worthy mission, raise your hand and say "aye."

Everyone

Aye!

Brandi

The ayes have it! Now, let's make a workable plan."

