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Cast of Characters

The Adults:

MISS NELSON

MISS VIOLA SWAMP

PRINCIPAL HUMLEKER

DETECTIVE MCSMOGG

The Kids:

RAYMOND, a chubby little George Smiley figure

PHOEBE, a shy, nerdy girl

GEORGE JORGENSON, JR., an Asian-American jock

LAVITA, a little spitfire girl

MORRIS, aka “Mouse,” a tough, little African-American kid

KIMBERLY, a perfect, popular girl, with great hair

ELVIS, a slicked-back greaser boy who talks like “The King”

Setting

The school, the schoolyard, the police station, Miss Nelson’s street, under the sea, on the moon, in the air.

Acknowledgments

Miss Nelson is Missing! was commissioned by The Children’s Theatre Company in Minneapolis. It premiered January 7, 1997 and closed April 13, 1997.

MISS NELSON IS MISSING!

adapted by Jeffrey Hatcher

BASED ON THE BOOK BY
HARRY ALLARD AND JAMES MARSHALL

(Spot up on the curtain. Hanging in front of it is a blackboard. It's huge, like a 19th century drop. The blackboard looks like the one from the book—with this written at the top in chalk: "My name is Miss Nelson." Below are some questions:)

("1 + 1 = ?")

("The capital of Texas is ?")

("The distance to Mars is ?")

(Over this we hear "School Days, School Days" sung by a lovely children's choir. Just a few notes. Then: Slam! Another blackboard drop slams down in front of the first one. It reads: "Miss Nelson is Missing!")

(Music: blaring, dramatic, horror movie shriek!)

(Curtain rises to reveal the hallway.)

(Outside room 207. Inside we can hear yells and shrieks and screams. After a moment we see PRINCIPAL HUMLEKER appear. The ruckus builds. The PRINCIPAL turns out front and glares, as if to say "something's got to be done!" He storms off.)

(MISS NELSON tries to calm the class. They keep up the cacophony.)

MISS NELSON. Class! Class! Please, class, I beg you! Class!
CLASS! *(Shrieks:)* **CLASS!!!**

(The KIDS finally calm down.)

MISS NELSON. *(Sighs:)* Thank you!

(KIMBERLY raises her hand.)

MISS NELSON. Yes, Kimberly?

KIMBERLY. Miss Nelson, you didn't call roll! You didn't call roll, Miss Nelson, you made a *mistake!*

MOUSE. Mistake! Mistake!

LAVITA. Miss Nelson, she made a mistake!

KIDS. MISTAKE! MISTAKE! MISTAKE!

MISS NELSON. (*A tight smile:*) Thank you, Kimberly, for reminding me of my error.

KIMBERLY. (*Butter wouldn't melt:*) You're welcome, Miss Nelson.

MOUSE. (*Imitating her:*) "You're welcome, Miss Nelson!"

LAVITA. Teacher's pet!

MOUSE / LAVITA. TEACHER'S PET! TEACHER'S PET! KIMBERLY'S PINK PANTS ARE WET!

(*KIMBERLY pulls LAVITA's hair.*)

LAVITA. OWWW!

MISS NELSON. (*Claps hand:*) Now, class, class—!

MOUSE. That's right, applaud!

GEORGE. YEAH! Clap! Clap!

ELVIS. Bring your hands together, baby!

(*They all start to clap and cheer.*)

MISS NELSON. No, that's not what I—Class? OHHH!

(*It dies down.*)

May I call roll now?

LAVITA. What-ever.

MISS NELSON. All right then! Kimberly?

KIMBERLY. Present, Miss Nelson.

LAVITA. (*Blows a raspberry:*) BLLLLLWWWW!

(MOUSE and GEORGE start coughing, blurting “brown nose, brown nose” between the coughs.)

MISS NELSON. A-hem! Mouse?

MOUSE. That is me! I am the Mouse Man!

KIDS. (*Chanting:*) MOUSE! MOUSE! MOUSE!

MISS NELSON. “Mouse.” Present. George Jorgenson, Jr.?

GEORGE. (*Like a Marine:*) YO!

MISS NELSON. LaVita?

LAVITA. What-ever. (*Smacks chewing gum.*)

MISS NELSON. Phoebe?

PHOEBE. I’m nauseous.

MISS NELSON. Raymond?

RAYMOND. I hate you.

MISS NELSON. ...and last but not least...Elvis?

ELVIS. I’m with ya, baby.

MISS NELSON. Elvis, I know your parents named you after their favorite singer, but could you *try* not to call me *baby* in class?

ELVIS. You got it, baby.

LAVITA. Miss Nelson, I wanna ask you a question.

MISS NELSON. That’s what I’m here for.

LAVITA. When’s recess?

KIDS. Yeah! Yeah! Recess! We Want Recess! WE WANT RECESS!
WE WANT—!

MISS NELSON. But class, we just *started!* We have to study math, spelling, geography, grammar—

GEORGE. Grammar-schmammam, we ain’t gotta study no stinkin’ grammar!

MOUSE. Not no way!

LAVITA. Nuh-uh!

GEORGE. What we need is recess!

MOUSE. RE-CESS! RE-CESS!

PHOEBE. (*A hand up:*) Miss Nelson, I'm nauseous.

MISS NELSON. Phoebe, now come on, you're not—

MOUSE. RECESS! RECESS!

KIDS. (*Chanting:*) RE-CESS! RE-CESS!

MISS NELSON. Couldn't I just open a window?

MOUSE. That's cool.

GEORGE. Then we can push Raymond out the window.

LAVITA. Yeah, Raymond takes a dive!

MISS NELSON. Nobody's pushing *anybody* out the window— (*Sotto voce:*)—unless I push first. (*To class:*) Come on now, learning can be fun!

LAVITA. Prove it.

MISS NELSON. I'll give you an example. Just look here on the board. Let's do math, and I know you'll enjoy it.

“One plus one.
What could be more fun?”

(The KIDS stare at her.)

You see? It rhymes!

LAVITA. (*Holds her nose:*) Wooooo!

MOUSE. Man, that's lame.

KIMBERLY. Like, was that supposed to be humorous?

MISS NELSON. Now, come on! One plus one! Who knows the answer? Kimberly?

KIMBERLY. (*Valley girl:*) Uh... Like, I don't *do* math. I'm going to be a Super Model.

MISS NELSON. Kimberly, even Super Models have to add and subtract.

KIMBERLY. Name one.

MISS NELSON. All right, Morris?

MOUSE. I *told* you: my name is “Mouse.”

MISS NELSON. Morris, wouldn’t you rather go by your *real* name instead of your *nickname*?

MOUSE. Mouse *is* my real name. The *nickname* is Morris.

MISS NELSON. LaVita, how about you?

LAVITA. I’m not answering *anything* after *that* stinky joke.

MISS NELSON. Phoebe?

PHOEBE. Math makes me dizzy.

MISS NELSON. Then use a calculator.

PHOEBE. My mommy bought me one, but I threw up on it.

MISS NELSON. George?

GEORGE. I forgot the question.

MISS NELSON. Raymond?

RAYMOND. I hate you.

MISS NELSON. Doesn’t *anyone* know what one plus one equals?

(ELVIS raises his hand.)

At long last! *ELVIS!* What’s the answer? What’s one plus one?

ELVIS. *(Speaks like Presley:)* Eleven.

(MISS NELSON stands up RAYMOND and PHOEBE.)

MISS NELSON. Now, look, class! See Raymond and Phoebe here! *One* Raymond plus *one* Phoebe equals—?

GEORGE. A pair of geeks.

MOUSE. Revenge of the nerds.

LAVITA / KIMBERLY. “Raymond and Phoebe sittin’ in a tree—”

MISS NELSON. Elvis? When *you* see Raymond and Phoebe, what do *you* say?

ELVIS. (*Looks up, cool, then sings:*)

“Return to sender,
Ba-dooba-dooba,
Address unknown!
Ba-dooba, dooba!”

MISS NELSON. All right, let’s try geography. Who knows the capital of Texas? Come on, now, *someone* must know.

(*KIMBERLY raises a hand.*)

Yes, Kimberly?

KIMBERLY. Paris.

MISS NELSON. No.

KIMBERLY. All the Super Models live in Paris.

MISS NELSON. Well, that may be, but—

KIMBERLY. Why would you want to be the capital of *anything* unless you could live in Paris?

MISS NELSON. LaVita, what’s the capital of Texas?

LAVITA. Spain.

MISS NELSON. LaVita, Spain is a whole *country*.

LAVITA. You wanna make somethin’ of it?

MISS NELSON. Mouse?

MOUSE. The capital of Texas is MY BUTT!

MISS NELSON. Raymond?

RAYMOND. I hate you.

(*ELVIS raises a hand.*)

MISS NELSON. Elvis! What’s the capital of Texas?

ELVIS. (*Deadpan:*) Graceland.

MISS NELSON. All right, we'll leave geography for later. How about spelling? We all know how to spell right? Kimberly?

KIMBERLY. (*Stands, scrawls on board:*) "Spell." S. P.E.L. "Spell."

(*KIDS applaud and cheer. KIMBERLY bows.*)

MISS NELSON. Actually, Kimberly, that's not... Never mind. How about oceanography. (*Holds up map:*) LIFE UNDER WATER! We could study all the fish in the sea!

KIDS. Boooo!

MISS NELSON. O.k., then...how about... (*Picks up space capsule model*) ...how about science! This is a space capsule that can go as far away as Mars or the moon!

KIDS. Boooo!

MISS NELSON. Okey-dokey! I know! Who here knows what entomology is?

LAVITA. Inta *what*?

MISS NELSON. Entomology! It's the study of insects!

MOUSE. I don't know etomology, but I et a' insect once! Wanna see?

(*Opens mouth.*)

LAVITA / KIMBERLY. OOOOO!

MISS NELSON. Entomology studies insects. Tell you what: it's almost nine o'clock—you know what that means? That means Story Time!

KIDS. Oh, man— Brother— Story Time, yuck—

MISS NELSON. I just happen to have a story about insects from our Story Time Book. (*Holds up book.*) Ready?

(*She sits on her story stool and starts to read from her book.*)

O.k.! Once upon a time there was an insect that was **two different animals**.

(MOUSE and GEORGE and LAVITA sneak up behind MISS NELSON with a rope.)

MISS NELSON. And this animal was one kind of animal when it was little and another kind of animal when it got big!

(They begin to go around her with the rope.)

When it was little it crawled on a thousand legs, but when it was big it could fly through the— (She notices she's being tied to her chair:) Hey! Oh! Oh, no, no, class, please don't...don't do—!

(They're cheering now.)

(PHOEBE goes up to MISS NELSON.)

PHOEBE. Miss Nelson, I'm sick!

MISS NELSON. Phoebe, help me!

PHOEBE. I have to go to the bathroom.

MISS NELSON. Phoebe, untie me, please!

PHOEBE. (In her face:) I'm gonna throw up.

MISS NELSON. Go! RUN! NOW!

(PHOEBE runs out.)

(MISS NELSON struggles as the KIDS go nuts again.)

MISS NELSON. Now, listen, class! Please—OHHHHH! Class? Please, class.

(PRINCIPAL HUMLEKER enters.)

PRINCIPAL. Well, well, well!

(Class immediately pretends to behave. MISS NELSON looks winded.)

MISS NELSON. Principal Humleker!

PRINCIPAL. Miss Nelson. Class.

KIDS. (Desultory sing-song:) Good morning, Principal Humleker.

PRINCIPAL. Studying hard, are we?

KIDS. (*Desultory sing-song:*) Yes, Principal Humleker.

PRINCIPAL. That's hubba-hubba, *darn* hubba-hubba. Miss Nelson, why are you bundled up like that?

MISS NELSON. Uh, well—

PRINCIPAL. Teaching the students about camping, eh?

MISS NELSON. Huh?

PRINCIPAL. (*Points:*) Learning how to tie a knot!

MISS NELSON. A knot? Oh, yes, that's it! And if you could just untie this kn—

PRINCIPAL. Yeppee-doodle-doo, that's quite a sailor's shank, Miss Nelson!

MISS NELSON. Sure is, now, if you'd just—

PRINCIPAL. I don't think I could untie that knot without a hammer and a saw!

(*PHOEBE re-enters with a wastepaper basket. She sticks it in front of MISS NELSON.*)

PHOEBE. I didn't make it to the bathroom.

MISS NELSON. Ah. Thank you, Phoebe.

PHOEBE. You're welcome.

(*LAVITA sticks up a white hand and pulls off a blobby elastic glove.*)

LAVITA. Look! I made gloves from paste!

KIMBERLY. Oooo!

GEORGE. Ugh!

MOUSE. Gross!

(*PHOEBE turns green and runs for the wastepaper basket again.*)

PRINCIPAL. Now, students, y'know: the big test is next Monday—a week from today, and you've all got to study so you can pass with flying colors and make the next grade! So I certainly hope you're all

learning a lot about science, geography, math (*Looks at board:*)
...spelling... Say, that's not how you spell spel—

(Bell rings!)

CLASS. RECESS!

MISS NELSON. Now, class, you *will* be dismissed, but you'll be dismissed in an orderly fash—

(The KIDS shoot out their chairs and crash past MISS NELSON and PRINCIPAL HUMLEKER, and out through the door. This motion frees MISS NELSON, and she and PRINCIPAL HUNLEKER spin like tops. Once the KIDS are gone, the two adults re-stabilize, dizzy.)

PRINCIPAL. Miss Nelson! I believe your students have a discipline problem!

MISS NELSON. You've noticed?

PRINCIPAL. Why, they're nothing but a gang of hooligans.

MISS NELSON. You caught them on a quiet day. They're not really *bad* kids, Mr. Humleker, they're just...really, really *rotten* kids.

PRINCIPAL. I have come to the conclusion that you're not strict enough with the little youngsters.

MISS NELSON. You mean "Spare the rod and spoil the child"?

PRINCIPAL. Actually, I don't think corporal punishment is the answer. Studies have shown that physical handling of an unruly child leads to life-long dysfunctional patterns of behavior and a lot of lawsuits. Maybe you should do what Mr. Snuff does?

MISS NELSON. Well, how does Mr. Snuff keep his kids in line?

PRINCIPAL. First day of class, he shoots a few of the small ones, just to let them know he means business. How are things going for the big test, Miss Nelson?

MISS NELSON. That test is going to be a bloodbath. None of them are going to get out this room above an F-minus.

PRINCIPAL. (*Fumes:*) F-minus! Why...why, that's... That's less than F! Miss Nelson, aren't you *happy* at our school? Don't you *like* teaching?

MISS NELSON. I *love* teaching! The only problem is the kids I teach just don't want to be taught by me. I smile at them, and they see my face, and they know in a second that I'm a sucker.

PRINCIPAL. Well, you can't get a new face. I know. I've tried. Your problem is you want to be liked. I don't care about being liked, and you know what?

MISS NELSON. Nobody likes you?

PRINCIPAL. Look, Miss Nelson, you'd better come up with a plan and quick. When next Monday's test is over I want to be able to report straight A's across the board for *all* our classes—and that means the class in Room 207. If we get straight A's, I'll win the school board's annual award for best principal! This year the prize is two expense-paid weeks in at the International Ballpoint Pen Convention in Saskatchewan!

MISS NELSON. (*Not impressed:*) Mmmmm.

PRINCIPAL. Hubba-hubba sis-boom-ba!

(PRINCIPAL *exits.*)

(MISS NELSON *sits on her desk.*)

MISS NELSON. I'm a failure! What am I going to do?

(MISS NELSON *picks up the "dunz" cap, puts it on her head and mopes. The curtain comes down. The blackboard reads: "The Next Morning"*)

(*Curtain rises.*)

(KIDS *in place again. It's an exact duplicate of the earlier insanity.*)

(*Screaming, yelling, spitballs, paper airplanes, hair-pulling, Indian whoops, someone is tied-up, someone's upside down, someone's doing cartwheels...*)

(*But there's no MISS NELSON.*)

(*The chalkboard reads: "Today is Tuesday."*)

(After a moment or two of this, MOUSE and GEORGE move away from the group and we see they've gagged and tied RAYMOND to a chair. LAVITA and KIMBERLY run around RAYMOND. PHOEBE tosses paper airplanes at him. ELVIS fires spitballs at him.)

(MOUSE and GEORGE speak down front. They're arguing.)

GEORGE. —I said: I'M gonna be the leader!

MOUSE. —and I said: *I'M* gonna be the leader!

GEORGE. Oh, *YEAH?* Well, I said: I'M GONNA BE THE LEADER!

(They start to fight.)

(LAVITA and KIMBERLY start yelling, jumping, clapping.)

LAVITA / KIMBERLY. FIGHT! FIGHT! GEORGE AND THE MOUSE ARE HAVING A FIGHT!

GEORGE. *(Pulling away:)* I'm gonna be the leader of this gang whether you like it or not!

MOUSE. Who says!

GEORGE. Toughest kid wins!

MOUSE. That's not fair, you're bigger than me!

GEORGE. All right then, we'll vote! Who votes for me to be leader of our new gang—Kimberly?

KIMBERLY. *(Jumping:)* Oh, I vote for *you*, George Jorgenson, Junior!

GEORGE. And I vote for me, too.

MOUSE. Well, I vote for me, too! What about you, LaVita!

LAVITA. Why can't a girl be the gang leader?

MOUSE. Girls can't be gang leaders 'cause of the *height requirement!*

LAVITA. Oh.

MOUSE. But if you vote for me, I'll put you in my Cabinet. I'll make you Attorney General.

LAVITA. In that case, I vote for Mouse!

GEORGE. Phoebe?

PHOEBE. I'm not feeling too good.

MOUSE. What about you, Elvis?

ELVIS. Kings don't vote, man.

LAVITA. Then it's up to Raymond.

(They turn to look at RAYMOND, bound and gagged.)

RAYMOND. MMMMPPPHHH!

LAVITA. Raymond can't vote!

MOUSE. Why not?

LAVITA. 'Cause Raymond's the one we're gonna throw out the window!

GEORGE. Yeah, throwing Raymond out the window was gonna be the gangleader's first official act!

MOUSE. Hey, Raymond! Which one of us do you want to throw you out the window?

RAYMOND. MMMMMPHH! MMMPHHHHHHH!!!

GEORGE. What'd he say?

KIMBERLY. I don't know.

LAVITA. I think he said "Oil can."

MOUSE. I know: let's *all* throw him out the window!

GEORGE / LAVITA / KIMBERLY. Yeah!

(They start to pick up RAYMOND, when PHOEBE comes down-stage.)

PHOEBE. Hey, you notice something?

LAVITA. I notice you don't got your head in a wastepaperbasket.

PHOEBE. No. I mean...you see what time it is?

(They all look up at the clock. It's 8:20 a.m.)

LAVITA. It's almost eight thirty.

GEORGE. Yeah.

MOUSE. So what?

PHOEBE. Well...if it's almost eight thirty...then where's Miss Nelson?

KIMBERLY. Phoebe's right.

LAVITA. Yeah, Miss Nelson, she's always right on time!

GEORGE. She always starts class at eight on the dot!

MOUSE. Then...if Miss Nelson always starts class at eight...and now the clock shows twenty *after* eight...that means she's almost ten minutes late!

LAVITA. *(To MOUSE:)* I'm changing my vote. You're too dumb to vote for.

KIMBERLY. That means George Jorgenson wins! *(Cheerleading:)*
GEORGE! GEORGE! J-O-O-R-J! GEORGE! YAYYYYYY!

GEORGE. *(Stands on the desk:)* As new gangleader, I say that if Miss Nelson isn't here in thirty seconds, we get to go home!

(Cheers!)

BUT BEFORE THAT: WE CAN SCREW AROUND AS MUCH AS WE WANT!

KIDS. YAYYY! HOORAY!

(MOUSE and LAVITA gag RAYMOND again.)

(Whoops, cheers!)

GEORGE. LET'S DO IT!

MOUSE. NOW WE CAN REALLY ACT UP!

LAVITA / KIMBERLY. WE'RE GONNA BE JUST TERRIBLE!

(They haul RAYMOND above their shoulders.)

(Just then the closed classroom door swings open and slams against the wall. And a truly horrible woman stands in the doorway.)

MISS SWAMP. NOT SO FAST!

(The KIDS gasp.)

KIDS. UGGGHH!

MISS SWAMP. PUT 'IM DOWN!

(The KIDS are frozen staring at this witch.)

MISS SWAMP. (Like a mad snake:) HISSSSSSS!

KIDS. WO!

(They drop RAYMOND with a thud and scamper to the far side of the room where they cower, teeth chattering.)

GEORGE. (Shaking with fear:) Who-who-who-who—?

LAVITA. Who're YOU?

(MISS SWAMP stomps in and slams the door shut. Wham!)

MISS SWAMP. I'm your new teacher! (Out front:) MISS VIOLA SWAMP!

KIDS. (Aghast:) VIOLA SWAMP?!

(MISS SWAMP slams a ruler down on the desk.)

KIDS. (Jump back:) AGGGH!

MISS SWAMP. (Points at RAYMOND:) WHADDAYA DOING WITH THAT ONE?

MOUSE. (Points at GEORGE:) Ask HIM! HE'S the gangleader!

GEORGE. I'm not the gangleader!

LAVITA. He won the election!

GEORGE. I want a re-count.

MISS SWAMP. QUIET!

(MISS SWAMP bangs her huge briefcase onto the desk. It makes quite a noise.)

Now untie the chubby one!

KIDS. (*Overlaps:*) Yes, Miss Swamp, I—er—right away—Sure—

(*MOUSE and ELVIS untie RAYMOND.*)

MISS SWAMP. (*Drill sergeant:*) All right, all right! EVERYBODY SIDDOWN AND SHADDUP!

(*They scurry to their seats.*)

MISS SWAMP. There's a new broom in Room 207! And here it is!

(*MISS SWAMP takes a long broom out of her briefcase.*)

MOUSE. You gonna ride that?

MISS SWAMP. Don't push me, kid, I get testy! O.k., open your books!

GEORGE. But—

KIMBERLY. But—

PHOEBE. But where's Miss Nelson?

LAVITA. Yeah!

MISS SWAMP. Never mind that! Open your books! It's time this class started to learn a few things!

KIDS. *LEARN?*

GEORGE. But Miss Nelson never made us learn nuthin'!

MISS SWAMP. ANYTHING!

MOUSE. That's what he said!

MISS SWAMP. From what I hear, this class can't add, can't spell, and can't find it's way to the bathroom!

PHOEBE. (*Raises hand:*) I can find my way to the bathroom.

MISS SWAMP. You don't know geography, you don't know science, you don't know animals, vegetables, or minerals! Well, from now on, you're going to add and subtract like computers! You're going to know geography like you were explorers! And you're go-

ing to spell like champions! O.k., who here is the one who calls himself “Mouse”?

MOUSE. I am Mouse!

MISS SWAMP. Well, from now on, we’re going to call you by your *real* name: *MORRIS*.

MOUSE. But—

MISS SWAMP. Don’t you call *me* “BUTT”!

MOUSE. But—!

MISS SWAMP. You said it again!

MOUSE. But I didn’t—!

MISS SWAMP. He said it again! You want detention, Morris?

MOUSE. Who teaches detention?

MISS SWAMP. ME!

MOUSE. Then I don’t want detention.

(LAVITA pops her bubble gum. It snaps! She blows a huge pink bubble.)

MISS SWAMP. Is that *gum* you’re chewing?

(The bubble is frozen in mid-balloon.)

LAVITA. WHUP!

MISS SWAMP. Do you have any idea what the penalty is for chewing gum in *my* class?

(Beat. LAVITA’s bubble deflates and goes back into her mouth. She swallows with a loud gulp.)

LAVITA. *(Gulps:)* No. What?

MISS SWAMP. DETENTION!

(LAVITA coughs and out comes the gum with a splat.)

A-HA! EVIDENCE! Back away from that, sister, I’m gonna make a chalk outline around that piece of gum!

(MISS SWAMP *starts to outline the gum.*)

GEORGE. Uh...Miss Swamp, it's almost nine o'clock.

MISS SWAMP. Yeah? SO? You want an award?

PHOEBE. Well, Miss Nelson, she always reads to us a nine o'clock.

MISS SWAMP. How would *you* know? I hear you're always *pre-tending* to be sick so you can hide in the bathroom!

PHOEBE. Not all the time!

RAYMOND. Just during lessons and tests.

GEORGE. Miss Swamp, aren't we gonna have story hour?

MISS SWAMP. NO!

KIDS. "NO"?

PHOEBE. No story hour?

KIMBERLY. But we *always* have story hour!

GEORGE. Even though we never listen!

MISS SWAMP. You shouldda thought of that earlier! From now on, instead of story hour we're going to do trigonometry, geometry, long division, calculus, spelling, biology, science, and state capitals!

ELVIS. Oh, baby!

(MISS SWAMP *turns slowly to glare at ELVIS.*)

MISS SWAMP. (*With deep vengeance:*) **Who here called me... "BABY"?**

(*All the KIDS scamper to one side of the room, leaving the glowering MISS SWAMP facing ELVIS.*)

ELVIS. (*Quivering:*)

"Love me tender,
Love me sweet,"

MISS SWAMP. It's "Elvis," isn't it? Well, it's "Heartbreak Hotel" for you, pal! The penalty for calling a teacher "baby" is...
DETENTION!

(Bell rings!)

MOUSE. Recess!

KIDS. RECESS! RECESS!

(The KIDS head to the door. MISS SWAMP blocks their way, though, and slams the door shut. **SLAM!**)

MISS SWAMP. NOT SO FAST!

GEORGE. But it's recess!

MISS SWAMP. Not for Room 207 it isn't!

GEORGE. But Miss Swamp—!

KIMBERLY. Miss Swamp, it's in the *rules!*

MOUSE. That's right!

GEORGE. Every kid gets to go to recess!

MISS SWAMP. Not *this* class!

GEORGE. She can't be serious.

LAVITA. Somebody call a lawyer.

MISS SWAMP. In *my* class, you're going to *skip* recess, stay inside—and do—**ARITHMETIC!**

KIDS. AHHH!

MISS SWAMP. Get up to that board! Get up there! You heard me, march! One, two, one, two! ROUSCH! ROUSCH! TEN-HUT!

(The KIDS are lined up at the board now.)

All right, chalk in hands, hands to yourself, aaannnnnd: START!

(Blows a whistle.)

One plus one... (They scrawl:) ...minus one...plus one...plus two...minus three...plus four...plus five... (Gaining speed:) times seven, times eight, divided by nine, factored by the square root of the previous sum multiplied by the division of two times the cube of the hypotenuse minus the multiplication of two rhomboids and the long side of the circumference of a four sided triangle!

(The KIDS and the chalkboard are a blur of white dust. The board is crammed with all sorts of figures. KIDS bump into each other, cough, stumble.)

TIME'S UP!

(MISS SWAMP comes down the line grading their work.)

Hmm. F...F...uhhh...F!...MMMMMMM...Triple F...D-minus.... nah , F! F! F! F! F! You *all* fail!

PHOEBE. Didn't *anybody* get it right?

GEORGE. What was the answer?

MISS SWAMP. The same as the first question. One plus one equals...?

KIDS. *(Shake their heads in shame:)* **Two...**AHHHHHH.

MOUSE. *(A glance at the others:)* I, uh, I guess we learned our lesson, Miss Swamp.

LAVITA. *(Winks at GEORGE:)* Yeah, Miss Swamp.

GEORGE. *(A wink at MOUSE:)* Yes, I guess you taught us good.

(LAVITA signals PHOEBE.)

PHOEBE. Uh—*yeah!*

RAYMOND. *(Grumbles:)* No, she didn't.

LAVITA. *(Slaps RAYMOND's shoulder:)* QUIET!

KIMBERLY. So, Miss Swamp, since you've educated us all so well...I suppose we can go out to recess now.

MISS SWAMP. *(Smiles sweetly:)* You think so, huh?

KIDS. Well, yes— You see— As a matter of fact

MISS SWAMP. **NOT A CHANCE!** You thought you could pull a fast one on me the way you used to with that dumb, old Miss Nelson! Well, Viola Swamp isn't Miss Nelson! Miss Nelson was probably the worst teacher who ever taught at this school!

MOUSE. She wasn't *that* bad.

MISS SWAMP. Did *Miss Nelson* ever teach you one plus one was two?

GEORGE. Well—

MISS SWAMP. Did *Miss Nelson* ever teach you how to spell?

KIMBERLY. Well, not exact—

MISS SWAMP. Did *Miss Nelson* ever give you... (*Goes to her briefcase on the desk.*) ...**TWELVE HOURS OF HOMEWORK!**

KIDS. AHHHHH!

(MISS SWAMP begins taking books out of her briefcase and handing them to the KIDS in stacks, the books just keep coming out of the bottomless briefcase.)

MISS SWAMP. Kimberly! George Jorgenson, Junior! Morris! LaVita! Phoebe! Raymond! Elvis!

(By the time it's all over, each KID is holding a tall stack of about twenty huge books.)

THERE! That should keep you busy for one night!

KIDS. **ONE NIGHT?!!**

(Bell rings.)

MISS SWAMP. RECESS IS OVER!

(The KIDS drop all their books in horror. The door swings open, and PRINCIPAL HUMLEKER enters.)

PRINCIPAL. Well-well-well, hubba-hubba-ho!

KIMBERLY. Mr. Principal!

GEORGE. Principal Humleker!

PRINCIPAL. *(Beams.)* Everything going hunka-hunka-doodle I hope!

LAVITA. Mr. Principal, be our pal!

PRINCIPAL. *(Smiles.)* Why, what's the matter, class? Miss Swamp here hasn't been driving you too hard, I hope! Good morning, Miss Swamp!

MISS SWAMP. (*Bats eyes, hands on hips:*) Why, good morning to you, Principal Humleker! HUBBA-HUBBA!

PRINCIPAL. (*Surveys the scene:*) What's all this then? Books? Math? Homework? This certainly isn't the *old* Room 207! Miss Swamp, you're doing a real humdinger-dee-doo job!

MISS SWAMP. (*Mae West:*) Oh, Mr. Humleker, why, I bet you say that to *all* the substitute teachers!

PHOEBE. "Substitute"?

MOUSE. Principal Humleker, when's Miss Nelson comin' back?

(*PRINCIPAL and MISS SWAMP exchange glances. Their faces frown.*)

PRINCIPAL. That's a bit of a sore subject, Mr. Mouse. You see...

(*PRINCIPAL moves to the door and looks over his shoulder dramatically.*)

Miss Nelson—*IS MISSING.*

(*The screaming, horror movie music blasts again. He exits, closing the door.*)

(*The KIDS stare out front in horror.*)

(*MISS SWAMP laughs a witch-like cackle.*)

(*Lights go down.*)

(*"Ride of the Valkyries" kind of music comes up.*)

(*Music transition. We're about to do a sequence of days.*)

(*Lights up.*)

(*In the background is Miss Nelson's class. in the foreground is the PRINCIPAL. He sings:*)

PRINCIPAL.

Didja hear?

Didja see?

Please forgive my glee!

What a teacher!

KIDS. *What a creature!*

PRINCIPAL.

Tell the facul-ty!

She's a bone-crushin' mama, call for worker's comp!

She's a witch on wheels, and her name is Miss Swamp!

ALL.

SHE'S MISS SWAMP! SWAMP! SWAMP! SWAMP! SHE'S MISS SWAMP! SWAMP! SWAMP!

(Music under.)

(The chalkboard reads: "Today is Wednesday. Your Teacher is Miss Swamp!" Including the exclamation point.)

(The KIDS are seated. MISS SWAMP stands at the blackboard.)

MISS SWAMP. O.k., class, today is Wednesday. Let's start with an F! HOW DO YOU SPELL "SPELL," LITTLE MISS KIMBERLY?

KIMBERLY. *(Scared:)* Uh...s-p-e-l- uh— *(Repeats)* —uh—l...?

MISS SWAMP. That's right!

KIMBERLY. It is?

MISS SWAMP. Yes!

KIMBERLY. Can I go home now?

MISS SWAMP. NO!

(Lights down on class. Up on PRINCIPAL down front. They sing:)

PRINCIPAL. She gives them lots of homework!

KIDS. And no recess!

PRINCIPAL. It makes me grow a big smirk!

KIDS. We're in a mess!

ALL. IT'S A SWAMP! SWAMP! SWAMP! SWAMP! SHE'S MISS SWAMP! SWAMP! SWAMP!

(Lights up on class. The board reads: "Today is Thursday")

MISS SWAMP. Today is Thursday, class. George Jorgenson, Junior! On your feet!

GEORGE. (*Scampers to his feet.*) Yessir!

MISS SWAMP. What's the distance between the earth and its nearest neighboring planet?

GEORGE. I, uh...what's it's nearest neighboring planet?

MISS SWAMP. DON'T YOU KNOW?

GEORGE. I must have been sick that day.

MISS SWAMP. CLASS?

LAVITA. Pluto?

MISS SWAMP. F!

PHOEBE. Venus?

MISS SWAMP. F!

ELVIS. Nashville.

MISS SWAMP. F!

RAYMOND. Mars.

(All the KIDS look at RAYMOND.)

MISS SWAMP. Correct, Raymond.

RAYMOND. Thank you, Miss Swamp. I love you.

(Lights down on class. Up on the PRINCIPAL downstage. He sings:)

PRINCIPAL. *She isn't pert and perky!*

KIDS. *She's got some warts!*

PRINCIPAL. *She tougher than beef jerky—*

KIDS. *In boxer shorts!*

ALL. *SHE'S MISS SWAMP! SWAMP! SWAMP! SWAMP! THE SWAMP STOMP! STOMP! STOMP! STOMP!*

(Lights on the class. The board reads: "Today is Friday.")

MISS SWAMP. Class today is Friday. What's the capital of the state of Texas!

KIMBERLY. Houston!

MISS SWAMP. F!

GEORGE. Dallas!

MISS SWAMP. F!

MOUS. Fort Worth!

MISS SWAMP. Come on, the capital of Texas is...blank.

KIDS. We draw a blank.

MISS SWAMP. I *LOVE* GIVIN' OUT Fs!

(Lights down on class. Up on the PRINCIPAL downstage.)

PRINCIPAL. *Warn every kiddy!*

KIDS. *Get out the torture rack!*

PRINCIPAL. *It makes a fella giddy!*

KIDS. She's on tenure track!

ALL. *SHE'S MISS SWAMP! SWAMP! SWAMP! SWAMP! THE SWAMP STOMP! STOMP! STOMP! STOMP! THE SWAMP—STOMP!*

(The song ends.)

(Bell rings!)

(PRINCIPAL scampers off.)

(Lights up on class.)

MISS SWAMP. Stay in your seats!

KIMBERLY. But it's three o'clock.

MOUSE. School's over!

LAVITA. Yeah, thank God it's Friday!

MISS SWAMP. *(Picks up space capsule:)* Friday my astronaut! You have 200 pages of homework for this weekend, and I want all of it

completed by the time I walk in here Monday morning for the big test! I want it finished, and I want it perfect, and if each and every one of you haven't got straight A's across the boards I'll *double* your homework and I'll *triple* your homework and I'll keep you in detention for as long as ye all shall live! AND YOU KNOW WHY? 'CAUSE I'M VIOLA SWAMP, THAT'S WHY! HA-HA-HA-HA-HA-HA-HA! Whoops! Gotta go to Tai-Kwan-Do!

(MISS SWAMP sweeps out. The door slams behind her. The KIDS look at each other. They are dazed and exhausted.)

GEORGE. I'm in shock.

LAVITA. This can't be happening!

KIMBERLY. I can't stay in detention, Super Models have to start young!

MOUSE. Whatta you say, Elvis?

LAVITA. Yeah, Elvis, how do you feel?

ELVIS. Ain't nothin' but a hound dog cryin' all the time.

(The KIDS shake their heads sadly at this truth.)

GEORGE. Miss Nelson was kinda silly, but at least she was *human!*

LAVITA. Yeah.

GEORGE. Well—*half-human.*

MOUSE. Half-*teacher.*

GEORGE. Hey, wait a minute!

KIMBERLY. What?

GEORGE. I just thought of something. They didn't say Miss Nelson was sick, or Miss Nelson had quit. They said—

PHOEBE. They said Miss Nelson was *missing.*

LAVITA. Yeah!

MOUSE. That's right! *(Blinks.)* What does *that* mean?

GEORGE. It means that if somebody could *find* Miss Nelson—

LAVITA. If somebody could find Miss Nelson—

KIMBERLY. Then maybe—

GEORGE. Just maybe—

MOUSE. I get it! If somebody could find Miss Nelson—then she wouldn't be missing!

GEORGE. (*Slaps MOUSE on head:*) THEN SHE'D COME BACK AND BE OUR TEACHER!

MOUSE. That too.

KIMBERLY. Miss Nelson would be a lot nicer than Miss Swamp!

LAVITA. Yeah!

GEORGE. Miss Nelson would let us go out to recess!

LAVITA. That's right!

RAYMOND. I always liked Miss Nelson.

MOUSE. So what do we do?

LAVITA. Yeah, what?

GEORGE. We go wherever you go when you have a person who's missing?

KIMBERLY. Which is?

PHOEBE. We go to the department of Missing Persons!

KIDS. YEAH!— THAT'S IT!—

GEORGE. There's a special detective at the police station who all he does is find missing persons!

MOUSE. THEN LET'S GO TO THE POLICE STATION AND TELL HIM TO FIND MISS NELSON!

KIDS. YEAH!— RIGHT!— OKAY!— LET'S GO!

(The KIDS all hustle out the door—all except RAYMOND, who stands still in the middle of the room. PHOEBE is the last of the KIDS to get to the door. She stops; noticing that RAYMOND is still in the room.)

PHOEBE. Raymond, aren't you going to the police station with the rest of the kids?

RAYMOND. There's something fishy about all this?

PHOEBE. What do you mean?

RAYMOND. I said it once, I'll say it twice: Something here smells fishy.

PHOEBE. *(Takes his hand and pulls:)* Come on, let's go!

(PHOEBE and RAYMOND exit.)

(Music up: The "Peter Gunn" theme.)

(The red brick front of the police station drops down front. The sign above the station reads: "Police Station.")

(MOUSE, GEORGE, KIMBERLY, LAVITA, ELVIS—with PHOEBE and RAYMOND trailing behind—enter, look at the sign, nod to each other, and go in.)

(The facade is whisked away, and we're in the Sam Spade-like office of "The Bureau of Missing Persons Department." A desk and swivel chair. An old fan. But there's no policeman in sight.)

(The KIDS look around.)

MOUSE. Well?

GEORGE. Well, where is he?

LAVITA. Yeah!

(A head pops up from behind the desk. It's DETECTIVE MCSMOGG.)

MCSMOGG. Somebody looking for *me*?

GEORGE. That's him!

LAVITA. HIM?

KIMBERLY. Are you Detective McSmogg?

MCSMOGG. That remains to be seen. Who's asking and whadaya want?

MOUSE. Well, we're asking!

GEORGE. And we wanna find a missing person!

MCSMOGG. Then I'm Detective McSmogg!

PHOEBE. What were you doing under your desk?

MCSMOGG. A really good detective has to get inside the mind of his prey! He's gotta walk in the shoes of his quarry! He's gotta know what it's like to hide out, to be a fugitive on the run! Also, I dropped my pencil. Well, if you want to find a missing person, you've come to the right place! This is the Bureau of Missing Persons Department! Or, is it the Department of Missing Persons Bureau? Well, whatever it is, this is the bureau of departments where we find persons who are missing. That is, I mean, when I say this is where we find them, I don't mean this is where we *find* them, not that many persons get missing here in the department, unless of course this is where a person might be hiding!

(MCSMOGG suddenly looks under his desk.)

Nope. No one there.

But the long and the short of it is: If you've missed someone, chances are this is where I'll miss them too. I mean, this is where I'll find them! I mean, this is where I— SAY, WHO'S MISSING ANYWAY?

(The KIDS look at each other.)

ELVIS. Maybe we should try the Highway Patrol.

MCSMOGG. *(Hands out cards:)* McSmogg's the name, missing people's my game! Take a card, any card, they're all the same.

PHOEBE. *(Reads:)* "Detective McSmogg."

MOUSE. "Department of Missing Persons—"

LAVITA. "Bureau."

GEORGE. "You lose 'em, I snoop 'em!"

MCSMOGG. *(Takes out a doughnut:)* Yep, I've worked on pretty much every missing case this town's ever seen: the Case of the

Missing Mistletoe, the Case of the Missing Missile, the Case of the Missing Mississippi Mud Pie—

RAYMOND. You found all those?

MCSMOGG. I said I *worked* on 'em! Don't try to trip me up on trick questions, I've had Police Academy training!

KIMBERLY. Well, we heard you found missing *persons*.

MCSMOGG. Missing *persons* are my specialty! Why, I've got all the techniques here, all the doo-dads and thingamagiggies. See this pipe? This is official police detective equipment! So's this hat! I even had a magnifying glass once, but I lost it.

MOUSE. Well, we want you to find a missing person.

MCSMOGG. You DO? Geewhilikers, you've made my day! O.k., let's start: Which one of you is missing?

LAVITA. US?

MCSMOGG. You're *all* missing?

GEORGE. No, she means we—

MCSMOGG. (*Grabs paperwork:*) If you're all missing, it's gonna take extra manpower! We're gonna have to go into overtime! And the *paperwork!* Hoo, mammy!

PHOEBE. You don't understand!

KIMBERLY. We don't want you to find *us!*

MCSMOGG. NO?

KIDS. NO!

MCSMOGG. Well, if it's someone *else* who's missing, it's gonna be a lot harder! I mean, you're all here in the room, I couldda found you guys in a week or two! But if it's somebody else, geewhiz, man oh man, I don't know, I— Well, let's give it a try! I have a perfect record so far, and I don't plan on screwing it up!

MOUSE. A perfect record?

GEORGE. Then that means you always get your man?

MCSMOGG. I didn't say *that*, I said I had a *perfect record!*

KIMBERLY. Well, we're not looking for a man.

MCSMOGG. Aha! Then that's our first clue!

PHOEBE. What do you mean?

MCSMOGG. If we're not looking for a man, then we're looking for...someone else.

ELVIS. (*To RAYMOND:*) Is he for real?

MCSMOGG. Yessir, if we're not looking for a man, that narrows the investigation considerably. That means we're looking for...we're looking for...

LAVITA. A woman.

MCSMOGG. A WOMAN! DING-DING-DING-DING! AHA! I *knew* I was on the right track! Yessir, a woman it is! That's one clue down! Next! Go on! I'm rollin' now!

KIMBERLY. Detective McSmogg, we're looking for our teacher, Miss Nelson!

MCSMOGG. No, no, that's too easy!

LAVITA. What?

MCSMOGG. Don't you see? That's just what they *want* us to think! No, it's something cleverer, something far more mysterious and diabolical!

MOUSE. No, really, we're looking for Miss Nelson!

KIMBERLY. She's the one who's missing!

GEORGE. We can prove it!

MCSMOGG. You can? Oh. Well, that was no fun. (*Sighs:*) O.k., so your teacher Miss Nelson is missing. When's the last time you saw her?

MOUSE. Monday in school.

PHOEBE. And then when we came in next morning—

LAVITA. She was gone! She's been gone all week!

MCSMOGG. Hmm. Sounds like Miss Nelson...is missing.

ELVIS. You figured that out, huh?

MCSMOGG. All right, you got any leads to go on?

LAVITA. No.

MOUSE. Not a one.

RAYMOND. Well...

GEORGE. Well, what?

KIMBERLY. Yes, Raymond, what were you going to say?

PHOEBE. Go ahead, Raymond.

RAYMOND. Well... I think Miss Nelson is closer than we think.

MCSMOGG. Well, where do you *think* she is?

MOUSE. We don't know.

MCSMOGG. Closer than that, eh? Very suspicious.

RAYMOND. I mean: well...has anybody checked on Miss Nelson? Has anybody seen her driving out of town? Or taking a bus? Or walking down the street?

KIDS. No— No, I guess not.—

RAYMOND. Has anybody gone to her house?

MCSMOGG. Oh, don't make me laugh!

PHOEBE. Whaddaya mean?

MCSMOGG. A missing person's not gonna be missing in her own house! That's plain dopey!

RAYMOND. I'm just saying—

MCSMOGG. That'll be enough, young fella, I'm the trained investigator here. If Miss Nelson was at her own home, don't you think we would have heard about it by now? No, no. Chances are she's involved in some devious plot, some dastardly plan. Maybe she

was kidnapped! That happens, y'know. Teachers make so much money, I bet the kidnappers'd want quite a ransom, yessir, they'd want forty, fifty bucks!

KIMBERLY. Kidnapped!

LAVITA. You really think Miss Nelson has been kidnapped?

MCSMOGG. I don't *think*, I *know*! Yep, this is a kidnapping case if I ever saw one, and I've never seen one! Yessir, this calls for an investigation of almost Sherlockian proportions! Round the clock surveillance, top to bottom searches, round up every suspect in town!

MOUSE. So whaddaya gonna do first?

MCSMOGG. Go to lunch. I'm starving. Then I'm gonna track down and interrogate every teacher who's ever taught in this school district, every past, present, and future chalk-jockey in the whole of the whole city!

PHOEBE. But that'll take too long! That'll take forever!

MCSMOGG. That's okay, I'm paid by the hour. Yeah, I'll make those homeroom honchos spill the beans on this Nelson dame. I'll give 'em the third degree, I know how to make 'em squirm. Know the three words that strike fear and terror into the heart of every teacher in America—*Japanese School Year*. So long!

(MCSMOGG *exits.*)

(*The KIDS leave the office and walk outside to the street.*)

LAVITA. What an idiot.

KIMBERLY. He's going to be no help at all!

MOUSE. So what're we gonna do?

PHOEBE. I think we should follow Raymond's clue.

MOUSE. Aw, who wants to do what *Raymond* thinks!

GEORGE. Yeah!

LAVITA. Yeah, Raymond's a nerd!

KIMBERLY. And *you're* a nerd for believing him!

PHOEBE. I am not! If Raymond thinks we should go to Miss Nelson's house, then I'm going with him. Something...something here smells like fish!

MOUSE. That's not fish, that's Elvis's hair gel.

ELVIS. Hey, man, chill out.

RAYMOND. Well, I'm going to find out what I can at Miss Nelson's house.

PHOEBE. And I'm with you. Anybody else?

KIMBERLY. Well—

GEORGE. It's not like we got a *better* idea.

MOUSE. *Have* a better idea.

GEORGE. It's not like we *have* a better idea.

LAVITA. Yeah.

GEORGE. O.k., Raymond. I never thought I'd ever say this, but: YOU LEAD.

MOUSE. Yeah, we're behind you—THIS *ONETIME*. LaVita?

LAVITA. Do it.

MOUSE. Kimberly?

KIMBERLY. It'll be like BAYWATCH!

PHOEBE. What about you, Elvis? Do you wanna come along?

(Beat.)

ELVIS. Just don't step on my blue suede shoes.

(They exit to the "James Bond" theme—the Monty Norman guitar music.)

(The police office goes away, and Miss Nelson's street comes into view. It's Miss Nelson's neat, little pink stucco house.)

*(Once it's in place, we see the KIDS enter stealthily—all in spy trenchcoats and dark glasses. They move as a group. The music ends on the guitar chord—**dernnng!**)*

RAYMOND. SHHH!

PHOEBE. This is it.

LAVITA. This is Miss Nelson's house?

MOUSE. Bingo.

KIMBERLY. How do *you* know?

MOUSE. We soap her windows every Halloween.

PHOEBE. You do?

GEORGE. We soap her windows every Christmas and Easter too.

MOUSE. It's an easy score.

RAYMOND. Keep down below the hedges. If she's inside, she'll see us!

LAVITA. I don't see any lights on inside.

MOUSE. You think kidnappers leave the lights on?

LAVITA. If one of them was coming home late.

RAYMOND. Quiet!

GEORGE. Huh?

RAYMOND. I said: "SHUSH!"

GEORGE. Hey, I said we'd follow you here, but that doesn't mean I'm gonna take bein' shushed be a shrimpy, little four-eyes!

RAYMOND. I may be a shrimpy little four-eyes *now*, but some day I'm gonna be a billionaire software king, and you're gonna be living in a trailer court.

GEORGE. Yeah, but what's your point?

PHOEBE. Settle down, or someone'll see us!

KIMBERLY. Well, we can't see anything from down here!

RAYMOND. Somebody's going to have to sneak up to the window and peek in. Who wants to volunteer? Step forward.

(They all step back, leaving GEORGE ahead.)

You're a brave man, George.

GEORGE. HEY!

MOUSE. We can't send George in.

PHOEBE. Why not?

MOUSE. Look at his size.

LAVITA. He's barely two feet tall.

MOUSE. He won't be able to see over the sill!

GEORGE. They're right, you know.

MOUSE. *(The hero:)* I'll go!

RAYMOND. You can't go.

MOUSE. Why not?

RAYMOND. Well, you're too tall. Somebody'd see you from the street.

MOUSE. Darn!

PHOEBE. I have an idea!

LAVITA / KIMBERLY. WHAT?

PHOEBE. Kimberly and LaVita are the right size.

LAVITA. Yeah! Why can't a *girl* sneak up and peek in the window?

(RAYMOND looks at PHOEBE. He shrugs.)

RAYMOND. No reason.

LAVITA / KIMBERLY. ALL RIGHT! DIG IT! GET DOWN!

RAYMOND. O.k., now, get up there and get a good look inside.

KIMBERLY. I don't even know what I'm looking *for*?

RAYMOND. You wanna look for any trace of Miss Nelson. Mouse?

MOUSE. Yeah?

RAYMOND. You go down to the end of the block and be look-out!

MOUSE. Right!

(MOUSE darts down right.)

RAYMOND. George Jorgenson, you take the other block!

GEORGE. Okay!

(GEORGE darts down left.)

RAYMOND. Phoebe, you stay by me. And Elvis...?

ELVIS. Yeah, man?

RAYMOND. You...uh...you just, uh, "be cool," huh?

ELVIS. *(Thumbs up:)* I'm frosty.

LAVITA. Let's go!

(LAVITA / KIMBERLY tip-toe to the gate. KIMBERLY tries it. it's locked.)

KIMBERLY. *(Whispers:)* Hey! PSSST! It's locked!

RAYMOND. What?

KIMBERLY. *(Whispers louder:)* It's locked!

LAVITA. *(Full voiced:)* **The gate's locked!**

(KIMBERLY covers LAVITA's mouth. LAVITA and KIMBERLY rush back to RAYMOND.)

KIMBERLY. Now what do we do?

RAYMOND. We'll have to pick the lock somehow

KIMBERLY. How?

PHOEBE. I know!

RAYMOND. What?

PHOEBE. A hair pin.

RAYMOND. A hair pin?

PHOEBE. My mommy says a lady's hairpin is always the best locksmith.

RAYMOND. Well, where are we gonna find a hairpin?

(They all look at KIMBERLY.)

KIMBERLY. I don't use hairpins! My hair is *naturally* wavy!

RAYMOND. Kimberly, this is important. *Do* you use hairpins?

LAVITA. Use 'em? She sets off metal detectors at the airport!

KIMBERLY. All right! I use *one*.

LAVITA. Hand it over.

(KIMBERLY grouses, sticks her hand deep into her hair and pulls out a truly gigantic hairpin. Her curls fall. Her hair now flaps on the side of her head like two beagle ears. RAYMOND takes the hairpin. It's heavy.)

PHOEBE. *(Awed:)* Wow.

RAYMOND. That's some hairpin.

LAVITA. What else do we need?

PHOEBE. Well...we need something to lubricate the lock.

RAYMOND. Like oil.

KIMBERLY. Oil? You're gonna put oil on my hairpin?

LAVITA. Why not, you already spray cement on it every morning.

RAYMOND. Well, where are we gonna get oil?

(They all look at ELVIS. He smiles and slicks back his hair. He sticks his greasy palm out.)

ELVIS. Gimme five.

(RAYMOND smiles and draws the hairpin over ELVIS' palm.)

KIMBELRY / LAVITA. Oooooooo!

PHOEBE. I think I'm getting nauseous again!

RAYMOND. There's no time for that! *(To KIMBERLY and LAVITA:)* Now get going!

(KIMBERLY gingerly takes the oily hairpin, and they go back up the sidewalk to the gate. KIMBERLY looks back at RAYMOND. RAYMOND, PHOEBE, and ELVIS nod. KIMBERLY fiddles with the lock.)

(MOUSE and GEORGE run over to the group.)

MOUSE. Hey, what's takin' so long?

GEORGE. Yeah!

PHOEBE. SHHHH!

RAYMOND. You're supposed to be back at your post! I told you not to leave until I said to!

GEORGE. Well, I don't care what you told me—

MOUSE. Yeah, I'm not takin' orders no more!

(The KIDS are focused on this argument just as MISS SWAMP appears at the opposite end of the street. She carries groceries. ELVIS turns to see her. He freezes.)

RAYMOND. You'll take orders from me as long I say you will!

GEORGE. Oh yeah?

RAYMOND. Yeah!

(ELVIS slaps PHOEBE's arm. She turns, sees MISS SWAMP too. She freezes too. She slaps MOUSE, who turns and slaps GEORGE.)

RAYMOND. *(Turns himself:)* Whoops!

PHOEBE / ELVIS / MOUSE / GEORGE / RAYMOND. MISS SWAMP!

(MISS SWAMP has stopped to light a cigarette under the lamp post.)

GEORGE. If she sees us, she'll kill us!

MOUSE. Not only that, she'll give us more homework!

PHOEBE. For Pete's sake, let's keep absolutely, positively quiet!

(MISS SWAMP blows smoke into the lamplight. She coughs, hacking away.)

(LAVITA / KIMBERLY turn. They gasp!)

LAVITA / KIMBERLY. AHHH!

(MISS SWAMP starts.)

MISS SWAMP. HUH?

(KIMBERLY looks panicked. She's holding her hairpin.)

MOUSE / RAYMOND / PHOEBE / GEORGE. THROW THE HAIRPIN!

(KIMBERLY throws the hairpin at the lamplight.)

(Crash!)

(The lamplight pops off!)

(Blue light.)

MISS SWAMP. Hey, what the heck was that!

RAYMOND. Scatter!

(GEORGE, MOUSE, RAYMOND, and PHOEBE dart over the hedge. KIMBERLY gets on LAVITA's shoulders. MISS SWAMP goes to the gate. ELVIS gets an idea. He throws KIMBERLY his dark glasses. She puts them on her face. ELVIS hides behind KIMBERLY and LAVITA, just as MISS SWAMP gets to the gate.)

MISS SWAMP. Ooop! Why, I can barely see a thing in this light. Pardon me, miss!

KIMBERLY. *(Low voice:)* Not at all. Goodnight, Miss Swamp.

(MISS SWAMP smiles, nods, as KIMBERLY / LAVITA and ELVIS shuffle off.)

MISS SWAMP. *(Smiles:)* Goodnigh— MISS SWAMP! HEY!

(MISS SWAMP drops her groceries on her toe. She yelps and hops about as they KIDS vanish.)

Come back here!

(MISS SWAMP takes off after them.)

(From behind the hedge, RAYMOND, PHOEBE, MOUSE, and GEORGE pop their heads up.)

GEORGE. Come on!

MOUSE. We're outta here!

(GEORGE and MOUSE scamper off. PHOEBE leaps over the hedge and goes the other way.)

(RAYMOND comes out through the gate. He sees something on the sidewalk. It's a book. He picks it up and looks at it. Something dawns on him. He stares at the book.)

(PHOEBE darts back in, grabs his hand and pulls him off. RAYMOND drops the book as he's pulled off.)

(Music: Alice Cooper's "School's Out" played as spooky, haunted house music.)

(The street disappears and the schoolroom drop comes down. It's Miss Nelson's room—room 207 late at night. Blue light. No one on-stage. Sound of feet shuffling on tile off. Shushing noises. Clicking. The ding! of a key dropped. Then the door creaks open.)

(The KIDS are crouched in the hallway outside the classroom door. they peer in, check the coast it's clear. They tip toe in.)

(A light comes on. We see GEORGE at the light switch; MOUSE, LAVITA, KIMBERLY, and ELVIS are on their knees crawling into the room. They all look pretty disheveled from their evening's activity.)

MOUSE. Hey!

LAVITA. Turn that off!

KIMBERLY. Somebody'll see my hair!

MOUSE. Use your flashlights!

(MOUSE holds up a flashlight. GEORGE turns the light off again. Back to blue light, but bright enough for us to see the KIDS as they all brandish their flashlights and search about the room. The lights gradually sneak up during the scene.)

GEORGE. I knew we shouldn't have come here.

MOUSE. The school's the only *safe* place to hide out! If Miss Swamp saw us back there, she'll probably be at our own houses right now!

LAVITA. Yeah, with the cops!

KIMBERLY. I can't believe it! It's going to be in all the tabloids: "Super Model Has Police Record!"

MOUSE. Nobody's gonna end up arrested by no one long as we hide out here for a few hours!

KIMBERLY. But we broke in! We broke into the school after it was closed!

ELVIS. They'll think we're not guilty by reason of insanity.

(KIMBERLY looks out front through the "windows." GEORGE shoves her down.)

KIMBERLY. Hey! What was that for? I just wanted to look out the window onto the playground.

GEORGE. What if they got searchlights!

MOUSE. Yeah, they already nabbed Raymond and Phoebe!

LAVITA. Yeah!

GEORGE. That's right.

KIMBERLY. Raymond and Phoebe.

GEORGE. Yeah, I never thought I'd miss those two, but...

KIMBERLY. Raymond was our leader.

LAVITA. Raymond got us close to solving the mystery.

ELVIS. I was gonna hire Raymond to be my manager.

GEORGE. Well, we're on our own now. You didn't see anything inside Miss Nelson's house, did you?

LAVITA. We barely got a peek.

KIMBERLY. Miss Swamp surprised us before we got a chance to!

LAVITA. Yeah, when *you* two were supposed to be on the look-out.

MOUSE. Say, what was Miss Swamp doin' on Miss Nelson's street anyway?

LAVITA. Yeah, what about that?

GEORGE. Maybe all teachers live on the same street.

KIMBERLY. That's silly.

GEORGE. Then what was she doing there?

(The KIDS think. They shake their heads.)

MOUSE. What we gotta figure out is what happened to Miss Nelson?

LAVITA. Wait a minute. Where's the last place we saw Miss Nelson?

MOUSE. Right here.

KIMBERLY. In Room 207.

LAVITA. Then maybe the clue's in this room somewhere. Maybe she left us something to find.

KIMBERLY. But what would it be?

(They look around. GEORGE points at wall map.)

GEORGE. Here's something!

KIMBERLY / LAVITA. WHAT?

GEORGE. Remember Miss Nelson's science lesson? This is her map. "LIFE UNDER THE SEA."

LAVITA. The sea?

LAVITA. You think Miss Nelson went under the sea?

(The KIDS look out front, thinking. Behind them, the blackboard's black surface disappears and through it we see MISS NELSON swimming happily above blue waves, waving, smiling. Music: "Roll Out Those Lazy, Hazy, Crazy Days of Summer.")

(Then a quick music change to: Jaws.)

(A shark's fin appears. Then another. Then another. MISS NELSON finally sees them. As the music does its final "Reeet! Reet! Reet!" she disappears beneath the waves. The blackboard turns black again. And the KIDS turn back to each other.)

GEORGE. If she went under the sea, she'd'a got eaten by sharks for sure.

MOUSE. Yeah.

LAVITA. Yuck.

KIMBERLY. Very unpleasant.

(MOUSE picks up the space capsule model.)

MOUSE. Hey, I know! Remember her lesson about the planets? Maybe Miss Nelson is the first teacher to go to Mars!

(The KIDS look out, thinking. Sound: NASA. Houston control sounds:)

VOICES. *(Male:)* "ROGER, HOUSTON, WE HEAR YOU MISS NELSON."

(The blackboard reveals the red surface of mars with the space capsule on it. MISS NELSON is in a space suit, planting the American flag. She mouths something. We hear:)

MISS NELSON. *(Crackily, staticky:)* One small step for Miss Nelson, one giant leap for Miss Nelson's kind.

(She waves. Then she takes out a golf club and ball. Behind her the space ship suddenly emits engine exhaust and takes off, up and away. MISS NELSON looks up at it.)

MISS NELSON. *(Crackily, staticky:)* Houston, I think we have a problem.

(The blackboard turns black again.)

GEORGE. Nahh, she wouldn't'a gone to Mars before a big test.

LAVITA. He's right.

MOUSE. Yeah, no teacher wants to miss a big test!

KIMBERLY. It's what they *live* for.

(LAVITA snaps her fingers and grabs the butterfly net.)

LAVITA. Hey, remember Miss Nelson's story time lesson about how there's only one insect that evolves from one type of animal to another?

MOUSE. That's right!

GEORGE. They start as one kind of animal—

KIMBERLY. And they end up as another!

LAVITA. One thing that's really made up of two things.

GEORGE. Or two things that are really one thing.

KIMBERLY. Do you think Miss Nelson went buggy when she went bug hunting?

(They look out front. The blackboard reveals MISS NELSON in pith helmet and safari gear happily chasing butterflies.)

(Music: "Rite of Spring.")

(Suddenly a giant butterfly descends on MISS NELSON and yanks her into the sky. The music cuts off with the sound of a needle being ripped across a record.)

(The board goes black again.)

(The KIDS turn back to each other.)

MOUSE. Nahh, no bug is *that* big.

KIMBERLY. Then where is she?

(Sound of running footsteps.)

GEORGE. Somebody's comin'

KIMBERLY. Hide!

LAVITA. DIVE! DIVE! DIVE!

(The KIDS scramble behind their desks.)

(RAYMOND and PHOEBE, out of breath, run into the room.)

MOUSE. Hey!

LAVITA. Hey, look!

GEORGE. It's Raymond and Phoebe!

KIDS. Oh, man!— What happened!— We was worried!

KIMBERLY. We thought Miss Swamp caught you for sure!

LAVITA. Yeah!

GEORGE. How'd you get away!

PHOEBE. We ran the other way!

RAYMOND. In the opposite direction!

KIMBERLY. You ran all the way here by going in the opposite direction? That means you ran all the way around the world!

(The KIDS look at her.)

ELVIS. Man, you *better* become a Super Model.

PHOEBE. When we saw the coast was clear, we doubled back. We figured you'd hide out here.

GEORGE. We thought maybe we could find some clue, but—

PHOEBE. Well, Raymond thinks he's found more than a clue.

KIMBERLY / LAVITA. HE DOES?

ELVIS. What?

GEORGE. Yeah, what is it, Raymond?

MOUSE. Tell us, Raymond.

PHOEBE. Go on.

RAYMOND. I think... I think Miss Swamp kidnapped Miss Nelson.

KIDS. MISS SWAMP!

RAYMOND. It all adds up. Think back. Miss Swamp is supposed to be a substitute teacher—never even been to this school before—but she knew all Miss Nelson's lessons. She even knew about *story*

time! Then we go to Miss Nelson's house, and who comes down the street but—

KIDS. MISS SWAMP!

RAYMOND. Heading right for Miss Nelson's door! And then—when she caught us and we all ran away—Miss Swamp dropped something on the sidewalk.

KIDS. What was it?— Yeah, what?— Did you see it, Raymond?

RAYMOND. It was Miss Nelson's story time book. Miss Nelson always carried that in her bookbag. She never left it in the classroom overnight. She wouldn't even let it out of her hands for a minute. The only way Miss Swamp could get that book...is if she already had Miss Nelson.

LAVITA. Wow.

KIMBERLY. Gee.

ELVIS. Heavy.

MOUSE. Well, what about proof?

LAVITA. Yeah!

GEORGE. Yeah, if we go to Detective McSmogg, we'll need evidence.

KIMBERLY. That's right.

MOUSE. Where's the book now, Raymond?

(RAYMOND *looks at* PHOEBE.)

RAYMOND. I, uh—I don't have it.

KIDS. DON'T HAVE IT!

RAYMOND. I dropped it when we ran away.

KIDS. Oh, man!— NO WAY!— Aw, Raymond!

GEORGE. Well, then, did anybody else see it?

KIDS. No— No.— Nuh-uh.

GEORGE. Phoebe?

PHOEBE. (*Looks down, ashamed.*) No.

MOUSE. Then who's to say you're not making all this up?

LAVITA. Yeah!

KIMBERLY. Yeah!

RAYMOND. I'm not making anything up. I saw it.

GEORGE. Aw, I knew we shouldn't'a made you leader.

MOUSE. Yeah, why'd we ever follow *you*.

LAVITA. Yeah.

PHOEBE. We made Raymond leader 'cause he had the best ideas, that's why!

GEORGE. Yeah, well, *now* look where we are: Miss Nelson is missing, Miss Swamp wants our hides, the police are after us—

MOUSE. —and the big test is Monday morning.

KIDS. Oh, no!— That's right!— THE TEST!

LAVITA. We might as well go home and study.

MOUSE. Yeah, I'm gonna do my homework and study hard. I don't wanna end up bein' held back in Miss Swamp's class.

LAVITA. We just gotta cross our fingers she can't identify any of us from tonight.

KIMBERLY. She won't recognize me. (*They look at her.*) Well, my *hair*.

RAYMOND. What about *Miss Nelson*?

LAVITA. I'd give anything for Miss Nelson to come back.

KIMBERLY. Yeah, I miss Miss Nelson.

ELVIS. She was cool.

LAVITA. If Miss Nelson came back, I'd never chew gum again.

MOUSE. I'd never act up.

PHOEBE. I'd never throw up.

KIMBERLY. If Miss Nelson came back, I'd never misspell "Miss."

GEORGE. We *all* wish Miss Nelson would come back. But she's gone. We tried to find her and we couldn't. And **there isn't any evidence what happened to her.**

RAYMOND. Well, I'm going to keep looking.

GEORGE. (*Shakes head:*) Face it. It's over, Raymond. Come on. Let's go home.

LAVITA. Yeah, Raymond.

MOUSE. Big test, Raymond.

(GEORGE, LAVITA, and MOUSE are exiting.)

KIMBERLY. I have to pass this test, Raymond, I just have to—even if it means studying!

(KIMBERLY runs out.)

(ELVIS goes up to RAYMOND.)

ELVIS. Hey, man—even kings make mistakes.

(ELVIS exits.)

(PHOEBE turns to RAYMOND.)

PHOEBE. Raymond—

RAYMOND. Don't you want to go with the rest of them?

PHOEBE. No. I'll stay with you. That is if you want me to.

RAYMOND. Thanks, Phoebe, but—Phoebe, you should study for that test too. I don't want you to fail and end up stuck with Miss Swamp for another whole year.

PHOEBE. I wouldn't mind—that is—if you were in the same class too.

RAYMOND. Go home, Phoebe. Please?

PHOEBE. (*Nods:*) O.k. I know you saw that book. I know it. I believe you, Raymond.

(PHOEBE exits.)

(RAYMOND stares around the room. He looks at the ocean map. He looks at the space model. He picks up the butterfly net. He swats with it. Then he studies the net.)

(Then he looks out front.)

(Lights iris out to a spot on RAYMOND alone. It irises to black.)

(Lights change.)

(School days comes up. Instrumental.)

*(The big blackboard comes down. It reads: "Today is Monday. **Test Day!**")*

(The classroom door swings open and LAVITA and KIMBERLY come in, reciting in unison.)

LAVITA / KIMBERLY. One plus one is two, two plus two is four, four plus four is eight times 12 is 96 divided by 6 is 16 multiplied by the square root of the hypotenuse—

(They go on like this the girls are followed by GEORGE, ELVIS, and MOUSE. GEORGE has his eyes closed as MOUSE and ELVIS check him on some answers.)

MOUSE. The capital of Russia is?

GEORGE. Moscow.

ELVIS. The capital of Spain is?

GEORGE. Madrid.

MOUSE. The capital of Sweden is ?

GEORGE. Stockholm.

ELVIS. The capital of Greece is?

GEORGE. Athens.

MOUSE. The capital of Texas is?

GEORGE. Austin!

ELVIS / MOUSE. Awesome.

(The three boys shake hands, slap hands, do some cool thing.)

(PHOEBE and RAYMOND enter.)

PHOEBE. Well, if we don't know the answers to this test *now*, I bet we never will!

GEORGE. I was up to all hours studying geography!

LAVITA. I studied math!

KIMBERLY. It took me almost as long to study my spelling as it did to curl my hair!

PHOEBE. I still wish we didn't have to face Miss Swamp though.

LAVITA. I would've studied all night if it would get me out of Miss Swamp's class!

(Door opens again and PRINCIPAL HUMLEKER enters with blue exam books.)

PRINCIPAL. Well-howdy-dooty, Room 207!

KIDS. Good morning, Principal Humleker.

PRINCIPAL. All ready for the big test?

GEORGE. Well, yeah, but—

LAVITA. Yeah, but—

MOUSE. Where's—

KIDS. MISS SWAMP?

PRINCIPAL. (*Beams:*) Oh, *I'm* going to administer the test. Miss Swamp asked me to collect all your homework. Pass it up to the front, please! That's right! There we are! My, my, what a lot of homework! I bet you had yourselves a busy time of it!

ELVIS. You can say that again.

PRINCIPAL. All right: "I bet you had yourself a busy—" OH! You were making a ha-ha, weren't you?

ELVIS. Well, *I'm* laughing.

(PRINCIPAL takes out a whistle.)

PRINCIPAL. Very well, class! I'm passing out the test now. You have one hour to complete it. Starting—*(Checks watch)*—NOW!

(He blows whistle! Tweet!)

(Light change.)

(The KIDS start scribbling madly.)

(Music: "Jeopardy!")

(The clock hand moves swiftly from 8 to 8:30 in time for the music's final "bum-bum.")

(PRINCIPAL blows whistle again. Tweet!)

PRINCIPAL. O.k., time's up! Lay down your pencils, close your exam books, and pass your tests to the front. *(Collecting blue books:)* Oh, boy, oh, boy! The tension is mounting! The suspense is killing me! You know, if our school gets the best scores, I win an all-expenses-paid trip to the International Ball Point Pen Convention in—*(He's got them all now:)* That everybody's? Hum-doodle, then, rum-tee-tum doddle-dee-day! I'll score them and be back in just a few minutes! Stay in your seats now!

(PRINCIPAL exits and closes the door. The KIDS immediately get up.)

LAVITA. Wow!

MOUSE. My brain hurts!

GEORGE. That test was hard!

KIMBERLY. I'm going to need a long vacation in France!

(Loud footsteps in the hall.)

MOUSE. I hear you! But we got through it at least. Now, all we gotta do is pass the test and get—

(A woman's shadow appears at the door window.)

ELVIS. Wo, man, heads up.

GEORGE. Look!

LAVITA / KIMBERLY. It's Miss Swamp!

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!

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