

SIDEWAYS STORIES FROM WAYSIDE SCHOOL

A Play Adapted From Louis Sachar's Wayside School Novels

Adaptation By John Olive

Seattle Children's Theatre Version: 3/23/01

Inquiries to:

Susan F. Schulman
SCHULMAN LITERARY AGENCY
2A-1 Bryan Plaza
Washington Depot, CT 06794
860/868-3700
860/868-3704 - fax
SCHULMAN@aol.com

MRS. GORF, the meanest teacher in the history of Wayside School
MYRON, a student
BEBE, a student
LESLIE, a student
RONDI, a student
DAMEON, a student
LOUIS, the yard teacher
MR. KIDSWATTER, the principal, voice only
MRS. JEWLS, a teacher
SAMMY, the new student
LESLIE'S PIGTAILS, voice only
MISS ZARVES (Note: MISS ZARVES does not exist), the 19th floor teacher, voice only
MR. PICKLE, the school councilor
MISS VALOOOSH, a dancer
MR. GORF, a substitute teacher
MISS MUSH, the cook, voice only
MRS. KIDSWATER, a cow, nonspeaking

The play takes place in the Thirtieth Floor classroom of Wayside School. Up here everything is sideways, exaggerated and very very colorful.

For the most part the text in this script is from the premiere production of the play, at Seattle Children's Theatre. Much of the blocking and stage business in the SCT production is reflected in the stage directions, but some is not. In the interest of keeping the stage directions to minimum I've chosen to describe some of SCT's more elaborate staging conceits in an appendix.

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

(As the stage lights fade down we hear MUSIC: booming organ music, ending with one drawn out and ominous chord.

Suddenly there is a Wayside School KaZzzzzzzzap!
Wayside School KaZssssssap!s involve kabooms of sound and bright kaflashes of light. [See appendix, note 1]

The lights come up on MRS. GORF standing between MYRON and BEBE. MYRON and BEBE are trembling terrified. There are gleamingly large apples sitting on the other three empty desks. MRS. GORF has enormous ears, a huge bouffant of grey hair and things on her nose. She's smiling, which does not make her any pleasanter to look at)

MRS. GORF:

Does anyone else have an opinion? Myron? BeBe?

MYRON and BEBE:

N-n-n-no, Mrs. Gorf.

MRS. GORF:

Good.

(MRS. GORF goes toward the desk with the apple on it)

Because if you fidget or wriggle or squirm or sass me or get an answer wrong, I'll wiggle my ears—

(Wiggles her ears: they vibrate dramatically. MYRON and BEBE duck under their desks)

MYRON and BEBE:

NO!

MRS. GORF:

--stick out my tongue and turn you into apples!

(MYRON and BEBE quiver. MRS. GORF laughs)

Just like Rondi, and Dameon, and--

(Takes the apple off LESLIE's desk, speaks to it:)

Hello, Leslie. My, how red and delicious you look today.

(Sticks out her tongue and starts to lick it. MYRON and BEBE react, horrified, turning away:)

MYRON and BEBE:

Ooh.

(MRS. GORF doesn't lick the LESLIE apple. Instead, she grabs the three apples and heads back to her desk)

MRS. GORF:

I hate climbing up to the Thirtieth Floor every day, day in, day out, week after week, month after month. If I turned you all into apples I wouldn't have to do it any more. That sounds like such a good idea. I love apples. I hate children.

(Sits, picks up a handheld mirror and beams at her reflection)

Don't you think I'm looking well today? Myron? BeBe?

MYRON and BEBE (quickly):

Y-y-yes, Mrs. Gorf.

MRS. GORF:

I think I've grown another thing on my nose.

(Admires herself for another beat, then puts the mirror down)

Well. Enough of that. It's time for--

(MYRON starts to sneeze, trying desperately to suppress it)

MYRON:

Ah... Ah... Ah...

MRS. GORF:

Myron. You're not going to sneeze, are you? No sneezing allowed on the Thirtieth Floor of Wayside School, you know that.

MYRON:

Ah... Ah. Ah! AH!!!

MRS. GORF:

Myron!

MYRON (sneezes explosively):

CHOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!

(Papers fly off his desk. MYRON jumps up, starts picking them up. MRS. GORF goes to him, ears wiggling)

Oh, please, Mrs. Gorf, please, don't turn me into an apple, I'll never sneeze again, I promise. Never.

MRS. GORF:
Well...

MYRON:
Scout's honor.

MRS. GORF:
All right. You have on such an interesting shirt, Myron, I guess I can let it go this time.

MYRON (relieved):
Thank you, Mrs. Gorf.

MRS. GORF:
You're very welcome, Myron.

(MYRON sits, looking at his shirt)

Now. Class. Let's begin arithmetic.

(MYRON and BEBE react, terrified)

BeBe.

BEBE (cries out involuntarily):
No!

MRS. GORF:
What?

BEBE:
N-n-n-nothing, Mrs. Gorf.

MRS. GORF:
Please count from one to one hundred.

BEBE (relieved -- this is easy):
Yes, Mrs. Gorf.

(She goes to the front of the classroom, smiling)

MRS. GORF:
Alphabetically.

BEBE:
Alpha...?

MRS. GORF:
Yes, BeBe, alphabetically. Please begin.

BEBE (hesitates, swallowing)

MRS. GORF:

You know what happens to children who waste time, don't you? Please begin. From one to one hundred alphabetically.

(A long moment. BEBE is thinking as fast as she can. Finally, very tentatively, terrified she's wrong:)

BEBE:

Eight...?

MRS. GORF:

Very good. And then...?

BEBE:

Eight... teen?

MRS. GORF:

Excellent.

BEBE:

Eight... y?

MRS. GORF:

Keep going.

BEBE:

Eighty... eight?

MRS. GORF:

Yes.

BEBE:

Eighty...

(Going out on a limb)

Five? Eighty... four.

MRS. GORF:

A plus so far.

BEBE:

Eighty... nine, eighty-one, eighty-seven, eighty-six, eighty-three---

(Starting to enjoy herself)

Eighty-two, and... Fifty!

MRS. GORF:
No!

BEBE:
Oh!

MRS. GORF:
Eleven is next! Eleven begins with E! E comes before F!

(Stands, goes to BEBE. BEBE cowers)

BEBE:
Please, don't turn me into an apple, Mrs. Gorf! I have a dentist appointment on Tuesday!

(MRS. GORF's ears start to wiggle. BEBE closes her eyes and braces herself for life as an apple.)

Suddenly, there's a knock on the door. LOUIS enters. MRS. GORF's manner changes completely. She smiles and goes to LOUIS)

MRS. GORF:
Hello, Louis.

LOUIS:
Hello, Mrs. Gorf. Hello, everyone.

(BEBE slowly opens her eyes)

MRS. GORF:
What brings you up here?

LOUIS:
I was just passing by and I thought I'd look in.

MRS. GORF (as though this were simply an excuse to see her):
Oh, Louis. You can't "pass by" the top floor.

LOUIS:
I was just going to throw some things off the roof.

MYRON (involuntarily):
Cool!

MRS. GORF (glares at MYRON, makes a tsk-tsk noise)

MYRON (cowers)

LOUIS:

Is... everything all right?

(Notices the apples on MRS. GORF's desk)

Wow. Look at those beautiful apples. Why, Mrs. Gorf, you must be the most popular teacher at Wayside School.

MRS. GORF (modestly):

Thank you, Louis.

LOUIS:

They look yummy. Would you mind if I ate one?

MYRON and BEBE:

NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!

LOUIS:

Oh. Well, I'll... Go.

MRS. GORF:

Thanks for stopping in, Louis.

LOUIS:

Sure.

(Goes to the door, looks at MYRON and BEBE, not sure everything's all right)

I'll... see you at recess.

(MRS. GORF smiles winningly at LOUIS. He leaves. BEBE hides behind the desk. MRS. GORF turns.)

MRS. GORF:

Where was I?

MYRON (goes to her, trying to distract her):

You were teaching us to count alphabetically.

MRS. GORF:

No, that's not it. What was I...? Oh, I remember. I was going to turn BeBe into an apple.

(Goes to the desk, picks up a yardstick and slams it down. BEBE cries out:)

BEBE:

Oh!

MRS. GORF:

Pretty soon I'll have enough for a pie.

(MRS. GORF wiggles her ears at BEBE. There's a Wayside School Zzzzzap!

Note: Wayside School Zzzzzap!s differ from Wayside School KaZzzzzzzzzzap!s in that they don't involve kaflashes of light.

BEBE athletically dodges MRS. GORF's Zzzzzap!)

Missed!

(Chases her. BEBE dodges around the other side of the desk. MRS. GORF lets go another Zzzzzap! Again BEBE is able to dodge it)

Hohoho! Think you can get away from me, do you?

(Chases. BEBE dashes around the desk. Zzzzap! BEBE's able to dodge, but only by rolling across the floor. MRS. GORF's got her now. She approaches, cackling triumphantly)

Now I've got you!

BEBE:

Ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh.....

(MYRON dashes to MRS. GORF's desk and grabs the hand mirror)

MYRON:

Bebe!!!

(Slides the mirror across the floor. BEBE grabs it. MRS. GORF wiggles her ears. BEBE holds up the mirror.

KaZzzzzzzzzzzzzzap!!!

MRS. GORF:

Noo!!!!

(Lights kaflash and sounds kaboom. It goes on and on.

Finally, the lights come back up. MRS. GORF is nowhere to be seen and three new STUDENTS --- DAMEON, LESLIE and RONDI - are standing near the teacher's desk)

BEBE:

Rondi! Dameon! Leslie!

MYRON:

You're back!

LESLIE:

It was awful!

RONDI:

She was gonna bake us into a pie!

DAMEON:

She was gonna eat us!

BEBE:

All of us!

RONDI:

It was horrible! Horrible!

STUDENTS (scream):

Aaaaaaaaaaagggggggggggghhhhhhhhhhh!!!

(A moment. The horror passes and they're calmer.
DAMEON looks around)

DAMEON:

Where is she?

(They look around. No sign of MRS. GORF.)

Then MYRON bends down, picks up an apple from behind the teacher's desk, holds it up. The STUDENTS look at it, in growing horror)

That's... her?

MYRON:

Yes.

(Everyone reacts. Then they all look at BEBE.
Defensively:)

BEBE:

I... I didn't do it. All I did was hold up the mirror and she turned herself into an apple.

(After a beat)

BEBE con't:
What're we gonna do?

(LOUIS enters. The STUDENTS jump back, startled)

LOUIS:
Say, Mrs. Gorf, I wanted to mention that-- Oh.

(Looks around)

Where's Mrs. Gorf?

BEBE:
She...

MYRON:
She...

RONDI:
She...

DAMEON:
She...

LESLIE:
She...

STUDENTS (look at each other, then at LOUIS):
Stepped out.

LOUIS:
Oh.

(Sees the apple that MYRON's holding)

You know, that apple looks so delicious, and I'm really hungry, and well, I'm sure that Mrs. Gorf wouldn't mind if I ate it. After all, she always has so many. Do you think?

(Everyone looks at MYRON. A moment. Then MYRON makes a decision: he hands the apple to LOUIS. LOUIS takes it, shines it on his shirt, and then takes a big crisp bite)

Mmmm. Delicious. See you all at recess.

(Exits. The STUDENTS look at each other)

END SCENE

SCENE TWO

(In the transition, we again hear the powerful ORGAN MUSIC. The lights fade up:

It's morning, a few days later. MYRON, DAMEON, BEBE and RONDI are sitting at their desks, sprawling, bored. LESLIE is looking out the door. Moment.

Then we become aware that RONDI is chewing gum. Noisily. It snaps, pops and crackles. The other four STUDENTS turn and stare at her. After a moment, RONDI notices this)

RONDI:
What.

MYRON:
It's against the rules to chew gum at Wayside School. You're gonna get in trouble.

RONDI:
With who? We don't have a teacher.

LESLIE (after a pause):
Don't you think we should tell?

DAMEON:
Tell?

LESLIE:
You know, that BeBe turned Mrs. Gorf--

STUDENTS (scream):
Aaaaaaagggggghhhhhh!!!

LESLIE:
--into an apple.

RONDI:
Don't even say her name!

BEBE (stands, upset):
I didn't turn her into an apple. I held up the mirror and she turned herself into an apple, it's not my fault!

(The P.A. system CLICKs and then we hear:)

MR. KIDSWATTER'S VOICE:
Good morning, children!

STUDENTS:

Good morning, Mr. Kidswatter.

([See appendix note 2])

MR. KIDSWATTER'S VOICE:

What a beautiful day! The birds are blooming! The flowers are singing! What a wonderful day to be in school! Today's lunch menu will be Miss Mush's Baked Liver With Purple Sauce. Double yum. Now. It has come to my attention that Mrs. Gorf--

STUDENTS (scream):

Aaaagggghhhh!!!

MR. KIDSWATTER'S VOICE:

--has disappeared! This is not the sort of thing we permit here at Wayside School. Disappearing teachers indeed. I am sure I speak for everyone when I say to the students of the Thirtieth Floor: we are heartily heartily sorry. A new teacher is on the way up now. Have an educational day!

(CLICK. Silence. The STUDENTS look at each other)

BEBE:

A new teacher. That's good. Isn't it? She can't be any worse than--

DAMEON:

Don't say it!

(Moment. Then we hear a rhythmic bang-crash, bang-crash from the stairwell. The STUDENTS tense up. MYRON goes to the door.)

RONDI:

What is it?

MYRON:

Somebody's coming up the stairs.

LESLIE:

Who?

MYRON:

I can't see.

(The sound continues, getting louder and more ominous: bang-crash! Bang-crash! MYRON keeps looking out the door. The other STUDENTS sit in their chairs, trying to stay calm. Suddenly RONDI realizes that she's got gum in her mouth. She takes it out of her mouth, looks around, then impulsively puts it on MYRON's seat. MYRON comes back

and sits. Everyone struggles to stay calm. The sounds get louder: BANG-CRASH! BANG-CRASH! Tense beat)

RONDI (suddenly):

I can't take it any more!

(RONDI jumps out of her seat and finds a hiding place. This sparks panic in the other STUDENTS and they also jump up and hide. Except for MYRON: he's stuck in his seat)

MYRON:

I'm stuck! Help!!!

(BANG-CRASH!!! BANG-CRASH!!! Suddenly the door opens)

Aaaaaaagggggghhhhhh!!!

(MRS. JEWLS enters. She's pushing a shopping cart -- this is the source of the bang-crashing. She looks at MYRON, quivering in terror)

MRS. JEWLS (in a very friendly, sweet voice):

Hello.

(Goes to her desk, starts taking things out of her cart)

Where is everyone? Is it just you and me? The less the merrier.

(Takes off her coat, crosses to a coat rack, sees LESLIE hiding there)

Oh.

(Sees RONDI hiding behind the desk)

Hello there.

(Sees DAMEON also hiding under the desk)

Are we having a tornado drill?

(BEBE comes out from her hiding spot)

Hi. Would you like to take your seats?

RONDI:

Okay.

(RONDI sits, as do the other STUDENTS. MRS. JEWLS puts her shopping cart in the hall, then returns and faces the STUDENTS. They look at her, nervous)

MRS. JEWLS:

My name is Mrs. Jewls. I'm the new teacher on the Wayside School Thirtieth Floor. The first thing I want to say is that I love teaching. And sometimes I get a little carried away. So if I'm boring you, I want you to raise your hands up in the air and tell me.

MYRON (after a beat):

For real? We can tell you you're boring and we won't get into trouble?

MRS. JEWLS:

Of course not. You'll be doing me and the whole class a favor. You can't learn anything if you're bored.

(The STUDENTS look at each other)

Also, I want you to know that you can ask me any questions you want, any time you like.

BEBE:

Anything?

MRS. JEWLS:

Anything.

STUDENTS (shoot their hands up)

MRS. JEWLS (to DAMEON):

Yes, boy in the off-putte shirt?

DAMEON (stands, looks at his shirt):

My shirt is purple. Have you ever been in jail?

MRS. JEWLS:

No, I never have. I'm sorry.

LESLIE:

How much money do you make?

MRS. JEWLS:

I make thirty nine thousand, two hundred and two dollars and ninety eight cents per year. That's... seven hundred fifty three dollars and ninety cents per week or... one hundred fifty dollars and seventy eight cents per day.

STUDENTS:

Wow!

DAMEON:
You're rich!

BEBE:
How many men have you kissed?

(A long moment, as MRS. JEWELS looks off into space and counts on her fingers. Finally:)

MRS. JEWELS:
Thirty one.

STUDENTS:
Wow!

RONDI:
How much do you weigh?

MRS. JEWELS:
Well, now, I have some questions for you. It's my first day here and I'm wondering: why is Wayside School thirty stories high?

STUDENTS (shoot their hands up in the air)

MRS. JEWELS (to BEBE):
Yes?

BEBE:
The architect made a mistake. He was supposed to build the school with thirty classrooms all on one level but he accidentally put them on top of each other.

DAMEON:
He said he was sorry.

MRS. JEWELS:
Here's my second question: I only counted twenty-nine stories.

STUDENTS (raise their hands, this time more tentatively)

MRS. JEWELS (to MYRON):
Yes?

MYRON:
That's because of the Nineteenth Floor.

LESLIE:
That's where Miss Zarves teaches.

MRS. JEWLS:

Oh, yes. They told me about Miss Zarves. I'm so looking forward to meeting her.

DAMEON:

Miss Zarves doesn't exist.

BEBE:

There is no Nineteenth Floor.

MRS. JEWLS:

There's no...? She doesn't...? But...?

(There is an atmosphere of dread and ill ease among the STUDENTS. No one looks MRS. JEWLS in the eye)

LESLIE:

There's no Nineteenth Floor.

RONDI:

Please don't make us say it again.

MRS. JEWLS (after a beat):

Well, alright. Is there anything else I should know about Wayside School?

STUDENTS (shoot their hands up, enthusiastic again)

MYRON:

Never eat Miss Mush's lunches!

BEBE:

There's a cow somewhere in Wayside School!

MRS. JEWLS:

A cow?

LESLIE:

Yeah.

RONDI:

And there's dead rats living in the basement!

DAMEON:

Louis is really cool!

MRS. JEWLS:

Thank you, all. Before we begin our day's work I want to talk about a very important topic: discipline.

(The STUDENTS suddenly tense up. MRS. JEWLS goes to the blackboard and writes “DISCIPLINE” in large letters)

MRS. JEWLS, con’t:

Discipline is very important on the Thirtieth Floor. If you are tardy, or if you talk in class, or fuss and fidget, or if you sass me, I will--

STUDENTS (cringe, covering their heads):

Ohhhhhhhhhhh!

MRS. JEWLS (looks at them for a bewildered beat):

I will write your name on the board under “Discipline”.

STUDENTS (have a sigh of relief)

MRS. JEWLS:

If you misbehave again I will put a check by your name and if you misbehave a third time I’ll circle your name and you’ll have to go home on the kindergarten bus. Is that clear? Good. Now. I’d like to find out who you are. I would like to ask you to one by one come up to the front of the class and write your name on the board, and then tell me something about yourself.

RONDI (shoots her hand up, bursting)

MRS. JEWLS:

Would you like to begin?

(RONDI goes to the board and writes her name, careful to draw a smiley face on the “O”. Then she faces the class)

RONDI:

My name is Rondi and I have the prettiest teeth in Wayside School.

MRS. JEWLS:

Oh, I agree.

(To BEBE)

And now you, please?

(BEBE jumps up, writes her name on the blackboard)

BEBE:

I’m BeBe, and I’m the fastest draw at Wayside School.

MRS. JEWLS:

The “fastest draw”...?

BEBE:

Yeah! Watch!

(BEBE rushes to the art area and starts drawing on the easel.
Her magic marker is a blur)

I can draw a cat in five seconds, a dog in four, a flower in three.

MRS. JEWLS:

That's... that's wonderful. BeBe.

(Drawings are flying off the easel)

BEBE:

I... can... make... a... leaf... in... one... second.

MRS. JEWLS:

BeBe? BeBe. BeBe!

(BEBE is working on one final drawing)

You can stop now.

(BEBE gives MRS. JEWLS a drawing, of a stick lady in a dress)

BEBE:

This is you.

MRS. JEWLS:

BeBe, how lovely.

(Tapes it to her desk. Then, to DAMEON)

Next?

(DAMEON stands, writes his name on the board)

DAMEON:

Dameon. I never stop smiling.

MRS. JEWLS:

Never?

DAMEON:

Nope. Never.

MRS. JEWLS:

Did you win the lottery?

DAMEON (shakes his head)

MRS. JEWLS:

Do you know the funniest joke ever told?

DAMEON (shakes his head)

MRS. JEWLS:

Is it your birthday every day?

DAMEON (shakes his head):

No.

MRS. JEWLS:

Why are you so happy?

DAMEON:

You need a reason to be sad. You don't need a reason to be happy.

MRS. JEWLS:

Why, Dameon. That's lovely.

(DAMEON sits. LESLIE goes to the blackboard and writes her name. Her handwriting is exquisite, but it's upside down)

LESLIE:

My name is Leslie and my pigtails are beautiful.

(MRS. JEWLS and the STUDENTS tilt their heads to read her name)

MRS. JEWLS:

Leslie, why did you write your name upside down?

LESLIE:

I didn't.

MRS. JEWLS:

You did.

LESLIE:

It looks okay to me.

MRS. JEWLS:

Let's try an experiment, shall we? Would you read this book out loud.

(Finds a book on her desk, gives it to LESLIE. LESLIE takes it)

LESLIE:

Sure. Where do you want me to read from?

MRS. JEWLS:

Anywhere would be fine.

(LESLIE opens the book, then turns it upside down. Reads:)

LESLIE (reads):

“Adventures in American Literature, by—“

(MRS. JEWLS takes the book and turns it right side up)

Why did you turn the book upside down, Mrs. Jewls?

MRS. JEWLS:

I didn't, Leslie. You did.

LESLIE:

I did?

MRS. JEWLS:

Do you always read upside down?

LESLIE:

Well, I... I guess so.

MRS. JEWLS:

What happens when I write something on the blackboard?

LESLIE:

That is a problem. I can never read what the teachers put on the board.

MRS. JEWLS:

Hm. We have to do something about this.

LESLIE:

Can you turn the blackboard upside down?

MRS. JEWLS:

I don't think so. Leslie. You're going to have to...

LESLIE (cowers, expecting the worse):

What?

MRS. JEWLS (after a beat):

Stand on your head.

LESLIE:

I can't, Mrs. Jewls, I've tried and it doesn't work. I think my head is too round.

MRS. JEWLS:

You just need to find your center of balance.

DAMEON:

It's easy, like this.

(DAMEON gets up on his desk and easily stands on his head)

MRS. JEWLS:

See? Nothing to it. Rondi and BeBe will help you. Here's a pillow for your head.

(Takes a pillow from her desk chair and sets it down on the floor. RONDI and BEBE help LESLIE to stand on her head)

LESLIE:

It works! I can read the blackboard! This is great!

(She goes back to her seat as MRS. JEWLS turns her attention to MYRON)

MRS. JEWLS:

What's your name?

MYRON:

Myron

MRS. JEWLS:

You're next, Myron.

MYRON:

I can't.

MRS. JEWLS:

You can't write?

MYRON:

I can't move. I'm stuck.

MRS. JEWLS:

Why are you stuck?

MYRON:

I don't know!

STUDENTS (look at RONDI)

RONDI:
Uh-oh.

MRS. JEWLS:
Rondi?

RONDI:
I... Well, I accidentally put some chewing gum on Myron's seat.

MRS. JEWLS:
I see.

(Goes to the board and writes RONDI's name under
"DISCIPLINE")

RONDI:
I'm sorry, Myron.

MYRON:
That's okay, Rondi.

MRS. JEWLS:
Let's pull him off.

(MRS. JEWLS and the STUDENTS crowd around MYRON
and attempt to pull him off the seat)

MRS. JEWLS and the STUDENTS:
Aaaaaaaagggggggghhhhhhhh...

MYRON:
You're gonna rip my pants!

MRS. JEWLS:
All right.

(They stop)

Rondi, go down to the cafeteria and ask Miss Mush for a bucket of ice water.

(RONDI runs off)

The ice water'll make the gum hard. Less sticky. Well, I wonder what's keeping Rondi.

(RONDI runs back in with a bucket of water. She gives it to
MRS. JEWLS)

RONDI:
Sorry it took me so long. I had to explain to Mr. Kidswatter why I needed ice water.

MRS. JEWLS:

I see.

(She goes to MYRON)

MYRON:

Oh, no, please, don't!

(MRS. JEWLS pours the ice water down the back of MYRON's pants)

Oooooooooooooooooohhhhhhhh...

MRS. JEWLS:

Now pull!

(Everyone pulls, to no effect: he's still stuck)

MYRON:

I'm still stuck!

MRS. JEWLS:

Okay. I have one final idea. Everyone pull on Myron.

(They do. It looks like MYRON might stretch out like silly putty)

MYRON:

It's not working!

MRS. JEWLS:

And I'll kiss him on the nose.

(She does. And it works! MYRON flies off the seat and knocks everyone down)

Wonderful! Everyone, gather round I have something for you.

(MRS. JEWLS fetches her shopping cart, takes a very strange-looking object out of it, gives it to MYRON)

Myron, this is your mooglatch. Take good care of it.

MYRON:

What is it?

MRS. JEWLS:

Should we send you down to the nurse's office to have your ears checked? It's a mooglatch.

(Finds another odd object, gives it to RONDI)

MRS. JEWLS, con't:

Rondi, this krullwart belongs to you.

RONDI (takes it):

I've always wanted a krullwart.

MRS. JEWLS (handing out more objects):

BeBe, your plickerwacker. Dameon, here's your flurb, and Leslie, let's see...

(Looking through the cart)

LESLIE:

Do you have a snorple?

MRS. JEWLS:

Why, yes, as a matter of fact, I do. Here you are.

(Takes a snorple out of the cart, gives it to LESLIE. She puts the cart away. The STUDENTS look at the objects, not sure what they're for. MRS. JEWLS finds a conductor's baton, faces the STUDENTS)

Now then. I believe that if we can create harmony in music we can create harmony in our souls. So we will begin every day on the Thirtieth Floor by making music. Ready? One, and two, and three, and four, and--

(Gives the downbeat. Nothing happens)

Is something wrong?

DAMEON:

This is so sudden.

MRS. JEWLS:

Let's try again, please. Uno, y dos, y tres, y quarto!

(She conducts again. DAMEON begins playing his flurb. It makes a low tuba-like sound. Once this bass line is established, BEBE plays a few phrases on her plickerwacker. One by one the other STUDENTS come in and soon they're playing wonderful uptempo music. [See appendix note 3] MRS. JEWLS conducts with gusto)

Wonderful! Louder!

(The MUSIC gets louder)

MRS. JEWLS, con't:
Louder!

(Louder)

Louder!

(Louder)

Excellent!

(The music continues, exuberant and infectious)

MR. KIDSWATTER'S VOICE:
What is going on up there!?!)

MRS. JEWLS:
Music!

MR. KIDSWATTER'S VOICE:
Mrs. Jewls, the students in the other classrooms are having trouble hearing!

MRS. JEWLS:
The children in the other classrooms can't hear us! Louder!!!

(They play even louder. LOUIS appears in the door, hidden behind a large box. The music peaks, then ends)

MR. KIDSWATTER'S VOICE:
Thank you.

MRS. JEWLS (notices LOUIS):
Oh. May I help you?

LOUIS:
That was the most beautiful music I ever heard.

MRS. JEWLS:
Why, thank you. Children, you may put your instruments away.

MRS. JEWLS:
My name is Mrs. Jewls. I'm the new Thirtieth Floor teacher.

LOUIS:
I'm Louis, the yard teacher.

MRS. JEWLS:
Very nice to meet you.

LOUIS:

Likewise.

MRS. JEWLS:

What's in the box?

LOUIS:

I don't know.

MRS. JEWLS:

Let's find out.

(LOUIS puts the box on MRS. JEWL's desk, rips it open, and lifts out a computer)

LOUIS:

It's a computer.

MRS. JEWLS:

Computers are wonderful learning tools.

(A sudden burst of inspiration)

Oh! Our first lesson! Sir Isaac Newton. Sir Isaac discovered, many many years ago--

MYRON:

Before you were born?

(Moment. MRS. JEWLS smiles at MYRON, then goes to the board and writes his name under "DISCIPLINE")

MRS. JEWLS:

--that all objects attract each other. Because the planet earth is such a huge object--

RONDI:

It's the biggest object in the world.

MRS. JEWLS (picking up the computer):

That's true, and that's why we are all very attracted to it.

(MRS. JEWLS throws the computer out the window)

See how the planet earth attracts the computer?

(There's a stunned beat. Then the STUDENTS, and LOUIS, rush to the window and look down. Moment. Then we hear a distant but still impressive CRASH)

STUDENTS:
YAY!!!

MRS. JEWLS:
That attraction to the earth is called “gravity”. Thank you, Louis, for bringing such an excellent teaching tool into our classroom.

LOUIS:
My pleasure. I’ll leave you all to your lessons. See you all at recess.

(LOUIS exits. The STUDENTS look at MRS. JEWLS expectantly, smiling, ready for more fun)

MRS. JEWLS:
What I think we need right now is a little math.

STUDENTS (groan)

DAMEON (raises his hand):
Um, Mrs. Jewls...?

MRS. JEWLS:
Yes, Dameon?

DAMEON (tentatively):
Math is boring...?

MRS. JEWLS:
Oh.

(Brightly)

But I’m not. Take out your math books everyone.

(They move toward their desks)

END SCENE

SCENE THREE

(During the scene transition we hear:)

MR. KIDSWATTER'S VOICE:

Good morning, boys and girls! I have a very important safety reminder. To avoid problems on the stairs just remember this simple rule: when you go up the stairs keep to the right and when you come down keep to the left. Have an educational day!

(Lights up on the classroom the STUDENTS are in their desks and MRS. JEWLS is working with DAMEON on his counting:)

DAMEON:

Six, eight, twelve, one five, two, seven, eleven, three, ten!

MRS. JEWLS:

Dameon, I'm sorry, but that's wrong.

DAMEON:

No, it isn't. You asked me to count to ten, and I did, I counted until I got to ten.

MRS. JEWLS:

But you counted wrong. Here, I'll prove it to you.

(Takes a handful of pencils off her desk and lays them out in front of DAMEON)

How many pencils do we have here?

DAMEON (counting):

Four, six, one, nine, five. Five pencils, Mrs. Jewls.

MRS. JEWLS:

Y-yes, you got the right answer but you counted the wrong way.

(Points at books on her desk)

How many books?

DAMEON:

A thousand, a million, three. Three books Mrs. Jewls!

(MRS. JEWLS pulls out a tray filled with potatoes)

MRS. JEWLS:

How many potatoes?

DAMEON:

Seven, five, three, two, one, four, six, eight!

MRS. JEWLS:

No, there are eight.

DAMEON (confused):

That's... what I said.

MRS. JEWLS:

But you counted wrong.

(MRS. JEWLS thwacks her forehead against the wall five times. She turns to face DAMEON, unsteady)

How many times did I hit my head?

DAMEON (getting a bit upset):

Four, six, one, nine, five. You hit your head five times.

MRS. JEWLS:

No! Yes! Oh!

DAMEON:

I can't do it!

(Someone knocks on the door)

Six, thirteen, seven, four knocks!

MRS. JEWLS:

Come in!

(LOUIS enters)

Hello, Louis.

LOUIS:

Hello, Mrs. Jewls. Everyone. I... I brought a new student up.

(Holds the door open and the new STUDENT walks in. He's completely covered in filthy raincoats)

Everyone, this is Sammy.

(Everyone starts wrinkling their noses: SAMMY smells)

MRS. JEWLS:

Hello, Sammy. Is it raining outside?

SAMMY (in a loud screechy nasal voice):
Whaddaya think!?

MRS. JEWLS:
Class, let's give Sammy a nice Thirtieth Floor welcome.

STUDENTS:
Hiya, Sammy!

SAMMY:
Aw, g'wan.

MRS. JEWLS:
Thank you, Louis.

(Exit LOUIS)

Sammy, we were just helping Dameon learn to count.

SAMMY:
Counting's easy!

(To DAMEON)

You must be stupid!

MRS. JEWLS:
Now, now, Sammy. What's easy for you might not be easy for Dameon, and what's easy for Dameon might not be easy for you.

SAMMY:
Nothing's easy for Dameon! Hahahahahahaha!

DAMEON:
It would be easy to beat you up.

MRS. JEWLS:
That will be enough. Dameon, I promise, we will help you learn to count. Be patient.

(SAMMY sits on one of the desks, throwing his leg up. The STUDENTS all react)

BEBE:
You smell terrible!

MRS. JEWLS:
Bebe.

BEBE:

But it's true, Mrs. Jewls, he smells awful.

SAMMY:

You're ugly.

MRS. JEWLS:

Sammy. Bebe is a very pretty girl.

SAMMY:

She's ugly.

BEBE:

Well, you're probably even uglier'n you smell, that's probably why you're hiding under that ratty old raincoat.

MRS. JEWLS:

That will be enough of that. Sammy, why don't you take off your coat? Let us see how nice you look.

SAMMY:

I don't want to, you old windbag.

MRS. JEWLS (takes a beat to her anger fade):

Now, now. I'm sure you're a very handsome boy, you're probably just shy. Let me help you with this old coat.

(Goes to SAMMY and carefully pulls his ratty outer raincoat off, revealing another dirty coat underneath. The smell intensifies: everyone stands and moves away. MRS. JEWLS drops the coat and steps away from it, and SAMMY)

LESLIE:

He smells even worse without the coat.

SAMMY:

You don't exactly smell like a rose.

(MRS. JEWLS pulls off SAMMY's second coat, revealing another underneath. The STUDENTS react to the nowoverpowering smell)

STUDENTS:

Eeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeew!!!

(MRS. JEWLS runs to the window and sticks her head out and sucks in fresh air)

SAMMY (voice getting screechy harsh):

You're all a bunch of pigs! Dirty rotten pigs!

(MRS. JEWLS writes SAMMY's name under "DISCIPLINE")

RONDI:

Send him home on the kindergarten bus!

(MRS. JEWLS takes a deep breath, goes to SAMMY and takes off his coat -- revealing another underneath -- and throws it out the window)

SAMMY:

Hey, you ugly old hag, watch where you throw my good clothes!

(The STUDENTS react to this. DAMEON puts a check near SAMMY's name. MRS. JEWLS takes off another coat which she pitches out the window. The smell is now overwhelming. The STUDENTS move as far from SAMMY as they can get)

If you throw any more of my coats through the window I'll bite your head off!!! They smell better than you do!!!

(SAMMY starts to laugh. His laugh sounds like fingernails on a blackboard. He starts running away from MRS. JEWLS. She chases him and the STUDENTS join in. SAMMY's laugh becomes diabolical)

HahahahahahahahahahaaaaaaaAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!!!

(The chase continues. SAMMY runs out into the hall where the STUDENTS catch him. Coat after coat comes flying back to the room. Suddenly BEBE screams and dashes back into the room pursued by SAMMY's legs, in big rubber boots. DAMEON is trying to hold them but one of the legs kicks BEBE in the shin)

BEBE:

Ow!

(MRS. JEWLS reaches into the rubber boots and pulls out an enormous dead rat, holding it by the tail. The rubber boots collapse, revealing wooden struts)

STUDENTS:

Eeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeew!!!

MYRON:

A dead rat!

DAMEON:

Cool!

MRS. JEWLS:

No dead rats in my classroom!

(She flings it out the window. Everyone runs to the window to watch it fall. After a moment, we hear the rat splat on the playground)

STUDENTS (turn away from the window, delighted/grossed out):

Ooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooh!

MRS. JEWLS:

That's the third one this month. All right, everyone, back to your seats. It's time for the geography test.

STUDENTS (groan)

MRS. JEWLS:

Did you think I'd forgotten? Take out your pencils.

(The STUDENTS reluctantly return to their seats. MRS. JEWLS holds up a large poster sized sheet with the following country names: "Kyrkyunsk, Teleportania, East Kuku, Upper Laurentia, Cat Man Do, and Erk")

I want you to write down the capital cities, their population rounded off to the nearest thousand and the ten chief exports of the following countries expressed as a percentage of their Gross National Products.

STUDENTS:

Mrs. Jewls! This is hard! Ohhhhhhhh! Etc.

(The STUDENTS get to work, peering at the board, licking their pencils, writing on tablets. LESLIE stands on her head to read the board, then she too gets down to business. A long moment. Then we become aware of MYRON, staring at LESLIE's pigtails. He is wrestling with conflicting desires. After a long bout of agitation, he reaches out and yanks one of the pigtails)

LESLIE:

Yeooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooow!

EVERYONE:

What!?! What is it!?! What happened!?!

LESLIE:

Myron pulled my pigtails!

MYRON:

I couldn't help it! Every day I sit behind Leslie looking at her pigtails, and they... they call to me.

(MRS. JEWLS writes MYRON's name under
"DISCIPLINE")

MRS. JEWLS:

Tell Leslie you're sorry.

MYRON:

I am, I really am. I know it's wrong, and I'll never, never do it again. I promise.

MRS. JEWLS:

Good. Class, please get back to work.

(LESLIE sits, glaring at MYRON. MYRON tries to concentrate on the test. Moment.

Then the lights fade down, focusing on MYRON and his struggle with LESLIE's pigtails. There is eerie high-pitched music, like a snake charmer's. He looks at LESLIE. Her pigtails are performing an alluring dance. [See appendix note 4] MYRON quickly looks away, but he can't, not for long. LESLIE's PIGTAILS are pulling on him. He looks at them spellbound. Then the pigtails speak:)

BOTH PIGTAILS:

Myron...

ONE OF THE PIGTAILS:

Pull me.

MYRON:

I can't.

THE OTHER PIGTAIL:

What harm could it do?

MYRON:

Lots. Leslie'll scream and I'll get in trouble.

PIGTAIL 1:

Who cares.

MYRON:

I do. If I don't learn to control these kinds of impulses I'll grow up to be a kid.

PIGTAIL 2:

You know you want to pull us.

MYRON (busies himself with the test)

PIGTAIL 2:

And besides, you didn't pull me. If you're going to pull one you have to pull the other one. Otherwise, it's not fair.

MYRON:

That's true.

(He's briefly tempted. Then he goes back to the test)

PIGTAIL 1:

Just think how it would feel to wrap your fingers around us and give us a good sharp yank. Ooh. C'mon. Leslie won't mind.

MYRON:

She will.

PIGTAIL 2:

She won't. She likes it. Why do you think Leslie has pigtails anyway? They're for pulling.

MYRON:

I never thought of it that way.

PIGTAIL 1:

C'mon, Myron. Just one good yank. C'mon....

(MYRON hesitates. Then he yanks one of LESLIE's pigtails, hard)

LESLIE (howls):

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!

(The lights quickly normalize. MYRON is standing behind LESLIE)

MRS. JEWLS:

Myron, did you pull Leslie's pigtail again?

MYRON:
No.

LESLIE:
You did!

MYRON:
I pulled the other one.

STUDENTS (laugh)

MRS. JEWLS:
Are you trying to be funny, Myron?

MYRON:
I'm trying to be fair. I can't pull one without pulling the other.

STUDENTS (laugh again)

(MRS. JEWLS puts a check next to MYRON's name)

MYRON:
It won't happen again. Now that I've pulled both of Leslie's pigtails I've gotten it out of my system.

(Confidently)

You won't have to send me home on the kindergarten bus, Mrs. Jewls.

(LESLIE looks at MYRON, outraged. MYRON sits.
MYRON smiles at her)

MRS. JEWLS:
Let's get back to work, everyone.

(Everyone works. MYRON concentrates on the test.
LESLIE looks at him. An idea comes to her. She glances at
MRS. JEWLS. Then, suddenly:)

LESLIE (screams):
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!

(MYRON jumps up)

MRS. JEWLS:
Myron, that's it. You are going home on the kindergarten bus.

(She circles his name)

MYRON:

But-- But-- But I didn't--

(Looks at LESLIE. She smiles. There's a knock on the door.
LOUIS enters. He looks very ill at ease)

LOUIS:

Excuse me Mrs. Jewls. Mr. Kidswatter asked me to give you this.

(Hands MRS. JEWLS a note)

MRS. JEWLS:

What is it?

LOUIS:

It's...

(Swallows, nervous)

...a note from Miss Zarves.

(The STUDENTS stop working and watch MRS. JEWLS intently. Atmosphere is tense, filled with foreboding)

MRS. JEWLS:

A note from...?

LOUIS:

From Miss Zarves.

MRS. JEWLS:

On the Nineteenth Floor?

LOUIS:

That's right.

(MRS. JEWLS looks at him. Everyone watches MRS. JEWLS. After a beat, she opens the note. It's blank)

BEBE:

There is no Miss Zarves.

DAMEON:

There is no Nineteenth Floor.

RONDI:

That's why there's nothing on the note.

(A look of fierce determination comes into MRS. JEWLS's face)

MRS. JEWLS:

I'm going to get to the bottom of this.

(Strides to the door)

LESLIE:

Where are you going?

MRS. JEWLS:

To the Nineteenth Floor!

(She exits. The STUDENTS and LOUIS look at each other, then they all rush out after MRS. JEWLS. The room is empty. Moment.

Then the lights dim. We appear to be in an empty classroom. Through the glass of the door we see silhouettes of MRS. JEWLS, LOUIS and the STUDENTS. And we hear:)

MRS. JEWLS'S VOICE:

This is it.

LOUIS'S VOICE:

This is the Twentieth Floor.

MRS. JEWLS'S VOICE:

The one below is the Eighteenth, so this has to be the Nineteenth Floor.

LOUIS'S VOICE:

It would be the Nineteenth Floor if there were a Nineteenth Floor, but since there is no Nineteenth Floor this is the Twentieth Floor.

MRS. JEWLS'S VOICE:

It's the Nineteenth Floor. Miss Zarves's room.

LOUIS:

There is no Miss Zarves. Please don't make me say it again.

MRS. JEWLS:

Why not?

LOUIS:

It makes me nervous to say it. Like it's... bad luck, or something.

MRS. JEWLS:

There is not Miss Zarves. There is no Miss Zarves.

LOUIS:

Please, don't.

MRS. JEWLS:

There is not Miss Zarves.

LOUIS:

Stop it!

MRS. JEWLS:

Class! Everyone!

MRS. JEWLS and the STUDENTS:

THERE IS NO MISS ZARVES!!!

(There is a Wayside School *Zzzzzzzzap!* The door flies open and MRS. JEWLS, LOUIS and the STUDENTS are sucked into the classroom by a mysterious force)

MRS. JEWLS, LOUIS and the STUDENTS (scream):

AAAAGGGGGHHHH!!!

(The door slams shut: Boom!)

BEBE:

Where are we?

A DARTH VADARESQUE VOICE:

ON THE NINETEENTH FLOOR.

(MISS ZARVES appears. She is very scary. [See appendix note 5] Her voice booms and echoes:)

MISS ZARVES:

I AM MISS ZARVES.

EVERYONE (screams again):

AAAAGGGGGHHHH!!!

MISS ZARVES:

AND I HAVE HAD IT WITH THIS TALK ABOUT MISS ZARVES AND THE NINETEENTH FLOOR. THERE IS A NINETEENTH FLOOR! I DO EXIST! THE NEXT TIME SOMEONE SHOUTS, "THERE IS NO MISS ZARVES", I WILL COME BACK AND I WILL BE VERY VERY VERY ANGRY. DO YOU UNDERSTAND ME?

EVERYONE: (whimper)

MISS ZARVES (an Oz-like bellow):

DO! YOU! UNDER! STAND! ME!?!?!?!

EVERYONE:

Yes! Yes! Yes!

MISS ZARVES:

BE GONE!!!

(MRS. JEWLS, LOUIS and the STUDENTS leap up and dash out the door. MISS ZARVES's voice fades:)

AND DO YOUR HOMEWORK, DO YOUR HOMEWORK, DO YOUR HOMEWOR...

(The lights fade.

Then they bump up to full strength. We're back on the Thirtieth Floor. MRS. JEWLS, LOUIS and the STUDENTS run back into the room, very out of breath from having sprinted up from the Nineteenth Floor. A long moment as they catch their breath. Then LOUIS looks at his watch)

LOUIS:

Gosh, look at the time. I've got to get the balls ready for recess. Bye!

(Exits)

MRS. JEWLS:

Shall we get back to our test?

STUDENTS:

Oh, yes. Great. Geography. Wonderful. Just what the doctor ordered. Etc.

(They sit at their desks, getting back to work)

END SCENE

SCENE FOUR

(During the transition we hear the Thirtieth Floor Orchestra playing with abandon and brio. Lights up on the classroom.

The STUDENTS are watching as DAMEON demonstrates a science experiment, pouring beakers of chemicals into a large final beaker. It changes color and bubbles. MYRON, however, is sitting off to the side, thinking about something. After the experiment:)

MYRON:
Do...?

(Everyone looks at him)

Nothing.

RONDI:
What is it, Myron?

MYRON (hesitates briefly, then blurts):
Do you ever think about her?

BEBE:
About who?

MYRON:
Mrs. Gorf.

STUDENTS (scream)

LESLIE:
No!

RONDI:
Of course not.

DAMEON:
How can you even ask that question?

MYRON:
I do. I think about her a lot. Because--

(Unburdening himself, blurting)

It was me who gave her to Louis. I let Louis eat her. It haunts me. I think about it all the time.

(A moment. Then the other STUDENTS admit:)

DAMEON:
I do, too.

RONDI:
So do I.

BEBE:
Me, too.

LESLIE:
Me, too.

STUDENTS (shudder)

(MRS. JEWLS enters, with a mousey little MAN. He looks a little bit like Leon Trotsky: wire rims, goatee, rumpled three piece suit)

MRS. JEWLS:
Class, I'd like you all to meet Mr. Pickle.

MR. PICKLE:
Actually, it's Pickell.

MRS. JEWLS:
Mr. Pickle is Wayside School's new councilor. Can we give him a Wayside School Thirtieth Floor welcome?

STUDENTS:
Hiya, Mr. Pickle!

MR. PICKLE:
It's Pickell, and I just want you all to know that my door is always open. Actually, my office has no door.

(Laughing)

Hohohohohohohohohohohohohoho. Ho. Seriously, if any of you ever want to discuss any personal problems or crises that you might have, any deep issues you may be rassing with. For example if you feel like you might explode. Don't hesitate to stop on by.

(The STUDENTS look at him blankly. The recess bell rings and the STUDENTS dash to the door)

MRS. JEWLS:
One moment!

(STUDENTS stop)

MRS. JEWLS, con't:
Myron.

MYRON:
What?

MRS. JEWLS:
Would you stay behind, please?

MYRON:
I didn't do anything!

MRS. JEWLS:
Mr. Pickle would like to speak with you. The rest of you can go to recess.

(The STUDENTS less MYRON run down the stairs. MRS. JEWLS goes to the door)

Well. If you should need me, I'll be in the teacher's lounge.

MR. PICKLE:
Oh, I'm sure that Myron and I are going to get along famously.

(MRS. JEWLS exits. MR. PICKLE moves a chair into the center of the room, gestures at it. MYRON very reluctantly sits. MR. PICKLE pulls one of the desks close, sits on it)

I understand you have a problem.

MYRON:
I do?

MR. PICKLE (mimes pulling LESLIE's pigtails, then screams)

MYRON:
Oh.

MR. PICKLE:
Tell me about it, Myron.

MYRON:
I know it's wrong! But they just hang there, so... soft, so... braided together, so... long and so... so... so...

MR. PICKLE:
Tempting?

MYRON:
Oh, yes.

MR. PICKLE:
I can help you, Myron.

MYRON:
You can?

MR. PICKLE:
Yes. But you must trust me.

MYRON:
Well... All right.

(MR. PICKLE reaches into his pocket and takes out a pickle pendant on a silver chain)

MR. PICKLE:
Watch the pickle, Myron.

(Moves it back and forth in front of MYRON's face. It catches the light, glittering. MYRON is entranced)

You are getting sleepy. Your eyelids are getting heavy, heavy, heavy... When I count to three you will fall into a deep, deep sleep. One... Two... Three.

(MYRON's head drops forward. He's asleep. MR. PICKLE puts the pickle away)

Myron, can you hear me?

MYRON:
Yes...

MR. PICKLE:
Good. You will do what I say.

MYRON:
Do... What... You... Say...

MR. PICKLE:
Good.

(Comes downstage, speaks to us)

I used to be a world famous psychiatrist. People came from all over the world to consult Dr. Pickell. But zealots motivated by professional jealousy stripped me of my license. Well, I'll show them! Ha!

MYRON:
Ha....

MR. PICKLE (goes to MYRON):
Myron, when you wake up you will take your seat behind Leslie. You will want to pull one of her pigtails.

(MYRON is miming this in a sedated way, smiling and reaching for the imaginary pigtails)

But when you reach for it, it will turn into a rattlesnake.

MYRON (reacting):
Pigtails... Are... Rattlesnakes...

MR. PICKLE:
Very good. Now.

(Suddenly seized with inspiration)

Ooh.

(Motions to us to be quiet)

One more thing. Whenever Leslie says the word... “pencil”, you will flap your arms and dance in a circle, squawking like a crow.

MYRON (miming this):
Caw. Caw. Caw.

MR. PICKLE:
Good. When I snap my fingers you will wake up and you will remember nothing of this.

(Snaps his fingers. MYRON wakes up)

MYRON:
What happened?

MR. PICKLE:
I don't think you'll be pulling anyone's pigtails any time soon.

MYRON:
Really? But... Well, I don't feel any different.

MR. PICKLE (smiles):
Trust me, Myron.

(Exit MR. PICKLE. The recess bell rings. We hear the STUDENTS mounting the stairs, laughing and shouting.)

They enter and take their desks. MYRON goes to LESLIE, smiling)

MYRON:

Hi, Leslie. Did you have fun at recess?

LESLIE (wary of him):

Sure.

MYRON:

I'm so happy you had a good time.

LESLIE:

Thanks.

MYRON:

Your pigtails are very pretty today.

LESLIE:

Myron.

(Enter MRS. JEWLS)

MRS. JEWLS:

Hello, everyone!

STUDENTS:

Hi, Mrs. Jewls!

MRS. JEWLS:

We're going to write poetry!

STUDENTS:

Yay!

MRS. JEWLS:

You will need paper and something to write with.

(The STUDENTS get paper and writing tools from their desks. MRS. JEWLS pulls up a chair. The STUDENTS gather around her)

I want you to pick a color and write a poem about it. For example, if brown were your favorite color you might write:

(In an emotionally charged voice)

“At the circus I saw a clown / On his face was a frown / His sad eyes were brown.”

BEBE:

Oh, Mrs. Jewls, that's beautiful.

MRS. JEWLS:

Thank you.

(To the STUDENTS)

Any questions?

RONDI:

I'm gonna do purple!

LESLIE:

Purple's my favorite color!

RONDI:

I said it first.

LESLIE:

I'll switch to yellow.

MRS. JEWLS:

Everybody, get to work, please.

(They do, concentrating. MYRON has positioned himself behind LESLIE. He starts looking at her pigtails)

DAMEON:

Mrs. Jewls, what rhymes with "red"?

MRS. JEWLS:

Think of words that end in E-D.

DAMEON:

E-D words.

MRS. JEWLS:

Words that end in E-D will rhyme with "red".

BEBE:

What rhymes with pink?

MYRON (suddenly screams and leaps to his feet):

Rattlesnakes! Rattlesnakes! Rattlesnakes!!!

(Everyone looks at MYRON, horrified. He's breathing hard, shocked)

MRS. JEWLS (after a moment):

No, Myron, I don't think "rattlesnakes" rhymes with "pink". Everyone, let's get back to work.

(MYRON sits, sitting as far as he can from LESLIE's pigtales, eyes wide. Another moment)

RONDI:

I can't think of a single word that rhymes with purple!

MRS. JEWLS:

Hmmmmmmmm. That is a challenge.

DAMEON:

Start with A and work through the alphabet: aurple, burple, curple, durple, eurple—

BEBE:

Furple, gurple, hurple...

LESLIE:

Iurple, jurple, kurple, lurple, murple, nurple...

RONDI:

There isn't one word!

MRS. JEWLS:

I'm sure you'll think of something.

MYRON:

What rhymes with blue?

(We hear a mooing cow. Everyone nods their heads.
LESLIE breaks her pencil.)

BEBE:

I can't think of anything that rhymes with "pink".

MRS. JEWLS:

I'm sure you'll think of something.

BEBE:

I can't think. My mind's on the blink. I'm no good at poetry. I stink.

MRS. JEWLS:

Keep trying.

BEBE:

And now my pen's out of ink.

DAMEON:

It's on the blink.

LESLIE:

Would you like to use my pencil?

(MYRON leaps to his feet, dances in a circle flapping his arms)

MYRON:

Caw!!! Caw!!! Caw!!! Caw!!! Caw!!!

(He sits, starts working on his poem. Everyone stares. MYRON looks up, notices this)

What.

MRS. JEWLS:

All right, class, let's read our poems. Who wants to start?

DAMEON (stands, reads):

The fire truck is red
It hurried!
The siren wailed!
The house burned!
The fireman saved
The baby who screamed!

STUDENT (applaud)

(DAMEON sits, smiling)

MRS. JEWLS:

That's very good, Dameon. All those words do end in E-D. BeBe?

BEBE:

My favorite color is pink.
That's all I can think
Of.

STUDENTS (applaud)

(BEBE sits. LESLIE stands)

LESLIE:

I don't feel too well, oh
I don't know who to tell, oh
I'm sick and I smell, oh
My barf is yellow.

STUDENTS (applaud enthusiastically)

LESLIE (as she sits):

Thank you, thank you.

MRS. JEWLS:

Rondi?

(RONDI stands, hesitates. The STUDENTS look at each other: has she solved the purple quandary?)

RONDI (reads, tentatively):

The baby won't stop crying
His face is turning purple
Will anything make him feel better?

(Slyly)

I bet a burp'll

(A stunned moment. Then everyone applauds: brilliant!

Suddenly, the door booms open. LOUIS appears, face pale, as if he's just seen a ghost)

MRS. JEWLS:

What's wrong, Louis? You look like you've just seen a ghost.

LOUIS:

I think I have.

(Swallows)

I think I've just seen Mrs. Gorf.

STUDENTS:

AA!!!!

MRS. JEWLS (after a brief pause):

Who's Mrs. Gorf?

STUDENTS (take a deep breath, preparing to scream again)

(Quick BLACKOUT, and thundering organ music)

END SCENE

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE

(We hear the dramatic organ music, then the lights come up on the classroom. MRS. JEWLS is sitting at her desk, correcting papers. The classroom is empty. A moment. Then we hear distant and ominous thunder. Another moment.

Then the door creaks open. MRS. JEWLS looks at it, expecting someone to come in. No one appears. MRS. JEWLS stands, goes to the door, closes it, then goes back to her desk. She sits, works. Another moment.

Then suddenly, the door booms open with a bang)

MRS. JEWLS (a bit frightened):
Is someone there? Hello...?

(No response. MRS. JEWLS stands, goes to the door again, closes it. She starts back toward her desk but before she can get there the door bangs open again. MRS. JEWLS whirls. And now we hear the unmistakable sound of:)

MRS. GORF (laughing evilly):
Heeheeheeheeheeheeheehee...

(And something happens to MRS. JEWLS: her body twists and writhes as though something is entering her. And then she joins in:)

MRS. JEWLS:
Heeheeheeheeheeheeheehee...

(We hear more disturbing organ music)

END SCENE

SCENE TWO

(In the transition we hear more thunder. Lights come up. The stage is empty. RONDI enters, agitated and panicky, followed by the other STUDENTS. They go to her)

DAMEON:

Tell us, Rondi. Don't leave anything out.

RONDI:

I asked Miss Mush for mashed potatoes.

LESLIE:

No.

RONDI:

I was hungry!

MYRON:

We understand.

LESLIE:

Tell us.

RODNI:

Well... She put 'em on my plate and they made a, a... wet sound, so I didn't wanna look at 'em—

DAMEON:

Of course not.

RONDI:

So I just walked back to my table, and I sat down, and I picked up my spoon, and I... I looked at the mashed potatoes. And I saw her.

MYRON (after a beat):

Miss Mush?

RONDI:

Mrs. Gorf.

STUDENTS (scream):

Aaaagggghhhh!!!

RONDI:

Her nose was sticking up, and her big ears, and those crunchy things that Miss Mush always puts in they were Mrs. Gorf's—

STUDENTS (scream):
Aaaagggghhhh!!!

RONDI:
--beady little eyes.

DAMEON:
What'd you do?

RONDI:
I ate her as fast as I could!

STUDENTS (recoil in horror)

RONDI:
Before she could do anything.

LESLIE:
Last night, I had a dream about—

STUDENTS (get ready to scream)

LESLIE (quickly):
--her.

STUDENTS (relax)

LESLIE:
It was awful. I was walking up the stairs at Wayside School and in every door of every classroom she was there, looking at me, wiggling her ears, laughing, and holding an apple. It was... It was...

(Breaks down. MYRON makes a steely effort not to look at her pigtailed and pats her back comfortingly)

DAMEON:
I saw her in a cloud. Floating in the sky. She looked right at me.

BEBE:
My Mom made apple pie and I ran screaming from the house.

STUDENTS (shudder)

DAMEON:
I feel haunted.

RONDI:
She's coming back. I know she is.

BEBE:

What's going to happen to us!?

MYRON:

What are we going to do!?

(The door bursts open and MISS VALOOOSH, a colorfully dressed dancer, leaps balletically into the classroom)

MISS VALOOOSH (in a thick accent):

Do?!!

STUDENTS:

AAAAAGGGGGHHHHH!!!!

MISS VALOOOSH:

Ve are going to TANGO!!!

(Waits for an enthusiastic response, but the STUDENTS simply stare at her, in horror)

What is vrong mit you bambinis?

(LOUIS appears in the door, carrying a boombox tape player)

LOUIS:

Hello, everyone! It's Arts Enrichment day at Wayside School, and Miss Waloosh, the world famous dancer, is here.

MISS VALOOOSH:

Velcome! My name ees Meez Valooosh. Eet ees so vunderfull to be heer at Vayside Schoooool. I hope ve are going to be friends, ya? No? Vell. Who shall be first? Eh?

(To MYRON)

What ees your name, eh?

MYRON:

Myron.

MISS VALOOOSH:

Myrando! You are ze keeng! You vill rool ze Ballroom of Life!

MYRON:

I don't know how to dance.

MISS VALOOOSH:

Dance? Dance?

(Spits on the floor)

MISS VALOOOSH, con't:

Ve are not going to dance. Ve are going to tangoooooooooooooooooooo!

(LOUIS hits the play button and we have music, a raucous and very loud tango. MISS VALOOOSH grabs MYRON and spins him around the room. The STUDENTS watch, horrified at first, but then they begin to enjoy it. When MYRON is finished, RONDI jumps forward:)

RONDI:

Do me!

(MISS VALOOOSH tangoes with RONDI. One by one the other STUDENTS join in and the dance becomes choreographed and complex. The STUDENTS are very good tangoers and the dance is dramatic and effective, with lots of "Hey!"s. The dance ends:)

EVERYONE:

HEY!!!

(Everyone applauds. MISS VALOOOSH approaches LOUIS)

MISS VALOOOSH:

Luis?

LOUIS:

No, no, no.

MISS VALOOOSH:

Si, si, si.

LOUIS:

No!

MISS VALOOOSH:

Si!

LOUIS (emphatically):

I don't dance!

(MISS VALOOOSH grabs him and they tango. The STUDENTS watch, delighted. The dance builds, ends)

EVERYONE:

HEY!

MISS VALOOOSH:
Fahntahsteek!

(The music keeps playing as everyone applauds. MRS. JELWS appears in the door. She is holding a rusty bucket. And whatever spirit possessed in Scene One her is still in control: she's scowling and her eyes flash evilly. She picks up the cord to the boombox and unplugs it. The music stops. The STUDENTS look at her, immediately sensing that something is wrong)

RONDI:
Mrs. Jewls, are you all right?

LOUIS:
Mrs. Jewls, I'd like you to meet Miss Waloosh.

MRS. JEWLS:
Charmed. However, we have important things to do here, so if you don't mind...

MISS VALOOOSH:
Vell. I don't need to breeck vall to fall on me.

(To the STUDENTS)

Good-bye, bambinis.

STUDENTS:
Good-bye, Miss Waloosh. Bye. Etc.

RONDI:
It was fun dancing with you.

MISS VALOOOSH:
Dance!? Ve didn't dance! Ve—

MISS VALOOOSH and the STUDENTS (spit on the floor):
Tangoooooooooooooooooed!

(MISS VALOOOSH exits. LOUIS picks up the boombox and follows her out. The STUDENTS wave. MRS. JEWLS looks at them sternly. They notice her mood and quiet down)

MRS. JEWLS (in an altered voice):
Take your seats, please.

(STUDENTS start moving toward their seats. MRS. JEWLS picks up a ruler and bangs it down)

MRS. JEWLS, con't:

Don't you know what happens to children who waste time!?

(STUDENTS rush to their seats. They look at each other, very worried)

We are going to learn three things: seven plus four, the capitol of England, and how to make pickles. Seven plus four is eleven, the capitol of England is London and you make pickles by sticking cucumbers in brine.

(Reaches into the bucket and holds up a pickle)

All right. Myron.

MYRON (jumps, tense)

MRS. JEWLS:

How much is seven plus four?

MYRON (quivering in terror):

London?

MRS. JEWLS:

Incorrect. Who can tell me how pickles are made? BeBe!

BEBE (also terrified):

E... leven?

MRS. JEWLS:

Wrong! Dameon!

DAMEON (similarly terrified):

In London?

MRS. JEWLS:

Yes, they do make pickles in London. Very good.

(Suddenly turns to RONDI)

Rondi.

RONDI (jumps)

MRS. JEWLS:

What is the capitol of England?

RONDI:

Um... E?

MRS. JEWLS:

That does it! You're all staying inside for recess!

(Then, as in Scene One, MRS. JEWLS twists and writhes but now the evil spirit is leaving her body. MRS. JEWLS she looks at the cowering STUDENTS)

Oh, my. What came over me?

(Sees the bucket of brine)

Oh! I am so sorry.

(Puts it down on the desk, then goes to the board and writes her own name under "DISCIPLINE")

LESLIE:

Mrs. Jewls, are you alright?

MRS. JEWLS:

Of course.

(The STUDENTS are relieved, looking at each other, smiling, breathing more easily)

All right, everyone, please take out a piece of paper and a pickle.

STUDENTS (laugh)

MRS. JEWLS:

I mean pencil. It came out pickle.

RONDI:

Hey, I thought pickles came from cucumbers.

DAMEON (laughing):

I thought they came from London!

(STUDENTS are laughing, a tension release. But suddenly MRS. JEWLS grabs a yardstick off her desk, and slams it down. Everyone jumps. MRS. JEWLS goes to LESLIE. LESLIE cowers. In a very Gorf-like voice:)

MRS. JEWLS:

You think you're really cute, don't you, Leslie. You and your pigtails. I'm going to ask you three questions and if you don't answer them correctly I'll dump pickle brine on your head. How much is seven plus four!?

LESLIE:
E-eleven.

MRS. JEWLS (angry - she got it right):
Ooh. What is the capitol of England?!

LESLIE:
London.

MRS. JEWLS:
Ooh.

(Smiles)

What is the name of my cousin who lives in Vermont?!

LESLIE (hesitates for a brief beat, then answers forcefully):
Fred Jewls!

MRS. JEWLS:
Wrong!

(Starts to dump the brine on LESLIE. LESLIE jumps up, runs. A chase. The STUDENTS grab MRS. JEWLS. MYRON takes the bucket away)

MYRON (horrified):
Mrs. Jewls!

(Moment. MRS. JEWLS has been shocked into normality. She looks at the STUDENTS, horrified. She goes to the board, puts a check by her name, then circles it. Then she runs out of the room)

STUDENTS:
Mrs. Jewls!!!

END SCENE

SCENE THREE

(During the transition we hear more thunder, deep and ominous. Lights up on the classroom. The STUDENTS are sitting at their desks, very quiet, hands folded. Atmosphere is very gloomy. A moment)

DAMEON:

Maybe...

STUDENTS (look at DAMEON)

(DAMEON stands up. Passionately:)

DAMEON:

Maybe we could teach ourselves.

LESLIE:

Teach ourselves?

DAMEON:

Sure. You're good at Reading. Well, you have to do it upside down but other than that you're a really good reader, and Rondi's good at Geography, and BeBe's good at Art and Myron's good at Everything, so we could take turns teaching ourselves.

BEBE:

What're you gonna teach, Dameon, counting?

DAMEON:

We can do it! I know we can. We're strong. Tough. We're the Wayside School Thirtieth Floor.

RONDI (after a moment):

I miss her.

(More thunder. Then the P.A. system CLICK's and then we hear:)

MR. KIDSWATTER'S VOICE:

It has come to my attention the Mrs. Jewls has disappeared!

STUDENTS (jerk to attention)

MR. KIDSWATTER'S VOICE:

This in not the sort of thing we permit here at Wayside School. Disappearing teachers. I am sure I speak for everyone when I say to the students of the Thirtieth Floor: we are heartily heartily sorry. A new teacher is on the way up now.

(CLICK. Silence. The STUDENTS look at each other. More thunder.)

Then a MAN opens the door and peeks in. His voice is high-pitched and squeaky)

MAN:

Is this the Thirtieth Floor? I only counted twenty-nine. But this is the last classroom before the roof and I'm told there are thirty stories. I must have miscounted.

(Enters. He's wearing a loud and dorky 19th century-ish suit. Knickers. He carries a briefcase and a small cookie tin. He's suffering from intense stage fright and makes his voice too loud and it every now and again it cracks. The following sounds rehearsed:)

Well! Here you all are! And here I am! This is my first teaching job and I'm not ashamed to admit that I'm pretty—

(Suddenly stops. Swallows. Then he reaches into his pocket, takes out his notes, glances at them)

--nervous. Whew.

(Takes a deep breath, and continues his spiel:)

But I bet that you are nervous, too. After all, we are going to spend a lot of time together and no doubt you are wondering what I am like. But don't worry. I took two semesters of How To Make The Students Like You. Hahahahahaha!

(He's getting more confident, smiling)

What's your favorite subjects? Mine is arithmetic.

(To LESLIE)

What's your name?

LESLIE:

Leslie.

MAN:

What a nice name. Tell me, Leslie. If I have fourteen pencils and I give seven to this handsome fellow here, how many do I have left?

LESLIE:

Seven.

MAN:
Seven what?

LESLIE:
Pencils.

(MYRON leaps to his feet, flapping his arms, shouting:)

MYRON:
Caw! Caw! Caw! Caw!

(The MAN lets go a yelp and drops to the floor, cowering, trembling and weeping. A moment. The STUDENTS look at each other)

LESLIE:
What's wrong?

RONDI:
Are you all right?

MAN:
Ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh...

DAMEON:
Try looking at your notes.

MAN:
Ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh...

BEBE:
Would you like a glass of water?

LESLIE:
Should we call Mr. Pickle?

MYRON:
What's in the tin?

MAN:
The tin...?

MYRON:
The one you're holding in your hands.

MAN:
Cookies! That's it! Pass out the cookies!

(Stands. To MYRON)

MAN, con't:

Thank you. Oh my. Whew. That was close.

(Back to his memorized speech)

To break the ice, I have brought some cookies for us to share.

(Opens the tin and starts passing out cookies. We hear:
ominous thunder)

I made two dozen cookies. There are twelve cookies to a dozen. How many cookies are in the tin? Anyone?

RONDI:

Two dozen?

MAN:

Hahahahahahahahaha!

(RONDI's looking at the MAN suspiciously. He notices
this)

What's your name?

RONDI:

Rondi.

MAN:

Eat your cookie Rondi. Now I'd like you all to tell me something about yourselves.
Rondi, would you like to start?

RONDI:

Why do you look famil--?

(The MAN cocks his head and RONDI stops speaking, as
though her voice were suddenly turned off)

MAN (to BEBE):

Next.

BEBE:

I'm BeBe and I'm the fastest draw in--

(The MAN cocks his head and BEBE suddenly stops
speaking)

MAN:

Wonderful. Next.

DAMEON:

My name is Dame—

(The MAN cocks his head and DAMEON stops)

MYRON:

Hey, what's going--?

(Same thing happens to MYRON)

LESLIE (tries to speak; can't)

MAN:

What's the matter? Cat got your tongues?

(Laughs. The laughter builds demonically. The STUDENTS try to talk but they're speechless)

My name is Mr. Gorf.

(The STUDENTS eyes widen. We hear: more thunder)

My Mommy was Mrs. Gorf.

STUDENTS (try to scream; can't)

MR. GORF:

She was the best Mommy a boy ever had. Someone turned her into an apple and ate her!
I'm going to find who it was and make him -- or her -- very very sorry.

(Smiles)

Any questions?

LESLIE (raises her hand)

MR. GORF:

Yes?

(Cocks his head at LESLIE; she can talk)

LESLIE:

You stole our voices.

MR. GORF:

Tasty cookies, weren't they?

(MYRON raises his hand. MR. GORF cocks his head at MYRON)

MYRON:

What are you going to do to us?

MR. GORF:

I haven't decided yet. But I am going to do something. You are in my power. I've been dreaming of this moment.

(DAMEON raises his hand. MR. GORF cocks his head)

DAMEON:

It was you, wasn't it, you made Mrs. Jewls mean.

MR. GORF:

I had to get rid of her.

(BEBE raises her hand. MR. GORF cocks his head)

BEBE:

What happened to her?

MR. GORF:

I don't know. Maybe somebody ate her.

(Laughs. RONDI raises her hand. MR. GORF cocks his head at her)

Yes?

RONDI:

Mr. Kidswatter!

(MR. GORF whirls. RONDI jumps up and makes a break for the door. MR. GORF turns and sees her reaching for the doorknob. He cocks his head, freezing her in place)

MR. GORF (laughing):

Do you think escape!?! You'll never escape me!

(There's a knock at the door. MR. GORF moves RONDI back to her desk with a series of head-cocks. She moves with jerky puppet-like motion. Then he goes to the door. Back to his sweet/shy voice:)

Who is it?

MISS MUSH'S VOICE:

It's Miss Mush. I just came up from the cafeteria to say hello and to welcome you to Wayside School.

(RONDI holds up a paper and pencil. The other STUDENTS see it and get the idea: they take out pencils and paper and during the following scene scribble madly. MR. GORF is too busy at the door to notice)

MR. GORF:

How nice of you, Miss Mush. We're rather busy right now but perhaps we can get together for tea and crumpets some day.

MISS MUSH'S VOICE (giggles):

Ooh, that sounds lovely. Are you married, Mr. Gorf?

MR. GORF:

No, I'm single, Miss Mush.

MISS MUSH'S VOICE:

So am I, Mr. Gorf.

(MISS MUSH's arm is thrust into the room, holding a large colorful slice of cake)

I brought you a slice of my famous rutabaga cake with crunchy noodle topping.

MR. GORF:

Could you leave it outside the door?

MISS MUSH'S VOICE:

Outside the door?

(The STUDENTS fold their note into a large paper airplane)

MR. GORF:

If you don't mind.

MISS MUSH'S VOICE (hurt):

Well, all right. Good-bye, Mr. Gorf.

MR. GORF:

Good-bye, Miss Mush.

(RONDI starts to throw the paper airplane. MR. GORF turns, sees this and immediately cocks his head, freezing RONDI, and everyone else, in mid-toss)

Hohohohohoho.

(Goes to RONDI snatches the airplane, unfolds it, reads:)

MR. GORF, con't:

“Help! Help! Help!” Oh, that’s clever. “We’re being held captive by Mrs. Gorf’s crazy son.” I kind of like that. Don’t you realize there is nothing you can do escape me? Nothing!

(He moves everyone back, herky-jerky, back to their seats. Everyone but BEBE, that is. She’s been hiding behind the desk. She picks up the paper airplane, refolds it and tosses it out the window. MR. GORF turns, sees her)

Aha!

(He forces her back to her seat. Faces the STUDENTS)

All right. Let’s get serious. Who ate Mommy? Who’s going to tell me? Anyone?

STUDENTS (say nothing)

MR. GORF:

No one? Well, let’s have a little fun while you make up your mind to tell me.

(More thunder, as MR. GORF takes a cell phone out of his bag, goes to BEBE, dialing a number. He hands the phone to BEBE. We can tell by BEBE’s tone that the following is against her will:)

BEBE:

Hello, Police Department. This is BeBe from the Thirtieth Floor of Wayside School. I’m calling to let you know that I just saw the principal, Mr. Kidswatter, steal the children’s lunch money! Yes! He just put it in his pocket.

(MR. GORF laughs, hangs up the phone)

Oh!

(MR. GORF dials again, this time handing the phone to MYRON)

MYRON:

Hello, this is Myron from the Thirtieth Floor of Wayside School and I can see from up here that McDermott’s Department store is on fire! Yes! It’s engulfed in flames!

MR. GORF:

Isn’t this fun?

(Redials, giving the phone to RONDI)

RONDI:

Hello, Mommy? It's me, Rondi. I just called to say that you are the worst Mommy in the world! I hate you!

(MR. GORF hangs up. RONDI is crying -- everyone is, including MR. GORF)

MR. GORF:

She was the best Mommy any boy ever had. She used to take me to the junkyard to watch the old cars get scrunched up. Sometimes she'd take me to the Spam factory. We'd stand on the sidewalk outside restaurants to watch people eat and she'd say, "Oh, doesn't that look scrumptious," or, "How yummy!". And the wonderful stories she would tell. Here's one:

(Reciting)

Once there was a skunk named Stinky and Stinky went for a walk with his mother. They passed Charley the Chipmunk and Charley said, "Hi, Stinky!" And Stinky said, "Hi, Charley!" And Stinky's Mommy said, "C'mon, Stinky!" So Stinky ran to catch up and they crossed a road and then Stinky heard a big thundering noise. He stopped. It was a car. Stinky had never seen a car before. "Stinky!" his Mommy called out and she rushed to him and pushed him out of the way. But the car ran her over. "Mommy. Mommy," Stinky cried out. But she was dead. The end.

(Moment. Everyone is appalled by this story. DAMEON's hand goes up. MR. GORF cocks his head)

DAMEON:

That's a terrible story.

MR. GORF:

Who turned Mommy into an apple?! Who was it?!?

BEBE (raises her hand)

MR. GORF:

Yes.

BEBE:

She turned herself into an apple. All I did was hold up the mirror.

MR. GORF:

You!

BEBE:

Yes!

MR. GORF:

Who ate her!? Tell me!

MYRON:

It was me.

DAMEON:

No, I ate her!

LESLIE:

No, I ate her!

RONDI:

No, I ate her!

LOUIS'S VOICE:

NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!

(LOUIS appears in the window, having just scaled the exterior of Wayside School. MR. GORF whirls)

It was me!

MYRON:

Louis, no!

LOUIS:

It's all right, kids. I remember that day, the last day Mrs. Gorf was here.

(Jumps into the room, goes to MR. GORF)

I remember everything: I ate Mrs. Gorf. I shined her up on my shirt and ate her. And you know what else? She was sour.

MR. GORF:

Ha!

(There's a kaboom of thunder. It's close. MR. GORF "grabs" LOUIS, controlling him like a puppet)

Louis is very bad. What should we do with Louis? Shall we make him dance?

(There's music and MR. GORF makes LOUIS do a bizarre dance, sort of like Punch and Judy at the disco. MR. GORF cackles with delight and dances along with him. LOUIS is horrified and so are the STUDENTS. [See appendix note 6] Finally:)

All right!

(He holds LOUIS suspended in mid-step. A dangerous moment. We hear scary thunder and the ominous mooing of

a cow. Meanwhile, as this is happening, BEBE is drawing furiously. MR. GORF doesn't notice. In an emotionally charged voice:)

MR. GORF, con't:

This is the moment I've been dreaming of. This is the man who ate Mommy. Ohhhhhhhh. Do you know what I'm going to do? Any ideas? Hm?

(The STUDENTS stare in frozen horror)

I'm going to... wiggle my ears. And now I'm going to stick out my tongue, and now I'm going to—

(There's a Wayside School Kazzzzzzzap! When the explosion of light and sound is over LOUIS is gone. MR. GORF reaches down to the floor and picks up a large shiny apple. MR. GORF picks it up. The STUDENTS are appalled)

Who wants to eat Louis? Leslie? Dameon? BeBe? Anyone? Ha!

(Holds the apple up to catch the light. Behind him BEBE draws furiously)

Has there ever been such a beautiful apple? Oh, Mommy, if you could see me, I know you'd be so proud of your Clarence.

(BEBE holds up the picture and shows it to the STUDENTS: it's a large drawing of MISS ZARVES. Everyone sees it and reacts: Brilliant!)

I should enter this apple at the State Fair. I'd win every blue ribbon, and if I didn't win I'd turn the judges into apples!

(The STUDENTS raise their hands, waving them frantically) I'll

turn the whole world into applesauce! Ha! Ha! Ha!

(Finally notices the STUDENTS)

What.

(Waves his hand allowing them to speak)

RONDI:

You won't get away with this.

MR. GORF:

Oh? And why not?

BEBE:

Miss Zarves won't let you.

MR. GORF:

Miss Zarves?

DAMEON:

She is going to be very angry with you.

MR. GORF (laughs):

You mean the Nineteenth Floor teacher? Mommy told me all about her. She doesn't exist.

MYRON:

Oh yes, she does.

MR. GORF:

You're trying to pull a fast one! There's no such person!

LESLIE:

What?

MR. GORF:

There is no Miss Zarves!

MYRON:

I can't hear you!

MR. GORF:

There is no Miss Zarves!

STUDENTS:

What?

MR. GORF (shouts, angry now):

There is no Miss Zarves!!!

(Kaboom! Kapow! KAZZZZZZAP! An explosion of thunder and light)

AAAAAAAAGGGGGGGGHHHHHHHHH!!!

(MR. GORF hides down behind the desk. MISS ZARVES appears, her seething light bathing the classroom. [See appendix note 7])

MISS ZARVES (voice booming):

WHO SAID IT? WHO SAID I DON'T EXIST? WHO WAS IT!?!?!

(STUDENTS all point to MR. GORF. He backs away)

MR. GORF:

I didn't! I was just kidding.

MISS ZARVES:

I OUGHT TO MELT YOU INTO PURPLE SAUCE!

MR. GORF:

NOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!

MISS ZARVES:

HEY. WAIT A MINUTE. I KNOW YOU. YOU'RE MRS. GORF'S BOY.

MR. GORF:

Yes. Yes, I am.

MISS ZARVES:

YOUR MOTHER IS ON THE NINETEENTH FLOOR.

MR. GORF:

She is? Mommy? What, what's she doing there?

MISS ZARVES:

SHE AND MRS. JEWLS ARE MEMORIZING THE OXFORD ENGLISH
DICTIONARY. UNABRIDGED. AND THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT YOU'RE GOING
TO DO, YOUNG MAN, THAT'S YOUR PUNISHMENT FOR SAYING I DON'T
EXIST. GO TO THE NINETEENTH FLOOR!!!

(MR. GORF tosses the LOUIS apple to the STUDENTS then
rushes out of the room)

MR. GORF:

MOMMYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYY!!!

MISS ZARVES:

HE'S GOT A LOT OF MEMORIZING TO DO.

(Her light begins to recede)

DO YOUR HOMEWORK. DO YOUR--

RONDI:

Wait! Don't go!

MISS ZARVES:

YES...?

RONDI:

You said Mrs. Jewls is on the Nineteenth Floor?

MISS ZARVES:
YES...?

DAMEON:
Could we have her back? Please?

LESLIE:
We miss her.

MYRON:
And Louis, too!

BEBE:
Mr. Gorf turned him into an apple.

MISS ZARVES:
HE DID? THAT'S TERRIBLE. WELL, OF COURSE YOU CAN HAVE LOUIS BACK.

(Booming)

LOUIS!!!

(There's a Wayside School KaZzzzzzzzap! LOUIS stands up)

LOUIS:
Oh my. I'll never eat another apple as long as I live.

BEBE:
And Mrs. Jewls...?

RONDI:
Please...?

MISS ZARVES:
WELL, I DON'T KNOW. SHE DID THREATEN TO DUMP A BUCKET OF PICKLE BRINE ON A STUDENT'S HEAD. WE DON'T ALLOW THAT SORT OF THING AT WAYSIDE SCHOOL.

LESLIE:
That was me! I don't care!

MYRON:
And besides, Mr. Gorf made her do it.

RONDI:
Please send her back.

MISS ZARVES:

SHE HASN'T FINISHED MEMORIZING THE OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY.
SHE'S ONLY ON "B".

BEBE:

We need her.

MYRON:

We love her.

RONDI:

Please...?

MISS ZARVES:

WELL...

STUDENTS:

Please, oh please, oh please, oh please...

MISS ZARVES:

I'LL TELL YOU WHAT. YOU CAN HAVE MRS. JEWLS BACK--

STUDENTS:

Yay!

MISS ZARVES:

IF--

STUDENTS:

Uncle Henry -oh.

MISS ZARVES:

--YOU CAN DO ONE SIMPLE TEST.

STUDENTS:

Anything! Tell us! We'll do it! Etc.

MISS ZARVES:

COUNT TO FIVE.

(Overlapping:)

LESLIE:

One, two, three, four, five!

MYRON:

One, two, three, four, five!

BEBE:

One, two, three, four, five!

RONDI:

One, two, three, four, five!

(DAMEON ducks down behind the STUDENTS, hoping MISS ZARVES won't notice him. No luck:)

MISS ZARVES:

DAMEON?

(DAMEON swallows, very nervous)

LESLIE (softly):

C'mon, Dameon...

RONDI:

Dameon, it's up to you.

DAMEON:

Ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh...

MYRON:

You can do it.

BEBE:

Come on we're the Wayside School Thirtieth Floor!

(A long tense moment. Then DAMEON takes a deep breath and says:)

DAMEON:

One.

STUDENTS:

Yay!

(But DAMEON's not sure what comes next)

LESLIE:

Come on...

RONDI:

Please...

DAMEON (closes his eyes, not sure it's right):

Two.

STUDENTS:

Yes!

DAMEON:

Um. Well. Gosh. Um. Fo--

STUDENTS:

Aaaagggghhhh!!!

DAMEON:

No. No, that's not it. Um... Th-th-th-th-three.

STUDENTS:

Yes!

DAMEON:

And... F-f-f-f-f-f-...

STUDENTS (terrified he's going to say "five"):

Ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhh...

DAMEON:

F-f-f-f-f-f... Four.

STUDENTS (gasp)

DAMEON:

And five. Easy.

MISS ZARVES:

MRS. JEWLS! MRS. JEWLS! YOU WILL RETURN!

(A Wayside School KaZzzzzzzzap! When the light and sound fades, MRS. JEWLS is back, head bend, reciting:)

MRS. JEWLS:

Bumblshoot. Noun. A popular ride at in insect amusement park. Bumboat--

STUDENTS:

MRS. JEWLS!!!

MRS. JEWLS:

Oh!

(The STUDENTS crowd around her, hugging her)

Oh, my. How long have I been gone?

BEBE:
Days!

LESLIE:
Weeks!

DAMEON:
Forever!

MRS. JEWLS:
I'm very happy to be back. Miss Zarves is a very strict teacher.

DAMEON:
Mrs. Jewls, I can count! Leslie has one, two pigtails! The blackboard has one, two, three, four, five, six erasers!

MRS. JEWLS:
I knew you would.

(There's a sharp karack of lightning and the wail of strong wind. And now the school's siren goes off. LOUIS goes to the windows and looks out)

LOUIS:
A tornado!!!

MRS. JEWLS:
Oh, dear!

LOUIS:
Hold on, everybody!

(The tornado hits. Wayside School starts to sway. The STUDENTS slide from side of the room to the other. [See appendix note 8])

RONDI (sings exuberantly):
WAYSIDE SCHOOL IS FALLING DOWN FALLING DOWN, FALLING DOWN

EVERYONE (joins in):
KIDS GO SPLAT AS THEY HIT THE GROUND MY FAIR LADY

(Finally, the storm passes. The lights come back on. Everyone is laughing delightedly)

STUDENTS:
We made it! Whoo! Yeah! Etc.

LOUIS:
Everyone, quiet!

DAMEON:
Let's do it again!

LOUIS (shouts):
QUIET!!!

EVERYONE (listens)

MYRON (outside the window):
Help! Help!

(Everyone rushes to the window)

DAMEON:
Myron!

BEBE:
He's hanging from the ledge!

LESLIE:
Grab him!

(LOUIS reaches out the window stretching)

LOUIS:
I can't reach him!

MYRON (off):
HELP!!! My fingers are slipping!

MRS. JEWLS:
Leslie.

(LESLIE looks at MRS. JEWLS. Taut beat, then she understands. LESLIE determinedly goes to the window, kneels and lets her pigtails hang down)

MYRON (screams)
RATTLESNAKES!!!

MRS. JEWLS:
Myron! They aren't rattlesnakes! Do you understand me? They're not rattlesnakes!

MYRON (outside):
Ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhh...

MRS. JEWLS:
Myron...

(A very tense moment. Then LESLIE's pigtails tighten as MYRON grabs them. She almost falls)

EVERYONE:
NO!!!

(LESLIE recovers)

MRS. JEWLS:
Okay, Leslie, pull! Pull!

(LESLIE slowly pulls MYRON back into the room)

LESLIE:
AaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!

(MYRON falls into the room, panting and gasping)

EVERYONE:
Yay!

(Suddenly, we hear a MOOING COW, just outside the door)

EVERYONE:
It's the cow!

(MRS. JEWLS goes to the door, opens it. A very large COW peeks inside)

MRS. JEWLS:
Hello there.

(To the class)

You know, I think we should name her Mrs. Kidswatter.

(MRS. KIDSWATTER is trembling, blinking. MRS. JEWLS touches her)

The poor dear, she's trembling. The tornado must have upset her. Class, let's play for her, I'm sure that will calm her down. Leslie, have you been working on your snorple solo?

LESLIE:
Yes!

MRS. JEWLS:

Wonderful. Louis, I have a barfenspiel for you.

(Gets a barfenspiel from her desk and gives it to LOUIS.
LOUIS is stunned:)

LOUIS:

Thank you.

(The STUDENTS and LOUIS hold their instruments)

MRS. JEWLS:

A-one, and a-two, and a-three, and a--

(They play. MRS. JEWLS conducts enthusiastically,
dancing. The music builds and as it crescendos, the lights
fade out)

END OF THE PLAY

Appendix

The premiere production of *SIDEWAYS STORIES FROM WAYSIDE SCHOOL* was at Seattle Childrens Theatre. Directed by Jeff Steitzer, the play opened March 23, 2001 in SCT's expansive Charlotte Martin Theatre. The set, designed by Edie Whitsett, was filled with crazy angles and had a dramatic rake. A door upstage left led to the steps. There were two windows upstage right. Downstage right was the "science lab" and downstage left was the "art area". The set was brightly colored with many overlapping color patterns. The costumes, by Melanie Taylor Burgess were similarly outlandish. Sound and music design was by Eric Chappelle; lighting was by M.L. Geiger; choreography by Steve Tomkins; dramaturgy by Deborah Frockt; the production was stage managed by Lisa Schaible.

Notes from the text:

1. At SCT, a bright flashing light, like a strobe but not nearly so violent, was hung above the stage. During the "Wayside School KaZzzzzzzzaps", this light flashed several times as the stage went to blackout. There were also loud booming noises, explosions, etc. The flashing light had the effect of pulling the audience's eyes away from the stage, allowing the transformations to be made. Smoke was never used in these transformations, nor at any other point during the play. In Seattle (and no doubt in many other cities) fire codes at childrens theaters are super-strict and smoke effects are impossible.
2. Mr. Kidswatter's announcements were done with a megaphone-like device mounted on the wall out of which two large red lips, operated by a stagehand, flapped during the announcements.
3. Eric Chappelle's music for the krullwart, snorple etc, was based on human voices extensively tweaked and sweetened post-productionally.
4. For this effect, lights went out almost entirely on the students, leaving only a small spot on Myron. The actors playing Rondi and BeBe then attached sticks to the ends of Leslie's pigtails. Light then played on the pigtails as they were made to dance alluringly. Snake charmer-like music and bright ribbons on the end of each pigtail heightened the effect.
5. The entire back wall of the set became Miss Zarves: backlit scrims made her eyes and a blackboard flew up to reveal jagged teeth and a red throat. Her voice was recorded and extensively reverbed. It was very loud.
6. At SCT, this was an elaborate disco number, complete with "Stayin' Alive" played at high volume, colored lights on the floor and , halfway through, a mirror ball. Louis did a weird Travolta-esque dance as Mr. Gorf stood on the desk controlling him. It was very funny but it would be difficult to duplicate.
7. Because, strictly speaking, we are not on the Nineteenth Floor, Miss Zarves's face did not appear. Rather, her presence was indicated by a flashing light.
8. Flashing lights were used here, as well as a spinning light pattern reminiscent of *THE WIZARD OF OZ*. During all this, Myron "fell" out of the window. Ideally, Myron's departure can be accomplished without the audience realizing it.

