

## DUMMIES

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A full-length play  
by Sam Affoumado

Contact:  
Sam Affoumado  
345 Riverside Drive - 6H  
New York, NY 10025  
Tel: 212-864-1175  
Cell: 646-a391-0301  
Email: Saffu@aol.com  
Website: [www.samaffoumado.com](http://www.samaffoumado.com)

CAST OF CHARACTERS

- ANGEL VEGA ..... Special Education Student. Intelligent, educationally handicapped and capable of being extremely volatile. Latino. Age 15.
- ROSETTA GREEN ..... Special Education Student. Learning Disabled, hyperactive, gregarious with a sense of fair play. African-American. Age 15.
- JOHN LUCCI ..... Special Education teacher. New to the teaching profession. He is animated with a sense of humor. Age 22.
- MRS. FRITZ ..... The school Guidance Counselor. A seasoned educator who maintains the status quo. Caucasian. Age: 60s.
- MR. GOLUB ..... The school principal. Conservative. He runs his school effectively and is proud of its top-ranking in the district. Caucasian. Age: 50s.
- BRIAN MCBRIDE..... Special Education Student. Slow-learner Heavy-set, docile, fearful and spoiled. Caucasian. Age 15.
- WILLIAM WONG ..... Special Education Student. High-functioning, artistic, verbal. He has Autistic qualities. On occasion, he blurts out. Chinese-American. Age 15.

## SETTING

SETTING: A NYC PUBLIC JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL IN MANHATTAN

TIME: DURING THE COURSE OF THE SCHOOL YEAR 1967-1968

## ACT ONE

SCENE 1: MONDAY MORNING. ALTERNATES BETWEEN THE CLASSROOM AND THE STAFF ROOM.

SCENE 2: IN THE CLASSROOM ON THE SAME MORNING.

SCENE 3: IN THE CLASSROOM ONE MONTH LATER.

SCENE 4: IN THE STAFF ROOM ONE MONTH LATER.

SCENE 5: IN THE STAFF ROOM ONE MONTH LATER

SCENE 6: IN THE CLASSROOM THREE WEEKS LATER.

## ACT TWO

SCENE 1: TEN MINUTES LATER. ALTERNATES BETWEEN THE STAFF ROOM AND THE CLASSROOM.

SCENE 2: IN THE STAFF ROOM ON THE SAME DAY.

SCENE 3: IN THE STAFF ROOM TWO WEEKS LATER.

SCENE 4: IN THE CLASSROOM ONE WEEK LATER.

SCENE 5: IN THE CLASSROOM ON THE SAME DAY.

SCENE 6: ALTERNATES BETWEEN THE CLASSROOM AND THE STAFF ROOM.

ACT ONE

SCENE 1: (MONDAY MORNING. 8:00 A.M.  
ALTERNATES BETWEEN THE CLASSROOM  
AND THE STAFF ROOM. WE HEAR OFF  
STAGE SOUNDS OF STUDENTS. A BELL  
RINGS. LIGHTS UP IN THE CLASSROOM,  
A DESOLATE SPACE WITH A FEW OLD  
DESKS AND CHAIRS. THE NAME MISTER  
LUCCI IS PRINTED ON AN OLD CHALK-  
BOARD. THE DOOR OPENS. WE SEE ANGEL  
AND ROSETTA WHO ARE WEARING THEIR  
HAND-ME-DOWN, SUNDAY BEST.)

ROSETTA

This here your class?

ANGEL

Yeah! (Pause) Don't know.

ROSETTA

You got a paper?

ANGEL

Yeah! You?

ROSETTA

Yeah! I got me a paper. (Pause) You got a number?

ANGEL

Yeah! You?

ROSETTA

Yeah! I got me a number. (Pause) What number you got?

ANGEL

505!

ROSETTA

(She looks at her paper.)

Me, too! I got that number.

ANGEL

(He looks at the door.)

Yeah. Is the right number. Nobody in la casa. (He laughs.)

ROSETTA

Shoo! It don't look like no classroom!

ANGEL

Yeah! Messed up! (Pointing to the chalkboard) What that say?

ROSETTA

You wanna know? You read it!

ANGEL

I can't... see so good. Think I need some glasses.

ROSETTA

Well, get some, then! It say Mister Lucky. No, it say Mister  
(Trying to read phonetically) Loo---loo---cee. Loo---cee.  
Lucy! Yeah! It say Mister Lucy!

ANGEL

(Laughing) Mister Lucy? Stupid name, Mister Lucy!

ROSETTA

Maybe it say Miss Lucy? No, that spell Mister, all right!  
That say Mister Lucy.

ANGEL

Maybe say Mister... I love Lucy!

(They laugh and slap each other five.)

ROSETTA

You seen that on TV?

ANGEL

Yeah! You?

ROSETTA

Yeah! She fu---nn---y! Right?

ANGEL

Yeah! Loco in the coco!

ROSETTA

She crazy, all right! Always gettin' herself in trouble.  
(Pause) I like her.

ANGEL

I like the bald-head man. You know. Skin head! He live  
downstair.

ROSETTA

Oh, yeah! I know. What his name is? (Pause) Fred?

ANGEL

Yeah, Fred! (Chanting) Fred, Fred, baldy skin head!

(ROSETTA laughs and joins in.)  
Fred, Fred, baldy skinhead! Fred, Fred, baldy skinhead!

(They laugh and slap each other five.)

ROSETTA  
I like little Ricky. He so cute. And smart! He can play the  
dr---u---m! That little boy can play!

ANGEL  
That ain't nothin'! I play drum.

ROSETTA  
Oh, no!

ANGEL  
Oh, yeah!

ROSETTA  
Good, like little Ricky?

ANGEL  
Yeah!

ROSETTA  
Says you!

ANGEL  
Look! I show to you.

(ANGEL pushes two desks together, grabs two  
pointers from the board and starts banging  
drum rhythms while singing Babalu.)

ROSETTA  
(Laughing)  
That ain't nothin' like little Ricky. He don't use no  
drumstick. He use his hand!

ANGEL  
So! I can use my hand. Look!

(ANGEL sings Babalu and pretends to masturbate.)

ROSETTA  
Ooooh! You na---st---y! Little Ricky use his hand on the  
drum, not on his self! You nasty! You lucky I don't tell.

ANGEL  
Who you tell? Lucy?

(They laugh and slap each other five.)

ROSETTA  
You fu---nn---y! (Pause) Where you from?

ANGEL  
(Teasing)  
Where you think? Manhattan.

ROSETTA  
Yeah but where you live at?

ANGEL  
Uptown.

ROSETTA  
For real? Me, too. I come from Uptown!

ANGEL  
I never see you.

ROSETTA  
Well, I never seen you neither!

ANGEL  
Cómo se llama?

ROSETTA  
Co---mo say what?

ANGEL  
Cómo se llama?

ROSETTA  
That Spanish?

ANGEL  
Yeah! How you know?

ROSETTA  
Don't sound like no English! (Pause) You Spanish?

ANGEL  
No! PR. You know? Rican? (Pause) You a Rican? (He laughs.)

ROSETTA  
No, I ain't no Rican!

ANGEL  
Then what?

ROSETTA  
You got eyes? (Pause) So? What you say? Co-mo say?

ANGEL

Oh! Cómo sé llama? What is you name?

ROSETTA

Oh. (Pause) Why you wanna know?

ANGEL

'Cause I wanna know, stupid!

ROSETTA

Don't be callin' me no stupid! I ain't tellin'. Guess!

ANGEL

Uhm... Negra? (He laughs.)

(ROSETTA slaps his arm. He runs around the desks.  
She chases ANGEL but does not catch him.)

ROSETTA

Shoo! I ain't know Negra! Mother jumpa!

ANGEL

Okay. How about I call to you... Negrita! (He laughs.)

ROSETTA

I ain't no Negrita neither! Sucker! You better stop!

(ROSETTA chases him around the table.)

ANGEL

Okay, okay. I stop! (Pause) So... cómo sé llama?

ROSETTA

Rosetta!

ANGEL

Aaahh! Ro---sita!

ROSETTA

No! Ro---setta! Rosetta Green and proud of it! So don't you be messin' with me!

BLACKOUT: LIGHTS UP IN THE STAFF ROOM. SEATED AT  
A CONFERENCE TABLE ARE JOHN LUCCI, MR. GOLUB AND  
MRS. FRITZ WHO IS READING FROM A STACK OF FOLDERS.

MRS. FRITZ

Rosetta Green. Age 15 years, 1 month. Transferred from Junior  
High School 23. Four younger siblings; females. Her file is  
loaded with negative anecdotal. According to the records,  
Mr. Lucci, Rosetta is subject to volatile temper outbursts.  
It was recommended that she be placed in a special program

(MORE)



MRS. FRITZ (CONT'D)

with a smaller group setting. I will be seeing Rosetta for counseling once a week. Of course, mainstreaming for a child like this will be out of the question.

JOHN

Why? What can you tell me about her academic profile?

MRS. FRITZ

(Reading) Let's see... Oral Reading is 2.4 grade level, Word Recognition is 2.5, Comprehension is lower second grade, Phonics Assessment... strong on her initial consonants and weak on her short vowels. Pretty typical. Math computation... lower third grade. No, I'm afraid she's functioning on too low a level for mainstreaming. I think she's going to be more of a management problem. I hope I haven't overwhelmed you, Mr. Lucci.

JOHN

Not at all. By the way, please call me John.

MRS. FRITZ

(She nods.) Do you have any questions for me?

JOHN

Yes. I was wondering, uh... what were your impressions when you first met her?

MRS. FRITZ

Rosetta and her mother were in for a conference with Mr. Golub and me in June. As I recall, she was well-dressed---

MR. GOLUB

---Yes, I recall that as well. I don't remember her being very forthcoming. I suppose she was nervous. Her mother was very agitated about her having to change schools but the girl was cooperative enough.

MRS. FRITZ

Yes, but I think we will be seeing a different Rosetta in the classroom. (Pause) Is there anything else?

JOHN

Uh... no. Not until I've had a chance to meet her and browse through the records.

MRS. FRITZ

I hope you'll do more than browse through them, Mr. Lucci. I would strongly advise that you read each one of them carefully. You'd be surprised at the insight a teacher gains.

JOHN

Oh, of course. I didn't mean to say that---

MRS. FRITZ

---It's all right. I understand. Coming into a new school with new students and we're opening the class two weeks into the term. It would be a difficult situation even for the most seasoned educator. I was only trying to point out---

MR.GOLUB

---Mrs. Fritz is right. Unfortunately, the late opening of this class was beyond my control. We acquired last-minute funding in the budget and, if you don't use it... It is a difficult situation but it's not something you can't handle. When I observed your demonstration lesson with the 8th grade class last week, I knew you would be the right person for this position. John, you're a natural. (To MRS. FRITZ) The students loved him.

JOHN

Well, I liked them right away.

MRS. FRITZ

Oh, that's wonderful. Building a good rapport with your students is essential. But first impressions can be deceiving, Mr. Lucci. I think you'll find your group to be a bit more difficult. All of them are new transfers and... well, ninth graders can be a handful.

JOHN

Well, I think first impressions can be---

MRS. FRITZ

---Mr. Lucci, I'm sorry but we're running short on time. Do you mind if we move along and discuss your other students before the bell rings?

JOHN

No, that's fine.

(MRS. FRITZ picks up the next folder and reads.)

MRS. FRITZ

Angel Vega, 15 years, 6 months. Guardian is an older sibling, age 22. Father unknown. Mother is... incarcerated!

BLACKOUT: LIGHTS UP IN THE CLASSROOM

ROSETTA

So what they call you?

ANGEL

Angel.

ROSETTA

You no angel. (Pause) Angel what?

ANGEL

Is no you business!

ROSETTA

Don't get loud with me! Shoo! (Pause) So what I call you?

ANGEL

Call to me anytime, baby. (He laughs.)

ROSETTA

I ain't yo baby! And I don't call up no boys, neither!  
(Pause) I just call you... "Little Ricky" (She laughs.)

ANGEL

You do, you see what happen!

ROSETTA

Yeah! What you gonna do?

ANGEL

Keep playin'. You see!

ROSETTA

I don't see nothin'! (Pause) Boy, tell me your name!

ANGEL

I tell to you, already. Angel!

ROSETTA

For real? (He nods.) What school you was at before?

ANGEL

Old junk school! This here is junk!

ROSETTA

I hear they got high academics. So why you come here, then?

ANGEL

I hit the lady.

ROSETTA

What lady? From the welfare?

ANGEL

My family is no welfare! The teacher! I hit the teacher!

ROSETTA

Ooooh! For real?

ANGEL

Yeah! I punch to her big mouth! (He laughs.)

ROSETTA

Ooooh! She a teacher! You b---a---d!

ANGEL

She start!

ROSETTA

So! She a lady!

ANGEL

A mean lady! And she is ugly!

ROSETTA

Real ugly?

ANGEL

Real ugly and real mean! She all the time grabbin' to me.  
She call me fresh.

ROSETTA

She wrong. You ain't fresh. You na---st---y!

(ROSETTA laughs and ANGEL makes a threatening fist.)

ROSETTA (CONT'D)

Shoo! I'm only playin'.

ANGEL

I don't like to play! Stupid kids all the time they laugh and call me names. I go to them kids gonna knock them out and then they scared! They tell the teacher I start. I don't start nothin'! Every day she pick on me and I don't do nothin'! I have to sit by her desk and all the time she look at me. I can't move she breathe down to my neck! She say, "Angel, stay in you seat and do you work. Maybe then, you could learn to read!" Kids start laughin' at me.

ROSETTA

You shouldn't pay them no mind. They stupid! Why you don't tell the teacher you need some glasses? Then you could read real good.

ANGEL

Don't need no glasses.

ROSETTA

You be sayin' you need---

ANGEL

---Don't need no dumb glasses! Don't need no dumb reading! I don't need nothin'!

ROSETTA

You need a education. (Pause) So why you hit the teacher?

ANGEL

She gonna take me to the Principal. I say, "No, I ain't goin'!" So she grab to my shirt! I say, "Teacher, get off me!" But she don't. She make a hole in my new shirt! I say, "Teacher, you gonna pay for a new shirt." But she say no she won't. I say, "Teacher, if you don't pay, I tear you shirt and you see how it feel!" Now she start yellin' and pokin' to me with her finger. She keep pokin' to me. That shit hurt! I have to do something! So... (ANGEL hits his hand with a fist.) Bam! I pop her in the face. I jack her up! Now she cryin' and screamin'. Her teeth all red in blood.

ROSETTA

Ooooh! You broke all her teeths?

ANGEL

(Modestly)

Uh, uh. Just one. So that old principal he say to me, "Angel, you stay home!" So I stay home.

ROSETTA

Ooooh! You got sup-sended?

ANGEL

Yeah.

ROSETTA

So now you back?

ANGEL

Yeah! But if I don't like it here... I quit!

BLACKOUT: LIGHTS UP IN THE STAFF ROOM.

MR. GOLUB

And strictly off the record, I'm glad to have a man in the Special Ed Department. Don't you agree, Mrs. Fritz? I wanted to open another class sooner but I am always getting flack from the parents. You know, bringing in more "special students"... well, the parents were afraid it would tip the balance and lower the standards. I think they're afraid that some of these kids will be a threat to the normal kids. But having a man in the department will certainly quell some of their concerns. Don't you think so, Mrs. Fritz?

MRS. FRITZ

Yes, but I think the parents might be concerned about---

MR. GOLUB

---They are concerned about your kids roaming the halls and congregating in packs. Vandalism. (JOHN laughs nervously.) No, well John, you never know with these kids. So far we've been lucky. That's why I'm glad you're here.

JOHN

I'm afraid I'm not much of a disciplinarian.

MR. GOLUB

Doesn't matter. You're a man! You get their respect automatically. It's built into their culture. You see?

JOHN

I'm just concerned about doing a good job, you know?

MR. GOLUB

Don't worry, John, you are working with a pro. Mrs. Fritz is a perfectionist and she knows how to handle those kids. You can learn a lot from her. (Pause) John, I'm counting on you. You know it's difficult to keep good staff. Men are especially hard to come by these days so... I hope you're planning to be with us for a long time.

JOHN

I don't think that will be a problem.

MR. GOLUB

Good! (Pause) You haven't served yet, have you?

JOHN

Uh, no. Actually, I just got an occupational deferment so I'm okay with the draft... as long as I'm teaching.

MR. GOLUB

Excellent! Now, let me tell you what I think your priorities should be. Lesson plans are number one and they need to be submitted for inspection on Mondays but... I won't hold you to it right now.

MRS. FRITZ

Mr. Golub, I really think Mr. Lucci would benefit from---

MR. GOLUB

---You can help him with the curriculum as the year progresses. (To JOHN) It's a different kind of teaching. Different standards. So I think your number one priority should be to keep them in the classroom at all times.

JOHN

What about when they have to go---

MR. GOLUB

---If they have to use the facilities, take the whole group! I don't want them in the halls without you. Understood?

JOHN

Perfectly.

MR. GOLUB

Your students may be... fine but I don't want any headaches from the parents and teachers of the regular kids.

JOHN

Whatever you say, Mr. Golub.

MR. GOLUB

Good! John, I'm going to give you carte blanche to the schoolyard. When the kids are restless, take them out! Use the cafeteria or even the gym, if it's free! And here's a key to the equipment room. Volleyballs, jump ropes, anything you need, take! They like sports. That's how they let off steam.

JOHN

Yes sir!

MR. GOLUB

Well, then... finish up with Mrs. Fritz. Oh, the school bus will arrive shortly. Meet your students in the cafeteria and escort them up to the room. Sorry, but I've got another meeting. Don't worry, John, I'm leaving you in good hands. Carry on, Mrs. Fritz! (MR. GOLUB exits.)

BLACKOUT: LIGHTS UP IN THE CLASSROOM.

ROSETTA

Where the other kids at? We need us some more kids. Shoo! We need us a teacher! (Pause) You wanna be the teacher?

ANGEL

No.

ROSETTA

Then I be the teacher. Where you wanna sit at?

ANGEL

Back there. (ANGEL sits in the last row.)

ROSETTA

Okay. Oh, I know! Now fold your hands and sit up real tall!

ANGEL

Now you sound like the teacher. (ANGEL folds his hands.)

ROSETTA

Now class, first we gotta wash the blackboard and fix up the room real nice. Who wanna clean the erasers?

ANGEL

No! You messed up! First we gotta pledge to the flag!

ROSETTA

What flag? You see a flag?

ANGEL

If you be a teacher, do it right! Flag or no flag!

ROSETTA

You bossy! (Pause) Okay, here goes. Class stand! Pledge!

(ANGEL stands and puts his hand over his heart.)

LIGHTS UP IN THE STAFF ROOM:

MRS. FRITZ IS READING FROM THE FOLDERS

ROSETTA & ANGEL

I pledge allegiance

MRS. FRITZ

Brian McBride. Age 15.

ROSETTA & ANGEL

to the flag

MRS. FRITZ (CONT'D)

Oral Reading 2.1

ROSETTA & ANGEL

of the United States of America

MRS. FRITZ (CONT'D)

Comprehension: first grade

ROSETTA & ANGEL

and to the Republic, for which it stands

MRS. FRITZ (CONT'D)

William Wong. Fifteen years, six months.

ROSETTA & ANGEL

one nation under god, invisible

MRS. FRITZ (CONT'D)

Higher Reading and Math, with idiosyncratic behavior...

ROSETTA & ANGEL

with liberty and justice for all.

BLACKOUT: END OF SCENE 1



SCENE 2: (THE SAME DAY. 8:40 A.M.  
A BELL RINGS. LIGHTS UP IN THE  
CLASSROOM. JOHN LUCCI ENTERS. HE  
HAS A JUMP ROPE AROUND HIS NECK AND  
A VOLLEYBALL IN ONE ARM WHILE BRIAN  
IS CLINGING TO HIS OTHER ARM. ANGEL  
IS IN HIS SEAT AND ROSETTA IS AT  
THE CHALKBOARD WITH A POINTER.)

JOHN

Good morning! Would someone please lend me a hand with these.

ROSETTA

You the teacher?

JOHN

If this is room 505, I am. Would you mind taking the  
volleyball?

ROSETTA

I don't mind. I take the jump rope, too.

(ROSETTA takes the rope and the volleyball.)

JOHN

Thanks. You must be Rosetta.

ROSETTA

Yes, teacher. You be Mister Lucy?

JOHN

(Laughing)

No, my name is Mister---

ANGEL

---I Love Lucy!

ROSETTA

(Laughing)

He fu---nn---y! Right?

JOHN

Yeah, he's a riot. No, my name is Mr. Lucci.

ROSETTA

How you spell it? (She points to it on the board.) L-u-c-c-i?

JOHN

That's right.

ROSETTA

That say Lucy.

JOHN

Maybe it looks like Lucy but it's pronounced Lucci.

ROSETTA

If you say so. Guess you be knowin' your own name.

JOHN

Rosetta, this is Brian. Brian, say "Hi" to Rosetta.

(BRIAN looks down at the floor and mumbles.)

ROSETTA

He be in the class, too?

JOHN

Yes. Brian **is** in the class, too.

ROSETTA

Where the other students at?

JOHN

Well, this is what they call a start-up class. It's small. Tomorrow, we'll have another student named William. He missed his bus today.

ROSETTA

No more girls? Just me, you, that boy and Angel?

JOHN

For now. And William should be here tomorrow.

ANGEL

Don't be tellin' my name to him!

ROSETTA

Shoo! The teacher be knowin' your name!

ANGEL

How he know? Stupid!

ROSETTA

'Cause he know my name. And don't you be callin' me no stupid!

JOHN

Okay! That's enough! We have a lot of work to do so let's just take our seats. (No one moves.) Now!

(They begin to move slowly.)

ANGEL

Yeah, he sound like a teacher.

ROSETTA

Teacher, you be in this school before?

JOHN

No. I'm new here.

ROSETTA

Me, too. Where you come from then?

ANGEL

Africa. (He laughs.)

ROSETTA

He don't come from no Africa. Teacher, you got kids?  
You be in the army? My cousin he fightin' at Viet Nam.

JOHN

No. Rosetta, can we please---

ANGEL

---Mind you business! (To John) She always in you business.

JOHN

Rosetta, do you have a seat preference?

ROSETTA

I got a seat but I ain't got no... what do prefence mean?

JOHN

I'm sorry. Do you have a favorite spot?

ROSETTA

Oh yeah, teacher. Up front.

JOHN

Good. Then sit up front. Anywhere you like.

(ROSETTA sits in front of the teacher's desk.)

JOHN (CONT'D)

Brian, why don't you sit next to Rosetta?

(BRIAN moves awkwardly toward ROSETTA and sits.)

ROSETTA  
(Raising her hand)  
Teacher! Can I change my seat?

JOHN  
You don't want to sit with Brian?

ROSETTA  
I just... need me some more room.

JOHN  
All right. Move a couple of seats to your left.  
(ROSETTA doesn't move.) What's the matter?

ROSETTA  
(Whispering)  
Where my left at? This way? (She points)

JOHN  
Sorry. Yes, that way.

ANGEL  
(Laughing)  
She don't know her left! Man, she stupid!

ROSETTA  
Don't be callin' me no stupid! I told you!

ANGEL  
(He stands up.)  
What you gonna do!

ROSETTA  
Somethin'!

ANGEL  
Don't see you do nothin', stupid!

ROSETTA  
That's it! Gonna make you pay, sucker!

(ROSETTA picks up a chair and raises it over her head.)

JOHN  
Rosetta!

ANGEL  
That's a bet!

(ANGEL picks up a chair and raises it over his head.)

JOHN

Angel!

ROSETTA

You gonna pay!

JOHN

Rosetta! Rosetta, put the chair down! Angel didn't mean it.

ANGEL

Oh yeah!

JOHN

Be quiet! Rosetta? Rosetta, that's a very pretty dress you're wearing. You wouldn't want to ruin it, would you?

ROSETTA

I don't care! He be messin' with me!

ANGEL

You mind you business!

JOHN

Stop! Put the chairs down! Both of you! Please.

ROSETTA

(On the verge of tears)

He start!

ANGEL

No, you start!

JOHN

Quiet! (To ROSETTA) I know you're a good girl. Please put the chair down. You're scaring Brian.

(BRIAN has been whimpering under a desk. ROSETTA puts the chair down. ANGEL does the same.)

ROSETTA

Shoo! (To BRIAN) I ain't gonna hurt you!

(JOHN helps BRIAN to his chair.)

JOHN

It's okay, Brian. Everything is okay. (Pause) We're going to set down a few rules, before we do anything else. Rule number one! We do not call anyone bad names! Number two! When we come into the classroom, we hang up our coats and then we sit down! Do you understand? (Pause) Rosetta?

ROSETTA

He start!

JOHN

I know! But do you understand?

ROSETTA

Yes, teacher.

JOHN

Good. Brian?

BRIAN

Yes.

JOHN

Angel? (Angel looks away) Angel, do you understand?

ANGEL

No speak English! (He laughs.)

JOHN

No? (Pause) Habla español, Angel? (Angel stops laughing.)  
Estas son las reglas de la clase. Primero! Nosotros no nos  
ponemos malos nombres! Segundo! Cuando entramos en la clase,  
colgamos nuestros abrigos en el armario y entonces nos  
sentamos! Ahora, entiende?

ANGEL

Yeah. (Pause) You Spanish?

JOHN

No. I studied Spanish in high school. (Pause) So? How was it?

ANGEL

No too good.

JOHN

Gee thanks! Then we better stick to English. Okay?

ANGEL

Yeah.

ROSETTA

Teacher, you fu---nn---y!

JOHN

I'm glad you think so. Now look, I was going to read with you  
first but I think we'll try something else instead. Do me a  
favor. Everyone, hold up the hand that you write with. The  
hand you hold your pencil with.

(They all raise their right hands.)

JOHN (CONT'D)

Great! You're all right-handed. Okay! Now we're going to learn something about left and right.

BRIAN

Teacher! Go bathroom!

JOHN

Sure! Just when we're ready to have some fun. Does anyone else have to go?

ROSETTA

No, teacher.

ANGEL

Nope!

JOHN

Oh. Well, uh... why don't we all go and take a break.

ROSETTA

I ain't goin' to no boys' bathroom! Shoo!

JOHN

Of course not! (Pause) We can go on a tour of the building! I'll show you the library, the auditorium, the gym and... the bathroom facilities... boys' and girls'. Okay?

ALL

Okay!

JOHN

Good. Now quietly push your chairs in and line up at the door.

BRIAN

Teacher! Hold hands?

ANGEL

You crazy? That baby junk! No me!

ROSETTA

Shoo! Not me neither!

JOHN

All right, all right! No holding hands. Brian, I think we're too old for that, okay?

BRIAN

Okay. Teacher? Hurry!

JOHN

Oh! Okay, we're hurrying! (Like a tour guide/drill sergeant)  
Ladies and gentlemen, the first stop on our tour will be...  
the boys' bathroom! Let's move it out! Hup! Hup! Hup, two,  
three, four, Hup, hup---

(BRIAN smiles and marches in place, ROSETTA follows  
but she is out of step. ANGEL hesitates but he  
begins to march in place. JOHN motions them to  
march out of the room while he continues to count.)

ROSETTA

Teacher, you fu---nn---y!

ANGEL

(Laughing)

Man, he is loco in the coco! (They exit.)

BLACKOUT: END OF SCENE 2



SCENE 3: (ONE MONTH LATER. LIGHTS UP IN THE CLASSROOM. JOHN IS AT HIS DESK READING A BOOK ABOUT GERBILS. ROSETTA AND WILLIAM ARE READING COMICS. BRIAN IS WEARING HEADPHONES AND SINGING. ANGEL IS TALKING TO THE PET GERBILS WHILE CLEANING THEIR CAGE.)

JOHN

Okay, we have five more minutes and then hobby time is over.

ROSETTA

Okay, Mr. Lucci.

WILLIAM

(Robotically)

This Batman is superior! "Bizarre Adventure in Time and Space." I will draw a picture for you.

ROSETTA

That boy can draw!

JOHN

Thank you, William. We can hang it up and decorate the room. (To ANGEL) How's Lucy and Ricky? Did you find out which is which? It says here, "to find the sex of a gerbil, (ROSETTA giggles.) hold it carefully at the base of the tail." "The male should have a large, nearly hairless patch---

ANGEL

---I know, Lucci. My brother read the book to me. I know it by heart.

JOHN

Okay, you're the expert! I guess you know your gerbils!

ANGEL

Yeah. Lucci, I can take them to my house in Christmas?

JOHN

As long as no one else wants them. Anybody want them?

ROSETTA

My mother say they na---st---y.

WILLIAM

My grandma is not tolerant of rodentia.

JOHN

Okay, then. Brian? How about you?

BRIAN

(Headphones still on) Three blind mice. They all la la la la la la la--- they cut la la la la la la la--- did you ever la la la la la la--- three blind mice.

JOHN

Brian!

ANGEL

Stupid song! He act like a baby. Lucci call to you! (Yelling)  
Hey, fat stuff!

JOHN

Angel! Knock it off! You want the gerbils, don't you?

ANGEL

Yeah.

JOHN

Then be nice... and you can have them.

(ANGEL walks over to BRIAN, taps him on the  
shoulder and lifts one side of his head phones.)

ANGEL

Brian! You wanna hear Mongo Santamaria? "Watermelon Man!"

BRIAN

No! No! I don't like it!

ANGEL

Wanna hear "I Am The Walrus?" Cuckoo-Cu-Koo!  
(He makes the crazy sign and points to BRIAN.)

BRIAN

No! No cuckoo.

JOHN

Angel! Cut it out!

ANGEL

What? Is the Beatles.

ROSETTA

Brian! You wanna hear Marvin Gaye?

BRIAN

Yeah! Marvin! Groovy! (He tries to sing.) Ain't no mountain  
high enough... ain't no la la la enough... ain't no---

(Rosetta laughs.)

JOHN

---Okay! Hobby time is over anyway! Brian, give Motown a break and put the headphones away. William, Rosetta, put the comics back in your desks. Angel, cover the gerbils. Everyone back to your seats. Let's go! Let's go!

ROSETTA

Wait, Mr. Lucci. Lois Lane be gettin' married to Superman!

JOHN

**Is** getting married to Superman. **Is**. (Pause) She is?

ROSETTA

Yeah. She got a pretty wedding dress and everything.

JOHN

That's nice but the wedding will have to wait.

WILLIAM

I want to investigate Math now.

ANGEL

No, no, Lucci. Reading! I wanna do reading.

WILLIAM

Math is superior. Math is king! I am the king of Math!

ANGEL

Shut up, King Chong! I wanna do---

JOHN

---Angel! Stop!

WILLIAM

Stop the violence! Hellcat Demon!

ANGEL

Shut up Chino! Ching-chong, ching-chong!

WILLIAM

(He points to Angel.)  
Snake-in-the-grass!

JOHN

Stop it! Angel! Don't ever say that again! Do you hear me?

ANGEL

I just want to---

JOHN

---Doesn't matter! You can't say things like that just because you want something! People have feelings! Just like you! Other people want things! Just like you! (Pause) Look, I know you're not a bad kid so... don't act like one. Okay?  
(Long Pause)

ANGEL

We can do Math. I don't care.

WILLIAM

I don't care!

JOHN

I guess that's as close to an apology as we're going to get. Rosetta? Brian? What do you want to do next?

BRIAN

Read, teacher.

ROSETTA

Reading, Mr. Lucci.

JOHN

Okay. The majority has spoken. Reading is next. Take out your books. Who wants to read? (Pause) Oh, come on. (Pause) Angel? I thought you wanted to read?

ANGEL

Yeah. I read. What page?

JOHN

I think we left off on page twenty-eight.

ANGEL

Lucci, you know I read the whole book. I finish.

ROSETTA

You lie. You don't be readin' so fast. How you read to page forty-two already?

ANGEL

Mind you business! I finish the book, Lucci. Take me two days and all night. No TV. I finish the book.

JOHN

Angel, that's great! I'm impressed. Did you like it?

ANGEL

No! Stupid book! Jim go to work on the farm in the summer. He play with the animals.

(MORE)

ANGEL (CONT'D)

He meet Jane, the farm girl, and he tell to her about the city. She say she want to go to the city and see everything and he say he like the farm because is quiet. Lucci? Why Jim like the farm? Is nothing to do there.

ROSETTA

Angel, you be spoilin' the whole story. Shoo!

ANGEL

Lucci? Tomorrow I get the hard book? The fatter book?

JOHN

You bet you do.

ROSETTA

That ain't fair!

JOHN

It is fair, Rosetta. When you finish reading it, you'll get the... fatter one, too.

ROSETTA

Shoo!

(She clicks her teeth and rolls her eyes.)

JOHN

Rosetta, don't click your teeth and roll your eyes at me. Nice young ladies don't do that.

ROSETTA

Shoo!

JOHN

Shoo... fly pie yourself. Can we read now? Do we have your permission, your majesty?

ROSETTA

Mr. Lucci, you cr---a---zy!

JOHN

Thank you. Angel? Would you start reading, please.

ANGEL

Okay. I read. (Reading slowly and methodically.) "Jim woke up early. He went down to the barn to see the cow. Elsie was chew---ing, chewing on some hay." See, Lucci? Stupid book! A horse eat hay. A cow don't eat no hay. Do he?

BLACKOUT: END OF SCENE 3

SCENE 4: (LIGHTS UP IN THE STAFF ROOM. MRS. FRITZ IS HAVING A COUNSELING SESSION WITH ROSETTA, WILLIAM AND BRIAN. THEY ARE SEATED IN A CIRCLE.)

MRS. FRITZ

Children, I am so sorry but I have a meeting with Mr. Golub in a little while so we will be having a shorter session today. Are there any pressing problems to discuss?

(The students shake their heads, "no.")

BRIAN

We play Go Fish?

WILLIAM

Too simple! Like falling off a log!

ROSETTA

Why do Angel get to stay with Mr. Lucci?

MRS. FRITZ

What? Oh, you mean during this period?

ROSETTA

Yeah. Why he never be comin' here? That ain't fair!

WILLIAM

He is the infidel! He must die!

MRS. FRITZ

William! That's inappropriate. (To ROSETTA) Don't you like coming here?

ROSETTA

Sometime. (Pause) Shoo! I ain't crazy, you know.

MRS. FRITZ

Of course you're not, Rosetta. Why would you say that?

ROSETTA

Kids be sayin' things, you know.

BRIAN

They call me bad names. I hear them.

WILLIAM

Punish the offenders!

MRS. FRITZ

William! (To BRIAN) What do you hear?

BRIAN

"Retard." You a "retard." They say it. I hear it.

ROSETTA

Brian, they stupid. Don't pay them no mind.

BRIAN

I hate them!

MRS. FRITZ

Now Brian, we don't hate anyone. That's not nice.

BRIAN

I do!

MRS. FRITZ

You don't really mean that.

BRIAN

Yes, I do! I hate them!

MRS. FRITZ

Rosetta, do these children bother you, too?

ROSETTA

No. They don't be messin' with me. Shoo! They know better.

MRS. FRITZ

What about you, William?

WILLIAM

They are the dastards of the universe!

MRS. FRITZ

William!

ROSETTA

Ooooh! William say a bad word.

MRS. FRITZ

It's not a bad word. It means they are cowards.

ROSETTA

Oh. It sound like the B-word. They don't be botherin' William because they know he smart. They like the way he be drawin'. (Pause) They be pickin' on Brian all the time. In the hall, in the gym, on the bus---

BRIAN

---Yeah! On the bus!

MRS. FRITZ

Well, that's unacceptable. We'll have to tell Mr. Golub about this. Do you know who the children are?

WILLIAM

They are the vermin of the earth!

MRS. FRITZ

William!

BRIAN

No, teacher.

MRS. FRITZ

Well, I'm very sorry, Brian. We will see what we can do.

ROSETTA

Teacher, can we go back to class now?

MRS. FRITZ

It's not time yet.

ROSETTA

But Angel gonna be reading with Mr. Lucci and that ain't fair. He get ahead of me in Reading.

MRS. FRITZ

Well, Angel is supposed to be here, too but I can't force him to participate in the group.

ROSETTA

Then you should be callin' his mother.

MRS. FRITZ

Rosetta, you can only worry about yourself. Children, coming here is not a punishment. I am trying to help you become better students and better citizens so that you can grow up and get a job, have a family and---

WILLIAM

---I will be a prominent comic book illustrator!

MRS. FRITZ

That's wonderful, William.

BRIAN

I drive a bus. No yellow bus. A real bus!



MRS. FRITZ

That's wonderful, Brian.

ROSETTA

I need to read better before I be gettin' me a good job. Shoo! I could be reading with Mr. Lucci right now!

MRS. FRITZ

Rosetta, it takes more than reading to become a good, productive adult. You have to learn how to get along with others. You have to be understanding and patient and---

ROSETTA

---I be patient. I be patient a long time. My old school don't teach me nothin' and I be patient, Shoo! I got patient and all I got back was trouble! Always be trouble.

MRS. FRITZ

Be honest, dear. Didn't you, sometimes, start fights with other children?

ROSETTA

Sometime they be startin' with me. Shoo! That school got all new books, new desks but we don't get nothin' new. We sit at the broken desks, we read from the old books. Teacher say she ain't got enough to go around so my class gotta use the old book. Other kids be gettin' Math puzzles and fun things but we be usin' the old math stuff. That ain't fair!

MRS. FRITZ

Rosetta, that was your old school. You are here now. Don't you think things are better for you in this school?

ROSETTA

Yeah.

MRS. FRITZ

All right. Tell me. What do you think makes it better?

ROSETTA

I don't be fightin'... so much. The books is better. I be readin' better now. Mr. Lucci ain't afraid of the kids like my last teacher. (She giggles) He be tellin' these corny jokes. He fun---ny! Right Brian?

BRIAN

Yeah. Funny. We play games. I hear music. I get headphones. Teacher is groovy.

WILLIAM

I am submerged in comic book classics!

ROSETTA

We play in the yard. Angel be takin' care of Lucy and Ricky.

MRS. FRITZ

Lucy and Ricky?

WILLIAM

The rodents are pollinating!

MRS. FRITZ

What?

ROSETTA

He mean the Gerbils be havin' babies.

MRS. FRITZ

Oh, you have Gerbils. Well, no wonder you want to go back to class. It sounds like you have a good time with Mr. Lucci.

ROSETTA

Yeah! You right. This here school be better. Can we go now?

MRS. FRITZ

Soon. Tell me, what else do you do in class with Mr. Lucci?

WILLIAM

We duel with magic swords!

BRIAN

We play Skully! We play Simple Simon! I like Simple Simon.

MRS. FRITZ

That's nice but... what do you learn with Mr. Lucci?

ROSETTA

We learn to do Jacks, Pick-up Sticks, Monopoly. Ooooh! We be makin' puppets for a puppet show!

BRIAN

I made key chain.

ROSETTA

Soon we gettin' dressed up and we be havin' turkey with the Indians and Pilgrims. Brian gonna be a Indian. Right, Brian?

BRIAN

Yeah! Indian! I smoke a pipe! Groovy!

BLACKOUT: END OF SCENE 4

SCENE 5: (A MONTH LATER IN THE STAFF ROOM. MRS. FRITZ IS SEATED AT THE CONFERENCE TABLE. SHE IS SIPPING TEA. SHE LOOKS AT HER WATCH. JOHN ENTERS.)

MRS. FRITZ

I was beginning to worry about you, Mr. Lucci. We're not going to have much time now.

JOHN

I overslept. Sorry. Where's Mr. Golub?

MRS. FRITZ

We have so many important things to discuss. Unfortunately, Mr. Golub will not be joining us. He has an emergency meeting with a parent.

JOHN

That's nice. At least we know where his priorities are.

MRS. FRITZ

I think you're being a little unfair. Mr. Golub's major concern is to run this school smoothly, which he does. It's orderly, safe and... the regular school has one of the best achievement records in the city.

JOHN

That's impressive. What about our kids? Don't they count?

MRS. FRITZ

Of course they do. We're fortunate to have Mr. Golub. Most principals are constantly looking over your shoulder.

JOHN

He's come into my room lots of times. He opens the door, sticks his head in to see what we're doing, says, "Carry on" and then he leaves. Yesterday was different. He came in but I think he was... traumatized.

MRS. FRITZ

By the children?

JOHN

By me! I was standing on my desk with my right leg high up in the air. (He laughs.) Simple Simon.

MRS. FRITZ

Oh, yes, I've heard.

JOHN

Mr. Golub mumbled something about using the yard to let off steam, then he held his head and he left.

MRS. FRITZ

Poor man. I think he's prone to headaches.

JOHN

Look, I don't want to be the cause of anyone's headache.

MRS. FRITZ

Mr. Lucci, I know it's been a struggle but after the first year it gets easier. And twenty years down the road---

JOHN

---Twenty years! (He laughs.) I can't think that far ahead. You know, with the war... Who can be sure of anything?

MRS. FRITZ

It must be awful having the draft hanging over you. The war is... I can hardly watch the images they are showing on television. (Pause) You can never tell about the future but right now... I know your students are very fond of you.

JOHN

It's mutual. They challenge me but they teach me, you know?

MRS. FRITZ

Yes, I know. Well... we have two major topics to discuss. First, Mr. Golub asked me to give you this pamphlet entitled BEHAVIOR CONTROL TECHNIQUES AND HOW TO USE THEM. Now, on page two you will see a listing of USEFUL INTERVENTION TECHNIQUES.

JOHN

Uh, huh. (Pause) What do they mean by PROXIMITY CONTROL?

MRS. FRITZ

Here's the definition. (Reading from the text) "A method by which the teacher moves physically closer to the students. In this way, the children are better able to control their impulses." You simply seat a student who has weak self-control close to your desk thereby, inhibiting the negative behavior.

JOHN

I'm sure PROXIMITY CONTROL is a good idea, theoretically.

MRS. FRITZ

But not pragmatically?

JOHN

I just can't relate to theories right now. My immediate concern is Angel. He's a very hostile kid. Don't get me wrong, he's made real academic progress and in a one-to-one situation, he's great but sometimes I feel like he could really explode. I've seen glimpses of it. I'd like to be able to figure out how to help him to manage his---

MRS. FRITZ

---All right. I understand. Where have you seated him?

JOHN

In the back of the room. (MRS. FRITZ shakes her head.) Well... I allowed my kids to choose their own seats.

MRS. FRITZ

I see. And has it been working for you?

JOHN

It's not about where he sits. He doesn't like William. I think it's a competition thing. But he's openly hostile toward Brian. I can see the hatred in his eyes. So far, he hasn't done anything terrible but---

MRS. FRITZ

---But you seem to think he will. Why not make it easy on yourself. If you seat him near you, you can inhibit his negative impulses.

JOHN

I can't do that. He'd think I don't trust him.

MRS. FRITZ

But you don't trust him, do you?

JOHN

I don't know if... I read his record and so... I don't know if my concern is colored by---

MRS. FRITZ

---Then you know he has a mother who is incarcerated.

JOHN

Yes.

MRS. FRITZ

And you know that he physically assaulted his last teacher.

JOHN

Yes, but---

MRS. FRITZ

---The child was out of control. And it was unprovoked.

JOHN

We don't know that!

MRS. FRITZ

He attacked his teacher, Mr. Lucci! He refuses to come to me for counseling. Your students are intimidated by him. He may be a danger to himself as well as to others. (Pause) Perhaps Angel does not belong in our program.

JOHN

He hasn't done anything! I'm sorry I even brought it up. And as far as my other kids are concerned... well, Rosetta can give it as well as she takes it and Brian can be a little pain. You know, Angel's rate of learning astounds me. He's not like the others. He's already finished four books. And his math skills have really improved.

MRS. FRITZ

I am pleased that he is making academic strides but the problem at hand is what to do about his behavior. Set the boundaries. Pull in the reins.

JOHN

I'm trying to set realistic goals for him but I don't want him to feel trapped.

MRS. FRITZ

The real world is governed by rules, Mr. Lucci. Society will not change to suit the needs of Angel Vega. It's possible that your good intentions may well be doing him a disservice. I do appreciate your determination but I think our time will be best served if we examine some of the other behavior-control techniques. Look at page six.

(JOHN looks at the pamphlet.)

JOHN

PHYSICAL RESTRAINT? Are they serious? It says, "The teacher must protect the student from him or herself and it is important that the student be held firmly but not roughly." Are we expected to wrestle them to the ground?

MRS. FRITZ

These are only guidelines, Mr. Lucci. (Pause) What would you do, if you found yourself in a serious situation?

JOHN

I don't know. What would you suggest?

MRS. FRITZ  
THERAPEUTIC BOUNCING!

JOHN  
What?

MRS. FRITZ  
Page ten of your pamphlet.

JOHN  
You mean throwing the kid out?

MRS. FRITZ  
Removing the child from the classroom. Yes.

JOHN  
Is that during or after the tantrum? (A bell rings.) Mrs. Fritz, I have to meet the kids downstairs.

MRS. FRITZ  
It's just the warning bell. Please, you can take the pamphlet home and study it but we have something else to discuss. (Pause) You haven't been writing lesson plans, have you?

JOHN  
Mr. Golub said he didn't expect me to do them. Look, I plan out what I'm going to do with my class in advance. I've established routines. I don't just wing it!

MRS. FRITZ  
I understand but you must write formal lesson plans every week. I would be very happy to help you with them.

JOHN  
Thanks but I do my planning mostly from home.

MRS. FRITZ  
To be honest, Mr. Lucci, I'm concerned that you are not spending enough time on academics during the day.

JOHN  
What do you mean by that?

MRS. FRITZ  
I know the children can be a handful. However, creating an appropriate curriculum and executing good lessons is vital to their success and I am concerned that you are not following---

JOHN  
---Are you suggesting the kids aren't learning in my class?

MRS. FRITZ

Not at all. But our department is always under the microscope and any deviation from procedures could give the "powers that be" an excuse to--- (the bell rings.) Oh, there's never enough time. Mr. Golub wanted me to tell you that you will be having your first formal observation three weeks from today.

JOHN

Fine. Does he have a preference for subject area?

MRS. FRITZ

Either Language Arts or Math but you are required to submit a group lesson plan to Mr. Golub, prior to the observation.

JOHN

Fine. Don't worry. I'll work on it. Could he observe us in the morning? The kids are more receptive in the morning.

MRS. FRITZ

Of course. I'll suggest it to Mr. Golub and send you a memo. And please feel free to confer with me, if you have any problems at all, Mr. Lucci.

JOHN

Thanks, Mrs. Fritz and please don't worry. It'll be fine. The kids will be great. I've got to get downstairs. (He exits.)

MRS. FRITZ

All right. Have a nice day!

BLACKOUT: END OF SCENE 5



SCENE 6: (THE CLASSROOM, THREE WEEKS LATER. THE ROOM IS COVERED WITH ART WORK, CHARTS, MAPS AND DISPLAYS OF THE STUDENTS' ACADEMIC WORK. JOHN IS WRITING ON THE BOARD, ROSETTA AND WILLIAM HAVE THEIR FEET UP AND ARE READING THEIR COMICS, BRIAN IS WEARING HEADPHONES AND SWAYING TO THE MUSIC AND ANGEL IS PLAYING WITH THE GERBILS.)

JOHN

Okay. Hobby time is over. Let's go! Let's go! Let's go!

WILLIAM

We have more hobby time. I calculate six minutes. I must reach the dramatic conclusion of my comic.

JOHN

Sorry, William. We'll add more time tomorrow. We have visitors coming. I told you, remember? Mr. Golub is coming and maybe Mrs. Fritz.

BRIAN

I know that teacher. We go there. We play "Go Fish."

ROSETTA

Yeah and we talk about private business.

WILLIAM

She admires my drawings. She says I have a talent. I am the greatest comic book illustrator of all time!

ANGEL

No you ain't! That old lady don't know nothing about a comic!

JOHN

Angel! Stop! The visitors want to see how well you do your work. So everyone... in your seats. Take out your notebooks!

WILLIAM

What subject?

JOHN

Math.

WILLIAM

Math is exhilarating!

BRIAN

Adding, yeah! No take-away. I don't like it! Too hard!

JOHN

All right, all right, stop!

ANGEL

I don't want to do Math! I wanna read! (He chants.) Read-ing! Read-ing! Read-ing!

ROSETTA

I wanna finish Lois Lane. (She chants.) Lo-is! Lo-is! Lo-is! Lo-is!

BRIAN

(Chanting)

Add---ing! Add---ing! Add---ing!

JOHN

(Screaming)

Stop it! Stop it! Stop it! (Pause) Why are you behaving like this? Do you want our visitors to see you acting like this?

ALL

No.

JOHN

Sometimes, things change but that doesn't mean we have to get upset! We'll have a longer hobby time tomorrow. We'll do more reading tomorrow. I promise. Now, come on. Behave yourselves.

(JOHN writes the following on the board:

Aim: To teach ordinal numbers. Objective:

The students will learn to recognize and use

Ordinal numbers in real-life situations.)

ROSETTA

Mr. Lucci, why you be so nervous?

JOHN

(Snapping)

I'm not nervous!

ROSETTA

When people be screamin' they could be nervous.

JOHN

I was screaming because... you were acting up. Angel, please put the cover on the cage. I don't want Lucy and Ricky distracting us during the lesson.

ANGEL

Okay, Lucci.

(ANGEL walks over to the gerbils. The room

is quiet when the door slowly opens.  
MR. GOLUB and MRS. FRITZ enter.)

ROSETTA

Uh, oh! They here!

BRIAN

(Loudly) Uh, Oh!

JOHN

(With nervous laughter)

Uh, oh! Now you really have to be good. Mr. Golub is here.  
Children? What do we say to our visitors?

ALL

Good afternoon, Mr. Golub. Good afternoon, Mrs. Frix!

JOHN

We'll be ready in a moment. Won't you please sit down?

MR. GOLUB

Don't let us disturb you, Mr. Lucci. Carry on.

MRS. FRITZ

You've done wonders with the room, Mr. Lucci. And Brian!  
My! My! My! This is very nice work.

BRIAN

Yes, teacher. I did it! I write it! All by myself!

MRS. FRITZ

You're very lucky to have a teacher like Mr. Lucci.

BRIAN

Yeah! Groovy teacher! We acting up. He not nervous.

ROSETTA

Mrs. Frix? Look at my spelling work. I got a hundred! Mr.  
Lucci hanged it up. You see it? Over there.

MRS. FRITZ

Oh, yes. Look at that! Very good work, Rosetta.

(ANGEL is holding a gerbil as he  
approaches MR. GOLUB.)

ANGEL

Mister? Wanna see my gerbil? You can pet him.

MR. GOLUB

Yes, very nice. Why don't you put him back now.

ANGEL

We name to him "Ricky." Lucy she is in the cage. You can hold him. He don't bite.

MR. GOLUB

(Patting ANGEL'S head) Very good. Pay attention to Mr. Lucci.

ANGEL

I had them in my house on Christmas. They get babies but the babies they die. Don't know why.

JOHN

(Quickly)

Okay! Angel, put Ricky back and please sit down. We're going to start now.

ANGEL

Yeah.

(ANGEL puts the gerbil in the cage, covers it, and sits down.)

JOHN

Today we are going to learn about a different kind of number. It is something we call an ordinal number. But before we do that, let's review what we already know. Brian, can you tell the class a number that you know?

BRIAN

Yes, teacher. Uh... (He mumbles to himself.)

ROSETTA

Come on, Brian! Shoo!

JOHN

Rosetta! Let him think about it. You'll have your turn.

ANGEL

Baby junk!

JOHN

Brian? Any number that you know.

BRIAN

Uh--- two?

JOHN

Good boy! Two! That's a number.

BRIAN

(Excitedly)

That's a number! Two! I said it! I did it!

JOHN

Rosetta, can you name some other numbers?

ROSETTA

Yes. Five and... seven.

JOHN

Good!

ROSETTA

And... sixteen. (To Mrs. Fritz) Sixteen my birthday.

JOHN

You mean you'll be sixteen years old next year. Right?

ROSETTA

Yes, Mr. Lucci. (To MRS. FRITZ) Then come seventeen.

JOHN

Right! Angel? Can you give us a number?

ANGEL

Easy! A million! If I play the numbers, I win a million! I like to buy me a big car. (He laughs.)

JOHN

Me, too! Okay. One million is a very big number. Why do we use numbers? (Pause) What are they good for?

ROSETTA

(Raising her hand) Oooh! Oooh! I know! To add.

JOHN

Very good! We use numbers to add. What else? Angel?

ANGEL

Easy! To subtract. Do times table. Divide. To tell tempatcha. For to count money. Numbers say how much things you got.

JOHN

Excellent! We use numbers for all of those things and more. Let's look at this for a moment. Okay? I have a stack of paper cups right here. I want to know how many cups there are altogether. How would I find out how many there are?

BRIAN

I count!

JOHN

Good, Brian! We could count them. Why don't you come up here and tell the class how many cups there are in this stack.

(BRIAN goes up to the desk and counts the cups.  
He is confused because they overlap. He is  
frustrated and begins to mumble.)

JOHN (CONT'D)

Brian? Why don't you pick them up and count them? You can  
pull them apart. It's better that way.

(BRIAN counts but drops the cups. ANGEL laughs.)

MR. GOLUB

(Quietly to ANGEL)

Young man. Behave yourself. I'm watching.

JOHN

Brian? Give me the cups and we'll put them on the table. Now  
you can count them one at a time.

BRIAN

One, two, three, four... five. Five cups. I did it!  
(To MRS. FRITZ) See? One, two, three, four, five!

JOHN

Thank you, Brian. You can sit down now.

(BRIAN sits and JOHN adds four cups to the stack.)

JOHN (CONT'D)

Angel? Would you come up here and count this stack of cups  
now?

ANGEL

(Not moving) Nine.

JOHN

Are you sure? Don't you want to come up and count them?

ANGEL

Lucci, I count already in my head. Nine!

MR. GOLUB

(To ANGEL) Mister Lucci!

JOHN

Okay. Angel says there are nine cups. Rosetta? Do you agree?

ROSETTA

Yes, Mr. Lucci.

JOHN

You're both right! There are nine cups in this stack. These are numbers that tell us how much or how many. Today we are going to learn about numbers that tell us where things are. They are called Ordinal numbers. (Demonstrating) I am putting three cups on the table. They are in a straight line or in a row. Now, I'm going to put this checker under one of these cups. Try to tell me where the checker is by using a number. Start by saying, "The checker is under"... and then tell me which cup. Okay?

ROSETTA

(Raising her hand) Ooooh! I know! I know!

JOHN

Okay, okay! Rosetta?

ROSETTA

The checker is under... that cup! (She points)

JOHN

It is. But I want you to describe the position of that cup on the table. Can you tell me the number of the cup you mean?

ROSETTA

The checker is under the... two cup?

ANGEL

The two cup? (He laughs). She don't know!

WILLIAM

(Singing) Be a clown, be a clown---

JOHN

---William! Stop! (Pause) Angel, we don't laugh when someone is trying to learn. Why don't you help us? Tell us which cup the checker is under.

ANGEL

I know this baby stuff. The middle. In the middle.

JOHN

Yes but I want you to use a number to describe where the checker is.

MR. GOLUB

(To ANGEL) You see? You don't know everything.

JOHN

Rosettta said it was under the two cup. Does that sound right?

ANGEL

No. Second. The checker is under the second cup!  
(ANGEL smiles at MR. GOLUB.)

JOHN

Good! The second cup in the row. Now I'm going to move the checker under this cup. (JOHN puts it under the first cup.) Who can tell us where it is now? Remember to use a number to describe where it is.

WILLIAM

Left side! First cup! The dragon commands!

JOHN

Good, William! Counting from your left side, this is the first cup. Okay, now I'm going to move the checker under this cup. Brian, tell me where it is.

BRIAN

Under... a cup?

JOHN

Yes, it's under a cup. Is it under the first cup?

BRIAN

No! (BRIAN laughs.)

JOHN

Is it under the second cup?

BRIAN

No! (BRIAN laughs.)

JOHN

Is it under the... third cup?

(JOHN lifts the cup slightly.)

BRIAN

Yeah! Third! Under the third cup! I see it! Third! I did it!

JOHN

Okay, Brian. (Writing on the board) Now we have learned to use these numbers, 1st, 2nd and 3rd, when we want to show the order of things. When we arrange things in a row or in a sequence, we can use first, second and third to describe where the things are. (He draws a baseball diamond.) For example, in baseball the players have to run around the bases but they can't just run to any base. They must follow a certain order, right? If a player hits the ball, where does he run? Rosetta?



ROSETTA

First base.

JOHN

Good! Where does he run next? Angel?

ANGEL

(Yawning) Second.

JOHN

Good! William? Where does he run next?

WILLIAM

He must run to third. The Yankees are the masters!

JOHN

Right! The player runs around the bases in this order. He runs to first base, then second base, then third base and then... Brian?

BRIAN

Uh... Home!

JOHN

Right! Home!

ANGEL

Can we read now?

JOHN

No! We're not finished! (Pause) We're going to play a game using these three cups. I am going to put this checker under one of these cups. Then, I'm going to mix them around like this. (He demonstrates.) All you have to do is tell me where the checker is. Remember to use one of the three new numbers we have learned. Use first, second or third.

ROSETTA

Oooh! Me! Mr. Lucci, me!

JOHN

Wait a minute! If you guess correctly, then you can come up and hide the checker.

ANGEL

I seen that! They play in the street.

JOHN

Cups in the street?

ANGEL

No, Lucci! They play with cards! For money.

JOHN

You mean, "Three Card Monty?"

ANGEL

Yeah! You got to find the red card. We play for money?  
(He laughs.)

MR. GOLUB

You can be put in jail for that.

WILLIAM

To gamble is not a laughing matter. My grandmother---

JOHN

---William is right. That game is against the law. All right now! Rosetta, you'll be first. Watch the checker. (Switching the cups) Round and around! Here we go! Where is the checker? Rosetta, do you know?

ROSETTA

Shoo! You too fast!

JOHN

Well that's the idea. Come on. Take a guess.

ROSETTA

The checker be... no, the checker **is** under the... second cup?

JOHN

Good grammar! Let's see if she's right. (He lifts the cup slowly.) Sorry. It's not there. It was under... this one! Okay. Brian! Watch carefully. Round and around! Here we go! Where's the checker now? Brian, do you know?

BRIAN

Uh... the checker is under the... first cup?

JOHN

Let's see if he's right. (Slowly lifting the cup)  
No, it's not here. Sorry.

BRIAN

No! No! Teacher! I want that cup!

(He points to the third cup.)

JOHN

Brian, you said you wanted the first cup.

BRIAN

No! No! I said that cup! I said it! I said it!

(He bangs on the desk.)

ROSETTA

That ain't fair! He say first cup! Now he be changin'!

WILLIAM

Cheating is not honorable!

MRS. FRITZ

William, I don't think Brian was cheating. He was confused. You see, if you counted from this side, it would be the first cup. Wouldn't it?

WILLIAM

This is possible.

JOHN

Oops. Mrs. Fritz is right. Maybe Brian was counting from the other side.

BRIAN

Yeah! The other side!

ANGEL

Oh, no! Lucci, you say we count to that side. The left! He just wanna win!

BRIAN

No! No! Shut up! Shut up!

ANGEL

You fat baby!

BRIAN

Shut up! He call me bad name! I hear it!

JOHN

Stop it right now!

ANGEL

(Muttering under his breath) Shit! I ain't playing!

MR. GOLUB

What did you say?

ANGEL

He cheat! Fat mama!

BRIAN

Shut up! Shut up!

ANGEL

You wait! I'm gonna get you, Brian!

JOHN

Angel, that's enough!

BRIAN

Teacher! Angel gonna get me! He get me! (He starts crying.)

MR. GOLUB

He's not going to get anyone.

ANGEL

Oh, yeah! That's a bet!

(ANGEL stands up, flips his desk over and starts  
for BRIAN. MR. GOLUB grabs ANGEL'S arm.)

MR. GOLUB

That's it! You're coming with me!

ANGEL

Mister! Get off me!

(ANGEL struggles but MR. GOLUB grabs him by  
the collar and pokes at him with his finger.)

MR. GOLUB

Who do you think you are? How dare you threaten anyone!

ANGEL

Get off me!

MR. GOLUB

How dare you!

ANGEL

He cheat!

BRIAN

No! Shut up! You cheat! Stupid! I hate you!

ANGEL

I get you, Brian! I get you! I got a gun!

(BRIAN runs to MRS. FRITZ and hides behind her.)

BRIAN

Teacher! He shoot me dead!

MR. GOLUB

That's it! You're done!

(ANGEL breaks loose, throws over another  
desk and bolts for the door.)

ANGEL

I get you, Brian! You see!

MR. GOLUB

John, don't let him out!

(JOHN blocks the door.)

MR. GOLUB

You'll leave when I tell you to leave!

ANGEL

(Pacing like a caged animal)

I don't care! I hate this school! Crazy school! Crazy!

JOHN

Angel, please calm down.

ANGEL

Is a crazy school for retard! I am no retard!

JOHN

Of course not! You're here because---

ANGEL

---No! Brian is a retard! All the kids they say that! I am no  
stupid! The class is for retard! (To BRIAN) RE-TARD!

BRIAN

He call me retard! I hear it!

MR. GOLUB

You're in this class, young man! So what does that make you?

(ANGEL stops pacing. He picks up the gerbil cage,  
and throws it at MR. GOLUB.)

ANGEL

F--U--CK Y--O--U!

BLACKOUT: END OF ACT I

ACT II

SCENE 1: (TEN MINUTES LATER.  
ALTERNATES BETWEEN THE CLASSROOM  
AND THE STAFF ROOM. MR. GOLUB, JOHN  
AND ANGEL ARE IN THE STAFF ROOM.  
MRS. FRITZ IS WITH ROSETTA, BRIAN  
AND WILLIAM IN THE CLASSROOM.)

MR.GOLUB  
Do you have an emergency  
number for him?

MRS. FRITZ  
Angel brought this on  
himself.

MR.GOLUB  
I need to notify the parent  
before I proceed with the  
suspension.

ROSETTA  
Ooooh! Angel gettin' sup-  
sended? He don't do nothin'.

JOHN  
May I speak with you for a  
moment?

ROSETTA (CONT'D)  
When Brian don't get what he  
want, he throw them fits and  
nobody say nothin'.

MR.GOLUB  
I'm not surprised. Then we'll  
have to call his brother.

MRS. FRITZ  
Rosetta, that's none of your  
business.

ANGEL  
You don't have to call to my  
brother. Shit!

ROSETTA  
It **is** my business. Shoo!

JOHN  
Angel, stop. Don't make it  
worse.

BRIAN  
Angel get me! He shoot me.

MR.GOLUB  
Suspending you isn't enough.  
You don't deserve to be in  
this school at all!

MRS. FRITZ  
No one is going to get you.  
You're safe here.

JOHN  
Mr. Golub, don't you think---

ROSETTA  
Ooooh! What about Lucy and  
Ricky? They be okay?

ANGEL  
Lucci, why you do this to me?

MRS. FRITZ  
They're Okay.

MR. GOLUB

You did this to yourself. Now keep your mouth shut.

JOHN

Can't we punish him some other way?

MR. GOLUB

He tried to assault another student, he threatened to use a gun, he destroyed your class and he threw an object at me! I should be calling the police!

ANGEL

Call the cops! See if I care!

JOHN

Angel, please. Don't talk back.

MR. GOLUB

He doesn't respect anyone. I'm sorry that I can only suspend him for a week.

ANGEL

Don't worry. I ain't comin' back to this junk place.

MR. GOLUB

I'm going to transfer him out of this program as soon as it can be arranged. He's not only defiant, he's dangerous. Mrs. Fritz will support my decision.

MRS. FRITZ

Angel loves those gerbils and look what he did! It's best to stay away from him.

ROSETTA

No! I like Angel. He fine.

MRS. FRITZ

Angel doesn't belong here, Rosetta.

BRIAN

Call the police! Make him go away!

ROSETTA

Shut up, Brian! Angel mad at you 'cause you a big baby!

MRS. FRITZ

Rosetta! That's not nice. And it's not Brian's fault.

(ROSETTA clicks her teeth and rolls her eyes).

WILLIAM

I demand to do decimals now.

JOHN

Please. Mr. Golub, I know he'll cool off after the suspension. You're right. He has a really bad temper but, like you said, they blow off steam but then it's over.

MR.GOLUB

We'll discuss it later. I'm going to take him to the main office.

JOHN

Why not leave him here with me. We can have our lunch sent up. And you can make the calls and we'll take it from there.

MR.GOLUB

I don't want him out of this room.

JOHN

Yes. Of course.

MR.GOLUB

I want a written report detailing the incident.

JOHN

Okay.

MR.GOLUB

Including your request for a suspension.

JOHN

My request?

BRIAN

No decibels! We sing, teacher?

MRS. FRITZ

No dear. We need to do some writing.

ROSETTA

I like writin' but you need to help me with my spellin'.

MRS. FRITZ

Of course.

ROSETTA

What we be writin'?

MRS. FRITZ

A report.

ROSETTA

A book report? I hate those.

MRS. FRITZ

I want you to write down exactly what you saw Angel do.

ROSETTA

I ain't seen nothin'.



MR.GOLUB

John! This kid sabotaged your formal observation. I have to include it in my teacher evaluation. If you don't request a suspension, it will look as if you condone his violent behavior. Write it up today, while the facts are still fresh in your mind.

MRS. FRITZ

Mr. Lucci needs you to tell the truth. Write it down now so you don't forget anything.

(THE BELL RINGS.)

MR.GOLUB

I'll send someone up with your lunch. (He exits.)

MRS. FRITZ (CONT'D)

All right, children. It's time for lunch.

(MRS. FRITZ motions to them to line up.  
She leads them out of the room.)

BRIAN

It's Pizza Day!

ROSETTA

No, I be smelling that meatloaf.

WILLIAM

Don't eat the mystery meat!

ROSETTA

Oooh! You ain't lyin! That meat be na---st---y!

(They exit.)

BLACKOUT: END OF SCENE 1

SCENE 2: (THE STAFF ROOM THIRTY MINUTES LATER. JOHN IS FINISHING HIS LUNCH. ANGEL'S TRAY IS UNTOUCHED.)

JOHN

Aren't you hungry? You should eat something.

ANGEL

Don't talk to me. Shit!

JOHN

Okay. Then don't talk to me and watch your mouth. (Pause) The fries are good. (Pause) Lucy and Ricky are okay. In case you want to know. (Pause) Great!

(JOHN takes out some paper from his notebook and begins to write.)

ANGEL

You write a report on me?

JOHN

I have to. I have no choice.

ANGEL

You scared of that old man.

JOHN

Angel, Mr. Golub is my boss. You don't understand.

ANGEL

Why you do baby Math today?

JOHN

What?

ANGEL

Baby Math. First, second, third... Why you make the class do baby junk today? Why no fraction and decimal? You know me and William can do fraction and decimal.

JOHN

Well... Brian can't do fractions and decimals. And Rosetta is not quite there yet.

ANGEL

So?

JOHN

So... the lesson was supposed to be for everyone. I wanted to show the principal how smart you all are and how much work you can really do.

ANGEL

But we not smart!

JOHN

Hey, you all have your strengths and weaknesses. Not everyone is good at everything. Angel, you are doing really well.

ANGEL

Lucci, you lying! The book you give to me... a little kid on my block could read that book! I see little kids in the fourth grade do fraction and decimal! I'm in the ninth grade.

JOHN

Okay, so you're a little behind. But you're learning and you're trying. And I want to help you catch up.

ANGEL

Then why you mess up? I don't learn new Math today. I don't catch up today. Lucci, you ashamed! You make it easy so Brian can do it but you make me look bad. (Pause) You make the class look stupid! (Pause) You make me look stupid!

JOHN

Come on, Angel. I did it because---

ANGEL

---'Cause you wanna look good to you boss! You don't care how we look. How I look!

JOHN

Angel, that's not---

ANGEL

---Is true! You care for you stupid lesson! I see how you act. All nervous and shit. You a different teacher today, Lucci. You messed up! And you make me get mad and now look! I get punish! I have to leave school!

JOHN

It's only for a week and then you'll be back.

ANGEL

No, I won't. Is no better here. Is the same like all the school. That principal he hate me. He think I'm stupid but I am no stupid! You... you the same like all the teacher.

JOHN

Angel, no es verdad.

ANGEL

No, Lucci! I don't care you speak to me Spanish. Is for show. It don't mean nothin'! You don't change nothin'!

JOHN

I'm sorry. What can I do to make it better?

ANGEL

Nothing. I wish I never come here. I don't care no more. Write the report. Leave me alone. Let me go to my house. Call to my brother to come get me. I wanna go to my house.

(ANGEL puts his head down on the table. JOHN stares at him and begins to write the report.)

LIGHTS SLOWLY FADE: END OF SCENE 2

SCENE 3: (TWO WEEKS LATER. LIGHTS UP IN THE STAFF ROOM. MR. GOLUB AND MRS. FRITZ ARE SEATED AT THE CONFERENCE TABLE.)

MR.GOLUB

I wanted to thank you, Mrs. Fritz, for your support.

MRS. FRITZ

I suppose it's the appropriate course of action.

MR.GOLUB

It's best for everyone concerned. The child is disturbed and he needs more help than we can give him here.

MRS. FRITZ

Yes. Has Mr. Lucci been informed?

MR.GOLUB

Not yet. How long do you think the process will take?

MRS. FRITZ

Oh, well, evaluations take time, Mr. Golub.

MR.GOLUB

Yes, of course, but---

MRS. FRITZ

---I have to administer a battery of tests. Communication, emotional development---

MR.GOLUB

---Certainly. I understand that but---

MRS. FRITZ

---And all the data must be interpreted so that we may devise the most effective educational strategies.

MR.GOLUB

It sounds like a very thorough procedure.

MRS. FRITZ

Oh, yes. It is. And then, of course, we must find Angel an appropriate school setting.

MR.GOLUB

So... about how long do you think all of this will take?

MRS. FRITZ

I think we have to assume that Angel will be with us for the remainder of the year.

(MORE)

MRS. FRITZ (CONT'D)

It would be difficult to find a program that would accept him this late in the term. He hasn't returned yet, has he?

MR.GOLUB

No. Since the suspension, no he hasn't. What do you suggest we do with him, when he does come back? The boy is an animal. I need your assurance that he will be kept under control.

MRS. FRITZ

We will certainly have to initiate an interim plan of action. That is why Mr. Lucci's input will be essential, if we hope to make any progress at all.

MR.GOLUB

Is that really necessary?

MRS. FRITZ

Mr. Lucci knows him better than anyone.

MR.GOLUB

Yes, but I don't think John will agree with our decision. He doesn't want the boy transferred.

MRS. FRITZ

Mr. Golub, if the tests indicate that Angel is maladjusted, then Mr. Lucci would be obliged to favor a transfer.

MR.GOLUB

It'll take more than test results to convince John Lucci. He has a tendency to act emotionally in matters like these. I have to say I... expected more from him.

MRS. FRITZ

It's only natural that he feels a strong attachment.

MR.GOLUB

I don't think he should be present at the hearing. How will it look to the board, if the boy's own teacher disagrees with our decision to transfer him out?

MRS. FRITZ

I am confident that Mr. Lucci will act in a professional manner. He was a witness to the child's rampage. And even he was unable to stop it.

MR.GOLUB

Mrs. Fritz, you are very capable of presenting the data with our recommendation at the hearing. I have Mr. Lucci's written report. It can be presented along with the other data.

MRS. FRITZ

Mr. Golub, the classroom teacher is an essential part of---

MR.GOLUB

---I'm trying to do what's best for the boy, Mrs. Fritz.

MRS. FRITZ

Yes, of course, but---

MR.GOLUB

---But I also have an obligation to do what's best for the school. You do understand that.

MRS. FRITZ

Certainly. I appreciate your position but---

MR.GOLUB

---Did you know that there have been other incidents with this boy? After school. Apparently, he has threatened other students. They are terrified of him and they have informed their parents.

MRS. FRITZ

Oh. I didn't know there were other incidents.

MR.GOLUB

Yes, and the parents are pointing fingers at your department. They are furious that we're trying to increase your numbers. They want me to take action, Mrs. Fritz.

MRS. FRITZ

Well... we are taking action. And Angel is the exception, not the rule. Mr. Golub, most of our children are---

MR.GOLUB

---Yes, yes, we know that but try convincing the parents. They're not happy having your Special classes in this building because of students like this. They're very concerned about the safety and well-being of their own children and they are going to pressure me.

MRS. FRITZ

Oh, I'm so sorry. What do you think we should do?

MR.GOLUB

Let me think about it. Look, I know this is new territory for all of us. We've never had a kid like this. I don't want you to be overly concerned. I'll deal with the parents.

MRS. FRITZ

Thank you, Mr. Golub.

MR.GOLUB

I certainly would appreciate anything you can do to speed up the process. The sooner the boy is transferred, the better.

MRS. FRITZ

All right. I will start gathering the testing materials immediately. When do you think Angel will return to class?

MR.GOLUB

I don't know, Mrs. Fritz. We've called the home several times but there has been no response.

MRS. FRITZ

Oh, I see. Once I've gathered the materials, I would like to start testing Angel as soon as possible.

MR.GOLUB

All right.

MRS. FRITZ

And I will have to interview the brother to complete the evaluation.

MR.GOLUB

Very good. I'll keep you informed. Carry on, Mrs. Fritz!  
(He exits.)

MRS. FRITZ

Have a nice day!

BLACKOUT: END OF SCENE 3



SCENE 4: (THE CLASSROOM: A MONTH LATER. JOHN IS EATING LUNCH AT HIS DESK. THERE IS A LOUD BANGING AT THE DOOR.)

JOHN

Come in! The door is open!

(More banging at the door)

JOHN (CONT'D)

I said the door's open! Jesus Christ!

(BRIAN runs in.)

BRIAN

Teacher! Teacher! They bother me! Come downstairs!

JOHN

Brian, this is my lunch period. What are you---

BRIAN

---Teacher! They bother me!

JOHN

I heard you. Who is bothering you?

BRIAN

The boy!

JOHN

Well, that narrows it down to about six hundred. Brian, do you know the boy?

BRIAN

Yeah!

JOHN

Does he have a name?

BRIAN

Yeah!

JOHN

Well... what is it?

BRIAN

I don't know!

JOHN

Do you know who his teacher is?

BRIAN

Yeah! (Pause) The lady! The lady! (He mumbles to himself.)

JOHN

Brian, calm down and think about what you're saying. (Pause) Now. Tell me. Who is the boy's teacher?

BRIAN

The big lady. The big lady... with the balls! The big balls!

JOHN

You mean Ms. Wycoff? The gym teacher?

BRIAN

Yeah! The big one! Yeah!

JOHN

Is she in the yard or in the gym?

BRIAN

Yeah! The yard! They play ball! That boy bother me!

JOHN

Did he hit you?

BRIAN

No! He call me bad names! They laugh! He throw the ball in my face! I don't like it! Teacher, I stay here with you?

JOHN

No, Brian, this is my lunchtime and your playtime. Go back downstairs and tell the gym teacher about the boy. She's in charge and she will help you.

BRIAN

No! I tell her! I did! She tell me, "Go away! Sit down!"

JOHN

Sit down where?

BRIAN

In the big office. Teacher, I wanna watch! Why I can't watch?

JOHN

Brian, go back downstairs and you tell Ms. Wycoff that Mr. Lucci wants to speak with her. Tell the gym teacher that I'm coming downstairs in a few minutes. Okay?

BRIAN

(Nervously) Oh, Boy!

JOHN

Then find Rosetta and stay with her. Tell her I said to watch you until I come down.

BRIAN

Oh, boy! I stay here? I be quiet. I listen to Supremes.

JOHN

No Supremes. Go, downstairs. You can't always run away from things. Come on, Brian. Tell the gym teacher what I said and then find Rosetta. Okay?

BRIAN

Yeah. Okay. Oh, boy! Oh, boy!

(BRIAN exits. JOHN sits at his desk and sips his coffee. There is a banging at the door.)

JOHN

What is this, Grand Central Station? The door's open!

(ROSETTA barges in. She is out of breath.)

ROSETTA

I ran up all them stairs! Sorry! One minute! I gotta... oooh! Think I got me some asthma. I gotta tell 'ya!

JOHN

Rosetta, calm down. Take a few deep breaths. That's it. Take it easy. (Pause) Whenever you're ready.

ROSETTA

Mr. Lucci, I got news for you.

JOHN

Yeah and I have news for you. You shouldn't be up here.

ROSETTA

Teacher, I ain't playin'.

JOHN

I'm not playing either. I want you to watch out for Brian until I come downstairs and then---

ROSETTA

---Mr. Lucci, I seen Angel.

JOHN

No, you didn't.

ROSETTA

Oh, yeah! I got eyes! I just now be seein' him!

JOHN

Where?

ROSETTA

In the yard. Outside the fence. He be with some big boy! I don't know him.

JOHN

Is he coming back to school?

ROSETTA

No. I don't know. He be runnin' at the mouth and he be cur---s---in'! He say he gonna get that man.

JOHN

Who?

ROSETTA

The principal. He say he gonna get him and Brian!

JOHN

Yeah, right. You know he's just talking. He doesn't mean it.

ROSETTA

No! He be real mad! He say... he be sayin'... shoo!

JOHN

What? Tell me!

ROSETTA

He say--- he be gettin' you, too.

JOHN

Baloney. Rosetta, don't worry about it. Go downstairs and find Brian. Some kids are picking on him and I want you to---

ROSETTA

---Mr. Lucci, he say he got a gun. You should go home. Sometime these boys get crazy. I don't know---

JOHN

---Rosetta, stop it! He's just talking big. He won't do---

ROSETTA

---What if he do?

JOHN

Okay. Do you want me to go down to the yard with you?

ROSETTA

No, teacher. I go and I be watchin'. If he do anything---

JOHN

---Rosetta, it'll be okay. Please, just find Brian.

ROSETTA

Where Brian at?

JOHN

I told him to see Ms. Wycoff in the yard.

ROSETTA

I know that lady. Okay, I find Brian. What I do with him?

JOHN

Just stay with him until the bell rings and then I'll meet you in the cafeteria. Thanks, Rosetta. You're the best.

ROSETTA

Yeah, I know. I be a good student. Later, Mr. Lucci.  
(ROSETTA exits.)

JOHN

Oh, boy!

BLACKOUT: END OF SCENE 4

SCENE 5: (THE SAME AFTERNOON IN THE CLASSROOM. JOHN IS AT THE CHALKBOARD. ROSETTA, BRIAN AND WILLIAM ARE SEATED.)

JOHN (CONT'D)

Now, First Avenue goes which way? Rosetta?

ROSETTA

Uptown!

JOHN

Right! Uptown. Rosetta, how do you know that?

ROSETTA

'Cause the numbers be gettin' more bigger. Say you be waitin' on the bus at Ninety-six Street.

JOHN

Ninety-six~~th~~, **sixth** Street.

ROSETTA

Oh, yeah. Ninety-six---~~th~~ Street. So then the next stop be Ninety- eight---~~th~~ Street and then a hundred, like that. So you know you be goin' uptown. I know 'cause I ride the city bus now. I don't need to ride that old cheese bus no more. (She laughs.)

JOHN

Rosetta. That's cool but we're trying to learn this so Brian and William can take the city bus, too.

ROSETTA

(To Brian and William) Yeah, you gonna like it. There ain't no matron on the city bus. You can stand up, if you want.

JOHN

Right. Brian? Which bus will you have to take to go home?

BRIAN

City bus!

JOHN

Yes, but on what street or avenue?

BRIAN

Second!

JOHN

Good for you!

BRIAN

Yeah! Good for me!

JOHN

Is that bus going uptown or downtown?

BRIAN

Downtown!

JOHN

Good. Now, picture this. You are on the bus and you are going downtown. On what street will you get off the bus?

BRIAN

My street. I get off my street.

JOHN

I hope so. What's the number of your street, Brian?

BRIAN

Fifty-two.

JOHN

Close enough! Fifty-second.

BRIAN

Yeah! Fifty-second!

JOHN

How will you know when it's Fifty-second Street?

WILLIAM

Ask the conductor!

ROSETTA

They ain't no conductor on a bus! You gotta ask the driver.

JOHN

Right. Brian, you can ask the bus driver or you can---

(The bell rings.)

ROSETTA

Time to go!

BRIAN

Time to go!

JOHN

Whoa! Wait a minute, wait a minute! Some reminders for tomorrow. Bring your lunch because we have the half-day trip.

(MORE)

JOHN (CONT'D)

Rosetta, bring your bus pass. Brian and William... make sure you bring money for the bus. We're taking the city bus to the zoo and we can practice what we've learned. Okay?

ALL

Yes, Mr. Lucci.

BRIAN

We go on the city bus! Yeah! Groovy! (He claps his hands.)

ROSETTA

We got homework?

JOHN

Not for tomorrow. Not unless you want some. Do you want some?

ROSETTA

No, thank you. Wait! Who gonna wash the board?

JOHN

I'll do it when I come back up. Okay, then. Pack up your things, push your chairs in, and line up at the door. (JOHN pulls ROSETTA aside.) Did you see "our friend" again this afternoon?

ROSETTA

No, teacher. He be gone when I come downstairs.

JOHN

Okay. If you see him again, would you tell him that I'd like to talk to him. Tell him he should come back to class. Okay?

ROSETTA

Okay.

JOHN

All right, everybody. Let's Rock n Roll.

(They exit. JOHN closes the door behind him.)

(Long Pause)

(The door slowly opens and ANGEL enters. He walks over to his desk. When he sees it is empty, he flips it over. He races over to the bulletin board and rips down all of the displays. He approaches the gerbil cage and snatches one of them out. He lifts it over his head and then slowly lowers it. He begins to kiss and caress it. He hears footsteps in the hall. He puts the gerbil in the cage, runs over to the door and hides behind it. The door opens and JOHN enters. ANGEL slams the door.)



JOHN (CONT'D)

Angel! What are you playing? Let's give the teacher a stroke? You scared the crap out of me. What did you do to the room?

(ANGEL remains motionless and glares at JOHN.)

JOHN (CONT'D)

Jesus Christ! Was that necessary? That's other people's stuff. (Pause) We miss you, you know. (Pause) Oh. You're still not talking to me. Well... I guess I don't blame you. Obviously, you're still angry. It's understandable. (Pause) Look Angel, you can't be angry forever. We all make mistakes and sometimes we do stupid things. We all do. We don't always know the right thing to do. No one is perfect so you have to forgive and move on. (Pause) All right! If you're still angry then talk about it! Say something! Use words! Scream if you have to but you can't go around destroying things and threatening people! That kind of behavior is unacceptable. It doesn't get you what you want. Don't you understand that? (Pause) Look, I know you're frustrated. You think no one is listening to you, right? Right? I know how that feels. I feel frustrated and I'm disappointed, too. I thought we were getting somewhere but now I feel that I'm fighting a losing battle and I don't what to do for you. I know I should be doing something but... I don't really have the power to do anything. Oh, I know you think I do because I'm a teacher. But I don't. So, yeah, I'm frustrated, too. Defeated. (Pause) I bet you feel like that all the time. It's not a good feeling, is it? (Pause) I know how smart you are. I know how frustrated you must feel. I know you're angry because we don't recognize you, do we? Angel, I know you are capable of great things. I don't want you to give up on us and please don't ever give up on yourself. Don't you see how amazing you are? (Pause) Show Mr. Golub! Show Mrs. Fritz! Show them who you really are! Show them what you can be, damn it! Don't give them what they expect! Don't let them decide---

ANGEL

---Lucci!

JOHN

Yeah? What!

ANGEL

You talk too much!

JOHN

Right. Sorry. (Pause) I'm listening.

ANGEL

Why you don't stick with me? Why you don't help me?

JOHN

I couldn't. The principal made the decision to---

ANGEL

---You the teacher! You suppose to help me!

JOHN

I know. I know you think I could but---

ANGEL

---When I first come to this place, I think is different here. I wanna do good. I think you the most best teacher I ever got. I try to show to you--

JOHN

---I know.

ANGEL

No! You don't know! I try to show to you I can do it. You make me think I can do it but look now! I am in trouble. Is no different. Is like before.

JOHN

It is different because it matters now.

ANGEL

No, it don't!

JOHN

Yes, it does! It matters to me.

ANGEL

Not to me! I don't care! If I stay home, good! If I go to another school, I don't care!

JOHN

Don't say that! You do care!

ANGEL

No, I don't!

JOHN

Then why did you come here today! Huh? Why? Why did you come back? If you don't care, then why are you here?

ANGEL

Because... because I---

JOHN

---Why?

ANGEL  
Mind you business!

JOHN  
No! You are my business! Why did you come back?

ANGEL  
I have to do something! All right?

JOHN  
What?

ANGEL  
Something!

JOHN  
What? Tell me!

ANGEL  
No!

JOHN  
Tell me, damn it! Angel, come on! Tell me!

(JOHN grabs ANGEL by his arms and they struggle.)

ANGEL  
No! Get off me!

JOHN  
Angel!

ANGEL  
No! Get off me! Don't make me---

JOHN  
---What! What is it?

ANGEL  
I said get off me!

JOHN  
Not until you tell me what you came to do!

ANGEL  
Okay! Okay! Shit! Let go!

(JOHN lets go of ANGEL'S arms. ANGEL reaches into his pocket under his coat.)

ANGEL (CONT'D)

You wanna see? Huh? Now I show to you!

(JOHN lunges at ANGEL and wrestles him to the floor.)

JOHN

Oh, God! Don't! Give it to me! Don't be stupid! Angel!

ANGEL

Lucci, stop! What's the matter? You crazy? Stop! Get off! Lucci! Get off me!

(JOHN pulls out a small bottle from ANGEL'S pocket.)

JOHN

(Getting up) Give me that! It's a... bottle!

ANGEL

(Brushing himself off) Shit, Lucci! You smart. You lucky you don't break it. I could sue you.

JOHN

It's a bottle?

ANGEL

For Lucy and Ricky. What you think? They water bottle got a crack. Rosetta say is leaking water. (Pause) Is a present.

JOHN

Thank you. Thank you very much.

ANGEL

Yeah.

JOHN

I don't know what to say. I thought... You're coming back, right? Lucy and Ricky need you. We need you.

ANGEL

That old lady call to my house. She say to my brother we need a test. She say I could go to another school.

JOHN

I won't let that happen. I promise. I'll do whatever I can to make it---

ANGEL

---Don't matter, Lucci. I got to leave anyway.

JOHN

Why? Who says so?

ANGEL

My brother. He say I have to stay with my grandmother now.

JOHN

So?

ANGEL

My grandmother live far away in Brooklyn.

JOHN

Let me call your brother. Maybe I can explain why---

ANGEL

---No, Lucci. My brother can't take care of me no more. I give him too much trouble. That's it! I go to Brooklyn tomorrow. That's it.

JOHN

I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. About everything.

ANGEL

Lucci, you can make me a favor?

JOHN

Sure.

ANGEL

You can give to me the book?

JOHN

The book?

ANGEL

You know. The fat book with the hard cover on it.

(JOHN nods his head. He walks over to the closet and removes two books. He gives them to ANGEL.)

JOHN

Here. Read this one first. Then, you can go on to this one. It's even harder.

ANGEL

And more fatter!

JOHN

And more fatter.

(Pause)

ANGEL

I got to go now.

(ANGEL walks to the door.)

JOHN

Angel? Take care of yourself. Let me know how you're doing. Okay? If there's anything I can---

ANGEL

---Yeah. Okay. (Pause) Muchas gracias, maestro. (He exits.)

(JOHN walks to the phone and dials.)

JOHN

Mr. Golub? John Lucci. (Pause) Fine, thank you. Mr. Golub, I really need to speak with you today. Do you have time? (Pause) I understand. I know you're busy but... Next week? Mr. Golub, this is important and we need to talk now. It's urgent. I'm sure you can fit me in for five minutes. (Pause) My tone? I don't think I have a tone. (Pause) Yes, I understand. (Pause) Yes, it's about Angel but it's more than that. (Pause) Yes, I know you've made your decision and I'm not trying to reverse it. (Pause) No, I'm not trying to pressure you. (Pause) No. What? (Pause) Mr. Golub, I don't have an agenda. I have some thoughts about how we can improve the department and I'd like to... yes. (Pause) I know. (Pause) I'm aware that I don't have tenure, Mr. Golub. (Pause) No, I would rather discuss it face-to face. (Pause) Disappointed? (Pause) Well, I'm sorry you feel that way. But I... I'm disappointed, too. (Long Pause) Tomorrow at 7:00 will be fine. See you then.

BLACKOUT: END OF SCENE 5

SCENE 6: (IN THE CLASSROOM AND THE STAFF ROOM SIMULTANEOUSLY. MRS. FRITZ IS WITH MR. GOLUB. SHE IS READING TEACHER RÉSUMÉS FROM A FOLDER. ROSETTA, WILLIAM AND BRIAN ARE STANDING AND FACING THE AUDIENCE.)

STUDENTS  
I pledge allegiance

MRS. FRITZ  
Robert Eisenberg, City  
University, two years  
experience.

STUDENTS  
To the flag

MRS. FRITZ (CONT'D)  
Harold Pollack, recent  
graduate, no experience.

STUDENTS  
Of the United States of  
America;

MRS. FRITZ (CONT'D)  
Joseph Moran, Cornell  
graduate, student teaching  
experience.

STUDENTS  
And to the republic for which  
it stands,

MRS. FRITZ (CONT'D)  
Samuel Roberts. Four years in  
three different schools. Red  
flag!

STUDENTS  
One nation, under God,  
invisible,

MRS. FRITZ (CONT'D)  
Patrick Murphy, eight years  
experience, two excellent  
recommendations. Available  
immediately.

STUDENTS  
With liberty and justice  
for all.

LIGHTS SLOWLY FADE OUT: END OF PLAY