

# **THE LAST NIGHTTIME STORY**

Written by

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FADE IN:

BEGIN MONTAGE - NIGHT

We SEE five or six SHOTS from different bedrooms around the world (L.A., rural Mississippi, China, Europe, Africa, South America; but could be anywhere) with a parent or guardian reading to four-year-old children in pajamas (or culturally appropriate night clothes). Ee HEAR a MALE TEENAGER speak.

MALE TEENAGER (V.O.)

Do you remember all those great  
bedtime stories your parents read  
to you when you were little? It  
didn't matter what the story was,  
as long as your mom, dad, grandpa,  
grandma, or whoever sat next to you  
and read. You'd sleep like a baby.

SUPER "FIVE YEARS LATER."

We SEE the same set of bedrooms around the world (L.A., rural Mississippi, China, Europe, Africa, South America) with nine-year-old children in pajamas (or culturally appropriate night clothes) playing with toys, video games, or watching TV in their rooms while we HEAR a FEMALE TEENAGER speak.

FEMALE TEENAGER (V.O.)

No one remembers the last time  
their parents or guardians read  
them a bedtime story. It just  
happens. It comes without warning.  
Most kids are caught completely by  
surprise. It's just part of growing  
up, right?  
(beat)  
When was the last time you were  
read a nighttime story?

END MONTAGE

INT. BRENDA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Twins, ALEC and BRENDA (9; in gym clothes) alternate playing with LEGOs, an Etch-a-Sketch, and video games, but neither child LOOKS interested or happy. We SEE a small bookshelf filled with classic children's books. Two books, "*Baby Beebee Bird*" and "*Goodnight Moon*," are opened slightly and placed just inside the door, so they will be knocked over if the children's parents enter the room.

BRENDA

Think they'll come up?

ALEC

They've never missed two days in a row. Never! But they looked pretty busy tonight.

BRENDA

Late day working.

ALEC

I hear the TV. They aren't coming up!

Alec angrily throws some LEGOs on the floor.

BRENDA

Hey, don't mess up my room!

She pushes Alec.

ALEC

It's our room!

He pushes her back. This creates a pushing match.

BRENDA

Only 'cause you're scared!

ALEC

All my stuff is here. It's my Xbox, ya know.

BRENDA

It's our Xbox. Under the tree at Christmas means we gotta share it!

ALEC

You don't use it anyway.

BRENDA

It's like chewing gum for the brain. That's why, birdbrain!

ALEC

They're not coming up, you know!

They stop pushing each other.

BRENDA

Probably busy on their phones, too.

Alec POINTS to the book Brenda picked out, standing open by the door.

ALEC

You picked *The Baby Beebee Bird* again? That's so pre-K!

BRENDA

You picked *Goodnight Moon*! Like that's not pre-K? Idiot!

ALEC

Don't call me an idiot, dummy. *The Baby Beebee Bird* takes forever to understand that nighttime is for sleeping! That's lame!

BRENDA

(snooty)

I agree the plot's a little thin, but the characters jump off the pages! Not like your stupid moon!

ALEC

I can't take it. I'm moving out.

BRENDA

So go already. You could have had your own room all along. You're suffering from separation anxiety.

They almost come to blows and stop playing with toys.

ALEC

I'll move into my room tomorrow. For sure! That will show you!

BRENDA

Been saying that for two years! There's no nightlight in there, you'll never leave my room! We'd better get to sleep.

ALEC

You brush your teeth, moron?

BRENDA

Yep. You, idiot?

ALEC

Had to.

BRENDA

Why?

ALEC

Big honking piece of spinach on my front tooth. I looked like Willy!

BRENDA

Gross! That's exactly why I'm not gonna miss you.

They crawl into separate twin beds and turn out the light. A nightlight goes on automatically.

ALEC

Think I'll have a sleepover with your boyfriend, Willy, on Saturday. In my room!

Brenda LAUGHS hard.

BRENDA

He's not my boyfriend! Think I'll have a sleepover with your girlfriend, Chelsea, on Friday! So there!

ALEC

She's not my girlfriend!  
(beat)  
Mom and Dad are bound to trip over the books!

BRENDA

They can't miss 'em!

Alec LAUGHS.

ALEC

You gotta shut up and get to sleep!

BRENDA

Why? Oh yeah. Big test in three days. Then, the costume parade and picnic!

ALEC

Multiplication tables, sentence structure: subjects, verbs, adjectives, and a creative essay! Just to get a lousy picnic!

BRENDA

Don't forget adverbs, which modify verbs and typically end in "LY." Easy! And the costume parade and picnic are fun, idiot!

ALEC  
Especially for girls! But boys got  
other stuff on their minds.

BRENDA  
What stuff?

ALEC  
Like moving into the next room.

BRENDA  
Just shut up and go to sleep!

There is a deafening SILENCE as the kids both glance at their  
closed door. Alec turns serious.

ALEC  
Hey, Bren? Do you ever not want to  
grow up?

Brenda thinks for a moment and answers sadly.

BRENDA  
Every night.

They quietly GIGGLE.

ALEC  
Good night, Baby Beebee Bird.

BRENDA  
Goodnight Moon!

Their eyes are WIDE OPEN as the night goes on and on.

INT. BRENDA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Alec and Brenda awake to a loud KNOCK on the door! We hear  
MOM's voice (30s, soft spoken, kind).

MOM (O.S.)  
Brenda, Alec, time to get up.  
Breakfast is waiting.

Alec and Brenda stir, but it's difficult to wake up. Alec  
opens one eye to see that the two books by the door are gone!  
He HOPS out of bed.

ALEC  
They're gone! Your stupid book, *The  
Baby Beebee Bird*, and my great  
book, *Goodnight Moon*! They're gone!

Brenda still doesn't open her eyes.

BRENDA  
*Goodnight Moon.*

Alec RACES over to shake her.

ALEC  
I'm serious. They're gone!

Brenda opens her eyes as wide as can be, and she HOPS out of bed.

BRENDA  
Must be here somewhere.

She looks above and under everything. They both examine the other books in the bookcase.

ALEC  
Nothing!

BRENDA  
Me either!

They HEAR another loud KNOCK on the door.

MOM (O.S.)  
Downstairs! Now! You'll be late for school!

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Alec and Brenda are dressed for school in nice, clean, typical school clothes. They SLURP *BRAND NAME* breakfast cereal while speaking fast. We see MOM and DAD (30s; business clothes) from the waist- or chest-down, but we SEE them checking their *BRAND NAME* smartphones and drinking coffee.

DAD  
Took you forever to get downstairs today.

MOM  
Worried you'll be late for school.

BRENDA  
Dad, Mom, did you see that old book, *The Baby Beebe Bird*?

MOM  
No, Dear. Why do you ask?

ALEC

Or that *Goodnight Moon* book?

DAD

No. Just finish your breakfast, or you'll be late.

BRENDA

Can't find them anywhere. I think my idiot brother is playing a joke on me.

MOM

Don't call your brother an idiot.

ALEC

I think my sister the moron got up in the middle of the night and hid the books.

DAD

Don't call your sister a moron.

MOM

Clean that room of yours, and I bet you'll find them.

ALEC

Maybe we were robbed!

DAD

I've gotta run. Kids, don't forget your lunches.

Everyone begins to leave the house.

MOM

And no stopping on the way to school. I know it's one block, and other kids will be walking with you.

DAD

Walk quickly.

BRENDA

Nice adverb, Dad.

ALEC

Oh, brother!



EXT. OLDER NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Alec and Brenda TRUDGE to school. A street sign reads: "Last St." They pass an old house and junkyard on a large lot surrounded by a wrought-iron fence. A rusty sign reads: "Rapple's Old Ancient Secondhand Antique Emporium and Junkyard." Alec and Brenda pass it without a thought. Their Grammar School is on the next block.

BRENDA

We'll find them when we get home.

ALEC

We'd better. I blame you!

BRENDA

For what?

ALEC

Getting old so fast. You're like a mini-Mom and you're not ten yet!

BRENDA

That's 'cause you're still a baby!

They push each other as they walk.

BRENDA (CONT'D)

They didn't walk away by themselves.

ALEC

We weren't robbed. Thieves would have taken the TV, jewelry, and my comic book collection.

BRENDA

My engineering kits!

ALEC & BRENDA

The Xbox!

They stop in their tracks.

ALEC

We have a hundred kids' books?

BRENDA

Why those two?

They SHRUG their shoulders, and TRUDGE to school.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

We see Twenty Students (9; various ethnic groups and genders, all in nice, clean clothes. The biggest boy is WILLY (Half-Middle-Eastern, missing front tooth; not so smart, but happy). The smallest girl is CHELSEA (Asian), who is very bright. Willy, Chelsea, and two other kids are sleepy and cranky today. We see only the legs of MRS. SCOGGINS (60, schoolmarm, pantsuit) as she RACES around the room. The children SIT in short desks.

MRS. SCOGGINS

What's the matter? Some of you  
didn't get enough sleep last night?

The children RAISE THEIR HANDS before they speak.

WILLY

I didn't.

CHELSEA

Me either.

ALEC

I didn't get too much.

BRENDA

Me either.

MRS. SCOGGINS

I want everyone to get a lot of  
sleep this week. We have our big  
tests coming up.

The Students GROAN.

MRS. SCOGGINS (CONT'D)

Multiplication tables, sentence  
structure: subjects, verbs,  
adjectives, and a creative essay!

Brenda RAISES her hand.

BRENDA

(yawning)  
Adverbs, too.

MRS. SCOGGINS

Adverbs are often a very important  
part of the test. However, let me  
return to the topic of creative  
essays. Do you remember writing  
your practice essays last week?

BEGIN FLASHBACK

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

SUPER: LAST WEEK.

The twenty alert Students stare at blank, blue-covered test booklets. The Students struggle getting their ideas down on paper, while Mrs. Scoggins walks past them. The Students suffer the agony of writer's block, We HEAR Mrs. Scoggins.

MRS. SCOGGINS (V.O.)

Your practice essays last week were well below the five-hundred-word requirement. Many essays lacked a clear beginning, middle, and end. I don't mean to sound harsh, but there was a general lack of imagination and creativity. You have to take these district-wide exams seriously. The Principal, my boss, was very unhappy. She called me into her office and told me that your essays reflected very poorly on me! I know each of you is capable of so much more!

END FLASHBACK

The Students look ashamed of themselves, except Alec, Brenda, Willy, and Chelsea, who are barely awake.

ALEC

Five hundred words is a lot.

MRS. SCOGGINS

Each of you has a story to tell. I think your next essays will be much more creative!

Mrs. Scoggins reads from a handful of essays in her hand.

MRS. SCOGGINS (CONT'D)

Willy, you already know that there is nothing too creative about shooting a basketball until your arms get tired.

The students LAUGH.

WILLY

Yes, Mrs. Scoggins. But the story does have a beginning, middle, and end, like you said.

MRS. SCOGGINS

Willy, your entire essay was three sentences: "I went outside to shoot baskets. Did pretty good at first. My arms got tired." And you did pretty well at first, would be correct grammar. Your entire essay was fifteen words! Not five hundred.

WILLY

I cut to the chase, Mrs. Scoggins.

Mrs. Scoggins ignores Willy.

MRS. SCOGGINS

And Chelsea, you're a bright girl.

Chelsea barely lifts her head.

CHELSEA

Yes, Mrs. Scoggins.

MRS. SCOGGINS

However, a whole essay about your dog sleeping is as exciting as watching paint dry.

The students LAUGH.

CHELSEA

It was the only exciting thing that happened all week!

MRS. SCOGGINS

One hundred thirty-seven words! Use your imagination. Convey your excitement and feelings! Your dog does more than sleep!

CHELSEA

He passes gas.

The students LAUGH.

MRS. SCOGGINS

That would have livened up your story.

CHELSEA

Yes, Mrs. Scoggins.

MRS. SCOGGINS  
Brenda, surely something more  
exciting happened in your life,  
since you found a smashed frog in  
your driveway in Kindergarten?

The students LAUGH.

BRENDA  
Yes, Mrs. Scoggins, but how about  
my clever title?

MRS. SCOGGINS  
*He Croaked.*

The Students LAUGH.

MRS. SCOGGINS (CONT'D)  
Two-hundred-seventy-one words, the  
class record!

The students CLAP.

MRS. SCOGGINS (CONT'D)  
Not funny!

The students stop clapping.

MRS. SCOGGINS (CONT'D)  
And Alec, your essay titled "Why I  
Hate to Write Essays" is certainly  
not going to please the district  
judges!

The students LAUGH.

MRS. SCOGGINS (CONT'D)  
A one-hundred-ninety-five-word  
essay is no laughing matter!  
Benjamin Franklin said, "Either  
write something worth reading or do  
something worth writing about."

WILLY  
Mrs. Scoggins, will that be on the  
test?

The students try to contain their giggles.

MRS. SCOGGINS  
If you want to score well on your  
creative essays, I strongly suggest  
you kick your imagination into high  
gear.

(MORE)

MRS. SCOGGINS (CONT'D)  
Your next opportunity will be on  
Friday before the costume parade  
and picnic. I hope your performance  
will be greatly improved.  
Creativity is everything! Now  
quietly listen for an hour while I  
review the parts of speech.

Alec leans over and whispers to Willy.

ALEC  
Here's the part of speech where I  
quickly fall asleep.

Alec, Brenda, Willy, and Chelsea quickly doze off. Willy  
FALLS out of his desk. Mrs. Scoggins RACES down the aisle to  
help him back to his desk, but he can't keep his eyes open.

MRS. SCOGGINS  
I don't know why everyone's so  
tired lately!

EXT. OLDER NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Alec and Brenda, just leaving school, walk sleepily toward  
home.

BRENDA  
So embarrassing!

ALEC  
I know. Right?

BRENDA  
I don't remember what we covered in  
the parts of speech.

ALEC  
I don't even remember recess.

BRENDA  
It's all your fault, idiot. Talking  
most of the night!

ALEC  
Shut up, moron. You were talking  
too!

BRENDA  
I want you out of my room tonight!

ALEC  
There ya go again, Mini-Mom.

A pushing match begins as they walk home.

BRENDA

Chelsea thought you were an idiot today. Said your essay was stupid!

ALEC

Like her essay about her sleeping dog wasn't stupid. And I gave you your title, *He Croaked*.

BRENDA

That's what you said back on the day it happened. You forgot, idiot.

ALEC

Funny how nobody made it to five hundred words.

BRENDA

That's 'cause nothing exciting ever happens around here!

ALEC

That's for sure!

BRENDA

What do we tell Mom and Dad when they ask about our day at school?

ALEC

It's so sad!

(beat)

I don't even remember lunch!

Suddenly, they HEAR large pieces of steel SCRAPING and CLANGING behind Rapple's Old Ancient Secondhand Antique Emporium and Junkyard. They RACE up to the wrought-iron fence and PEEK in.

BRENDA

What do you suppose that was?

ALEC

Came from behind the house.

BRENDA

Think Old Man Rapple is burying something?

ALEC

Or someone!

They SEE a BRIGHT LIGHT in the attic of the old house.

ALEC (CONT'D)

What's that?

BRENDA

Brighter than a full moon on  
Halloween!

The scraping of metal stops.

ALEC

What is all this junk in here,  
anyway?

BRENDA

Mom says he collects stuff every  
day and every night. Dad says he  
never throws anything away.

ALEC

Even his garbage?

BRENDA

Chelsea's mom said the same thing.  
Tried to get the city to do  
something about it, but they can't.

ALEC

Is it legal to collect garbage  
forever?

BRENDA

If people don't want it, I guess.

The LIGHT GOES OUT in the upstairs room.

ALEC

I bet he's coming out!

BRENDA

Let's get out of here!

Alec and Brenda SCREAM, and RUN all the way home.

EXT./INT. HOUSE - DAY

Alec and Brenda RACE inside and lock the door.

BRENDA

You check all the doors. I'll check  
the windows.

They RACE around the house checking every lock, and end up in  
the kitchen.



ALEC  
Everything's locked.

BRENDA  
Let's sit by the phone in case we  
gotta dial 9-1-1.

ALEC  
Good idea.

BRENDA  
Mom and Dad will be home in an  
hour.

ALEC  
Unless they have to work late  
again.

BRENDA  
Yeah.

ALEC  
I'll get my old baseball bat.

BRENDA  
It's a T-ball bat! Only make them  
madder. And you only got like two  
hits that whole season. You'll  
probably miss!

ALEC  
You got a better idea?

BRENDA  
I'm gonna call Chelsea and have her  
keep an eye out.

ALEC  
She lives two blocks away.

BRENDA  
You should know, she's your  
girlfriend!

ALEC  
She is not!

They push each other again.

BRENDA  
Call Willy, then. He's right across  
the street.

ALEC  
You should know. He's your  
boyfriend!

BRENDA  
You're such an idiot. His mom's  
home, and his dad's a policeman!

ALEC  
I know that, moron. But then we  
gotta use the phone.

BRENDA  
We don't have to call 9-1-1 now.  
Call Willy!

ALEC  
You're such a control freak!

Alec GRABS the phone and DIALS Willy. Willy's mom, MRS.  
GREENLEY (30, sweet) answers.

ALEC (CONT'D)  
Hi, Mrs. Greenley. Is Willy there?

MRS. GREENLEY (O.S.)  
Hello, Alec. Willy went up to nap.  
Didn't sleep well last night, I  
guess.

ALEC  
Something in the air, I guess, Mrs.  
Greenley. I'll call back later.  
Thanks.

MRS. GREENLEY (O.S.)  
Alec, I got a text from Willy's  
teacher, Mrs. Scoggins, that he  
fell asleep in class.

Alec's eyes open widely.

MRS. GREENLEY (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
You don't know anything about that,  
do you, Alec?

ALEC  
No, Mrs. Greenley, but it's pretty  
hard for any kid to stay awake  
during the parts of speech stuff.

MRS. GREENLEY (O.S.)  
Yes, thank you, Alec. I'll tell  
Willy that you called.

Alec HANGS UP nervously.

ALEC  
You hear that?

BRENDA  
That means Mom and Dad probably got  
a text from Mrs. Scoggins, too.

ALEC  
What are we gonna do?

BRENDA  
First, we're going to tear our room  
apart looking for those two books.

ALEC  
Then we gotta clean our room so we  
don't get into trouble.

Brenda and Alec RACE upstairs.

BRENDA  
We're already in trouble.

ALEC  
We'd better find those books!

LATER

INT. BRENDA'S BEDROOM - DAY

The room looks like a tornado struck. Alec and Brenda are  
poring over every book title.

BRENDA  
Nothing?

ALEC  
Nothing!

They HEAR their Mom and Dad come in downstairs.

DAD (O.S.)  
Hi, kids. We're home!

ALEC & BRENDA  
Hi, Dad!

MOM (O.S.)  
Hi, Alec. Hi, Brenda. What are you  
doing?

BRENDA  
Just cleaning our room.

ALEC  
And talking about parts of speech.  
Big test coming up.

MOM (O.S.)  
That's good. Got a strange text  
message from Mrs. Scoggins.

ALEC  
Our teacher, Mrs. Scoggins?

Brenda hits Alec in the arm.

MOM (O.S.)  
You both fell asleep in class.  
Alec, I would believe...

BRENDA  
Mrs. Scoggins speaks in a monotone  
sometimes.

ALEC  
Yeah. A moron-tone.

Brenda hits Alec again.

BRENDA  
Half the class zonked out.

DAD (O.S.)  
(laughs)  
I remember those days!

MOM (O.S.)  
(to DAD)  
You're no help.  
(to the kids)  
Dinner is in an hour.

ALEC & BRENDA  
Okay, Mom.

BRENDA  
(whispering)  
We gotta clean this room, pronto.

ALEC  
Pronto? Is that some kind of  
cleaning fluid?

BRENDA

Are you sure we're related? I think you snuck into our house after I was born!

ALEC

Just clean up, dummy.

BRENDA

Shut up, idiot!

They angrily clean the room. In addition, Brenda organizes all the books in the bookcase.

ALEC

By size?

Brenda POINTS as she describes the bookcase.

BRENDA

Size and alphabetical order. You got our Golden books, picture books, Dr. Seuss and other classics, modern authors, and reference books.

ALEC

I put all the LEGOs away! Oh, and my video games.

BRENDA

Shocking!

ALEC

What? Me putting the LEGOs away?

BRENDA

No, idiot. I didn't see two of your old favorites: *Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel*, and *The Little Engine That Could*.

Alec ATTACKS the bookcase.

ALEC

What? Are you sure? *Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel*, and *The Little Engine That Could*? This is disastrous!

Brenda POINTS at two areas in the bookcase.

BRENDA

Should be right here!

ALEC  
 I just read, I mean, saw them a  
 while ago!  
 (beat)  
 Last year, I think!

They HEAR Mom.

MOM (O.S.)  
 Dinner!

BRENDA  
 They're gone now! I'm going  
 downstairs to dinner. You probably  
 gave them to Goodwill or something!

ALEC  
 Not those books. Used to love 'em!

Alec EXAMINES every book in the bookcase.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Brenda is almost finished with her dinner. Alec's dinner is getting cold. The parents are scurrying around. Dad is washing dishes, while Mom puts food and kitchen items away. We SEE the parents only from the waist- or chest-down.

MOM  
 Finally, Alec. What took you?

ALEC  
 (sad)  
 I was looking for four books that  
 have gone missing since last night.

MOM  
 Four books?

BRENDA  
*The Baby Beebee Bird* and *Goodnight  
 Moon* disappeared last night.

ALEC  
 And I think *Mike Mulligan and His  
 Steam Shovel*, and *The Little Engine  
 That Could* disappeared today  
 because we heard strange noises  
 from behind Old Man Rapple's  
 junkyard.

DAD

You shouldn't be anywhere near the back of that dump.

MOM

Dad's right. You stay away from there. Not safe!

BRENDA

We just heard noises from the sidewalk.

ALEC

Strange, eerie noises. Like steel beams scraping.

(beat)

Almost crying!

MOM

Quite an imagination, dear.

BRENDA

I heard it, too.

ALEC

Then there was a bright light, as bright as a full moon.

BRENDA

A full moon on Halloween!

ALEC

Shining from Mr. Rapple's attic in broad daylight!

DAD

Just stay out of that yard! There used to be a big dog, ya know.

BRENDA

He's been dead since we started school.

MOM

All those old sharp pieces of rusty metal are all over. Brenda's always telling us we could get tetanus.

(imitating Brenda)

That needle is this big, ya know!

The kids look up and GULP!

BRENDA

I don't say it that often!

ALEC  
Yes, you do!

BRENDA  
Tetanus is a very dangerous  
bacterium! It can cause lockjaw, ya  
know!

ALEC  
We weren't going to go in there,  
but we think it's strange.

DAD  
What's strange?

BRENDA  
We lose the book, *Goodnight Moon*,  
and then see a bright light from  
Mr. Rapple's attic.

ALEC  
Then we lose *Mike Mulligan and His  
Steam Shovel*, and *The Little Engine  
That Could*, and we hear steel  
scraping in Old Man Rapple's  
backyard.

The parents continue to scurry around.

DAD  
Just a coincidence.

MOM  
Clean your room, and you'll find  
the books.

BRENDA  
We cleaned the room.

Alec LOOKS away.

BRENDA (CONT'D)  
Alec?

ALEC  
The books are kind of all over the  
floor. I was looking for...

MOM  
(interrupts)  
You get up there right now, young  
man. No dessert!



BRENDA

But we are missing the books! It's true.

MOM

Stop this silly talk. No dessert for you, either, young lady. Now, march up there with your brother. I've got a little work to do tonight, and so does your father!

BRENDA

Yes, Mom.

ALEC

Yes, Mom.

Alec and Brenda TRUDGE upstairs.

MOM (O.S.)

You let me be the disciplinarian again, Dear.

DAD (O.S.)

My bad. Sorry. I'll correct them next time. They're usually great kids. What's gotten into them?

MOM (O.S.)

Tired, I guess.

INT. BRENDA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

This time, Brenda forces Alec to help her arrange the books.

ALEC

Sorry about the mess.

BRENDA

It's okay. Let's you learn about alphabetical order, and let's me pick out a book for tonight.

ALEC

I should pick one out, too.

BRENDA

Ahh! *Olivia* by Ian Falconer.

ALEC

About the pig that is incredibly energetic and imaginative? I love that book!

BRENDA  
You surprise me.

ALEC  
Why?

BRENDA  
Just threw together an adverb and  
an adjective like a pro!

ALEC  
Really? Which is which?

Brenda hits Alec in the arm.

BRENDA  
You crack me up!

ALEC  
I'm serious. The L-Y word is the  
adverb, right?

BRENDA  
Duh!

ALEC  
You're ridiculously mean to me. I'm  
moving out!

BRENDA  
Nobody's stopping you. And I might  
sleep better! But you're learning!  
Ridiculously slow for a kid your  
age, but you're learning.  
(beat)  
What book are you picking out for  
tonight?

Alec carefully examines several books. He SMILES.

ALEC  
*The Polar Express* by Chris Van All,  
All, All...

BRENDA  
Allsburg. Love that story.

ALEC  
The paintings take me right to the  
North Pole.

BRENDA  
I wish they would!

They push each other. This time, Alec falls over and hits his head.

ALEC

Ow! Moron!

Alec POPS up and hits his sister on the arm, hard. She tries to act like it didn't hurt, but tears form.

BRENDA

Not supposed to hit girls.

ALEC

You started it!

BRENDA

Get out of my room! Now!

ALEC

All my stuff's here. You can't make me!

BRENDA

I'll call Dad and Mom!

ALEC

I'll make your life miserable.

BRENDA

Ridiculously miserable.

Alec is caught off guard. Then he chuckles.

ALEC

Sorry for hitting you.

BRENDA

Sorry for pushing you.

(beat)

But I still want you out of my room tomorrow. Time you grew up, and stop hitting girls!

ALEC

Maybe you're right.

Alec and Brenda STARE at their books. Then, they set them by their closed door, so that they'll be knocked over if the parents enter the room. The mood is sullen.

BRENDA

Think they'll come up tonight.

ALEC  
I'm sure of it. They missed last night.

BRENDA  
But they got the text from our Mrs. Scoggins, and they had work to do.

ALEC  
They'll be here.

LATER

Lying in their beds, the children, with EYES WIDE OPEN, wait, and wait, and wait. Agony!

INT. BRENDA'S BEDROOM - DAY

The kids are awakened by a loud KNOCK.

DAD (O.S.)  
Hey, kids, time to wake up.  
Breakfast is ready. Chop Chop.  
Let's go!

Brenda and Alec LEAP from their beds. *Olivia* and *The Polar Express* are gone!

ALEC  
Where are they? Did you do this again?

BRENDA  
Didn't do it the first time, idiot.

ALEC  
Moron. Where'd they go?

BRENDA  
No idea. Mom and Dad will know!

ALEC  
Let's get dressed.

BRENDA  
I get the bathroom first today. You look for the books -- without dumping them all out, idiot!

ALEC  
Dummy!

The kids are angry and concerned as they get ready for school.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Again, the parents SCURRY around, while sipping coffee and staring at their phones. Alec and Brenda slurp their NAME BRAND breakfast cereal while asking questions.

ALEC

Why didn't you come up to read us a bedtime story?

BRENDA

And kiss us goodnight?

Mom and Dad stop scurrying to answer (we still see them from the waist down).

MOM

We did! You were sound asleep.

BRENDA

What time?

DAD

When we finished work.

MOM

It was late. We're sorry.

ALEC

When you opened the door, did you knock over any books?

MOM

Didn't see any books, but it was dark.

BRENDA

What about the nightlight?

DAD

It was pretty dark. And we were pretty tired. Sorry, kids.

MOM

What's all this about books?

ALEC

They're gone! *Olivia* and *The Polar Express*. They're gone!

DAD

You'll have to look for them after school.

MOM

You're late again. Get going. And don't forget your lunches.

Mom and Dad head out at the same time as the kids, who wave goodbye with forced smiles.

ALEC

Old man Rapple's place, let's go!

BRENDA

Right behind you!

They RACE to the old Rapple house and squeeze their faces between the rails of the wrought-iron fence. They see a cement pig lawn ornament, and their eyes open widely.

BRENDA (CONT'D)

It's *Olivia*!

ALEC

I wonder where the conductor of *The Polar Express* is?

BRENDA

Old man Rapple probably has him tied up inside the house.

ALEC

Santa, too, I bet. He's got *The Goodnight Moon* upstairs, and the steam shovel and Little Engine in the backyard, I bet!

BRENDA

We gotta warn the other kids at school!

They RACE to school!

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY.

Alec and Brenda look at the clock and each other. Their faces say it all -- they're late. This time, half the class is cranky and tired, and Mrs. Scoggins is in a rotten mood.

MRS. SCOGGINS

I'll have to send a text message home to your parents!

ALEC

I'm sorry.

BRENDA

I'm sorry.

MRS. SCOGGINS

And what's with my class today?  
Half of you look like you haven't  
slept in weeks!

Alec and Brenda take a seat at their desks.

MRS. SCOGGINS (CONT'D)

Willy, did you get any sleep last  
night?

WILLY

I did.

(beat)

After the robbery!

MRS. SCOGGINS

The robbery?

WILLY

Nobody noticed it but me.

MRS. SCOGGINS

I see. What was stolen?

BRENDA

We bet it was books!

Willy RACES over to Alec and Brenda.

WILLY

Your place too?

ALEC

*The Baby Beebe Bird, Goodnight  
Moon.*

MRS. SCOGGINS

That's ridiculous. Nobody is  
stealing your books.

WILLY

*Leo the Late Bloomer, and Horton  
Hears a Who!*

BRENDA

Willy, that's so sad.

WILLY

I didn't read 'em in years, but I do like elephants.

ALEC

That explains a lot.

BRENDA

Alec says we lost *Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel*, and *The Little Engine That Could*. But he hasn't seen them for years!

MRS. SCOGGINS

This is not happening.

CHELSEA

*Bunny Cakes* and *Little Bear*. Gone from my bookshelf, and the fourth *Harry Potter* book was stolen right out of my sleeping hands.

ALEC

That was two nights ago. Last night, it was *Olivia* and *The Polar Express*.

MRS. SCOGGINS

Okay, class, that's it. A note is going home to all your parents. This is the silliest thing I've ever heard.

Mrs. Scoggins looks at her class and sees that half of the class is asleep.

MRS. SCOGGINS (CONT'D)

I don't know what's going on around here, but I'm sending you all out to recess -- just to wake up. Go on! Go on!

The kids wake up and stumble outside.

EXT. SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - DAY

Alec, Brenda, Willy, and Chelsea discuss things, while the other Students run and play.

ALEC

The good news is, it's not just us, Brenda.



BRENDA  
That's the bad news.

WILLY  
Huh?

CHELSEA  
They mean something big is going on.

WILLY  
Big?

ALEC  
And scary.

BRENDA  
What are we gonna do?

ALEC  
I don't know. I'm just a kid!

WILLY  
Where are our books going? Maybe it's like the Tooth Fairy, but it's a book fairy who steals books?

CHELSEA  
(smirks)  
And leaves extra teeth?

ALEC  
We think it's a real thief!

BRENDA  
We can't prove anything yet.

CHELSEA  
You have a suspect?

ALEC  
One. That's all we can tell you right now.

WILLY  
Can you tell Mrs. Scoggins, so she doesn't think we're crazy?

CHELSEA  
(looks at Willy)  
Too late.

BRENDA  
We'll know more tomorrow morning.

ALEC

We need to run around. If we get caught sleeping again, we'll be in third grade until we're twelve!

The BELL RINGS.

BRENDA

Quick. Run back!

They RUN back to class.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

The Students are back in their seats, and just as quickly, Alec, Brenda, Willy, and Chelsea begin to doze off.

MRS. SCOGGINS

Creative writing. Please take notes. The three-part structure for stories dates back to the time of Aristotle: a beginning, a middle, and an end.

ALEC

(mumbles)

This must be the end.

Alec, Brenda, Willy, and Chelsea are asleep. Willy falls out of his seat and onto the floor. Mrs. Scoggins wakes everyone up.

MRS. SCOGGINS

What's going on around here?

EXT. OLDER NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Brenda and Alec stumble toward home, half-asleep, when Alec perks up.

ALEC

Our suspect!

They RACE back to Old Man Rapple's place. They poke their faces through the wrought-iron fence.

BRENDA

Looking for evidence of *Leo the Late Bloomer*, and *Horton Hears a Who!*

ALEC

An elephant sitting on a nest in a tree would be pretty hard to miss!

BRENDA

So would a tiger running around!

ALEC

Yeah, but maybe not *Bunny Cakes*, and *Little Bear*. They could easily hide in all that junk!

BRENDA

*Bunny Cakes* is so Pre-K? Why would anyone read that one?

ALEC

(mumbles)

Old books can be comforting.

Alec looks around the junkyard, and he lights up and points at a cat crossing the back of the junkyard.

ALEC (CONT'D)

A tiger!

BRENDA

More like a cat, idiot.

ALEC

Not the cat! That old wood carving!

BRENDA

*Leo the Late Bloomer*?

ALEC

Old Man Rapple turned Leo into that carved tiger over there! What do ya think?

BRENDA

Gotta be him.

Brenda looks to the opposite side of the junkyard and sees an old pink cake box.

BRENDA (CONT'D)

There's a cake box!

ALEC

*Bunny Cakes*?

BRENDA

Gotta be.

ALEC  
I think we've seen enough.

BRENDA  
All the evidence we need.

ALEC  
Now, to set a trap!

BRENDA  
For tonight?

ALEC  
Exactly!

The front door of Old Man Rapple's house CREAKS open. Alec and Brenda don't see anyone!

BRENDA  
Let's get out of here!

Alec and Brenda RACE home.

INT./EXT. KITCHEN/BRENDA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Alec and Brenda RACE in and begin locking the doors.

ALEC  
Lock all the doors!

BRENDA  
Check the windows!

They RACE upstairs, checking the bedroom windows, when Willy KNOCKS on the front door.

ALEC  
What was that?

BRENDA  
Old Man Rapple?

The twins FREEZE! They HEAR louder KNOCKS. They whisper.

ALEC  
Where's my T-ball bat?

BRENDA  
Closet.

Alec and Brenda search the closet, when they hear Willy KNOCK on the back (kitchen) door. The twins FREEZE and whisper.

BRENDA (CONT'D)  
We're surrounded.

ALEC  
I'm calling 9-1-1!

Willy LEAVES and walks across the street back home. Alec and Brenda CREEP downstairs, PEEK out the windows. They see nothing. They RACE upstairs and SLAM the door to their bedroom.

They HEAR a SIREN a few minutes later. OFFICER (MR.) GREENLEY (35, uniformed, but we only see him from the waist down like Mom and Dad) knocks on the door.

The kids are upstairs and too afraid to answer until they hear his voice.

MR. GREENLEY  
Kids. It's me, Mr. Greenley.  
Willy's dad. Open up.

Alec and Brenda come downstairs and answer the kitchen door.

ALEC  
Sorry, Mr. Greenley, Officer  
Greenley, we think we overreacted.

MR. GREENLEY  
I thought so too. I was on my way  
home anyway, so I thought I'd check  
it out.

BRENDA  
Just a knock at the door.

MR. GREENLEY  
I called Mrs. Greenley before  
coming from the station. She said  
that Willy came by to get a  
homework assignment. He thought you  
were home, but nobody answered.

ALEC  
That was us idiots.

MR. GREENLEY  
Figured as much. Willy fell asleep  
in class again. Forgot all his  
assignments.

BRENDA  
I'll call him right now and give  
him the assignments.

MR. GREENLEY  
Thanks, Brenda.  
(beat)  
You kids look concerned. Something  
bothering you?

BRENDA  
Nope.

ALEC  
Nope.

MR. GREENLEY  
If there was, you'd tell me, right?

ALEC  
Yep.

BRENDA  
Yep.

MR. GREENLEY  
Good.

ALEC  
Can we keep this accidental 9-1-1  
call from our folks?

MR. GREENLEY  
Ha! You bet, Alec. I know you're  
getting too big to have a sitter  
after school. Practically fourth-  
graders already!  
(beat)  
Thanks for getting my son those  
assignments.

Brenda shuts the door and locks it. Brenda begins to call  
Willy.

LATER

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Mom and Dad arrive home with a pizza and a jug of milk. We  
see their legs.

MOM  
Kids? We're home!

DAD  
Pizza! Your favorite!

Alec and Brenda creep down the stairs. Alec holds his T-ball bat, and Brenda holds a badminton racket.

MOM

What were you two playing?

BRENDA

Nothing?

DAD

That's usually Alec's line.

MOM

We got another text message from your Mrs. Scoggins today.

DAD

Said you were both late for school.

MOM

Two notes in two days.

DAD

What's gotten into you? You get pizza anyway. We just want to know?

The twins stand defiantly in the kitchen.

ALEC

Some of our best books have been stolen!

BRENDA

And we're sure Old Man Rapple has been stealing them.

MOM

I'm sure they're in a closet, down in the basement, or under a bed somewhere.

DAD

We'll help you look for them this weekend if it bothers you so much. You haven't read many of those books in years!

Dad moves to HUG Brenda, and Mom moves to HUG Alec, but the twins step back.

ALEC

You don't believe us.

BRENDA

It's so obvious when you look in  
Old Man Rapple's junkyard!

MOM

I think your imagination has gotten  
the best of you.

ALEC

What about all that new stuff in  
Old Man Rapple's junkyard?

MOM

Did you see even one book?

BRENDA

No.

DAD

Then there's nothing to explain  
your weapons of choice?

The kids put the bat and racket behind them.

MOM

Let's all calm down, have some  
pizza, and forget the whole thing!

ALEC

But we saw evidence!

MOM

Evidence?

ALEC

The tiger?

BRENDA

The cake box?

ALEC

And the scraping of steel like Mike  
Mulligan and the Little Engine,  
screaming for help from behind Old  
Man Rapple's house.

BRENDA

We heard it!

Dad and Mom scurry around the kitchen.

DAD

Two notes sent home from Mrs.  
Scoggins in two days!



MOM

And these wild stories! We don't know what's gotten into you.

DAD

Alec, we want you to sleep in your room tonight!

Alec looks STUNNED.

ALEC

(pouts)

Do I have to? There's no nightlight, ya know.

MOM

We think you're keeping each other awake -- talking all night! This has to stop.

Alec HANGS his head. Even Brenda POUTS. They eat their pizza in tiny bites, sadly.

DAD

It's one room away, with an adjoining bathroom. You're not being sent to Siberia!

BRENDA

What about the Xbox?

ALEC

And the LEGOs?

MOM

You can divide things up after school tomorrow. You can play in each other's rooms. No big deal, right?

Alec HANGS his head. Brenda POUTS.

DAD

You kids need your sleep! That's why you're acting all crazy! Lack of sleep.

MOM

I agree. Now, finish your dinner and get up to your rooms. You will not be late for school tomorrow!

The twins STOP EATING and march upstairs, as sad as they have ever been.

INT. ALEC'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The door CREAKS as Alec opens the door. He enters the cold, toy-less room with tiny steps. Brenda BURSTS through the adjoining bathroom door with a forced smile, and her arms behind her back.

BRENDA  
Not that far away!

Alec tries to be brave as he sits on his bed.

BRENDA (CONT'D)  
I found these in the closet!

Brenda swings her arms out to reveal two walkie-talkies. Alec grabs one immediately.

ALEC  
You're a genius!

Alec's mood lightens immediately.

BRENDA  
I know, right?

ALEC  
We need to set a trap!  
(beat)  
Quick! To the bookcase!

They RACE into Brenda's room.

ALEC (CONT'D)  
Each of us picks out two more classic favorites.

BRENDA  
What for?

ALEC  
You'll see!

They look through all the books, carefully making two selections each.

BRENDA  
Whatcha got!

ALEC  
*Sword and the Stone*, and *The Cat in the Hat*. What did you pick?

BRENDA  
*Black Beauty, and Pete's Dragon,*  
the novel, not the kids' book!

ALEC  
Great. Help me move the dresser.

They struggle, but pull the dresser out.

ALEC (CONT'D)  
Put the books behind the dresser.

Brenda puts the books against the wall.

BRENDA  
Okay.

ALEC  
Help me push the dresser back.

They struggle to push the dresser back.

BRENDA  
Fine! Now, we'd better get ready  
for bed, or Mom and Dad will go  
through the roof.

LATER

The twins are in their rooms, lying in bed, and whispering  
into their walkie-talkies.

ALEC  
Thanks for remembering the walkie-  
talkies.

BRENDA  
Thanks for setting a good trap.  
(beat)  
But it's in my room!

ALEC  
You wanted me out of your bedroom  
anyway. You said so!  
(beat)  
Nobody's gonna get those books.

Brenda is unsure. She looks over at the dresser.

BRENDA  
(mumbles)  
Nobody.

ALEC  
We'll never get another bedtime  
story, will we?

BRENDA  
Every night we go to sleep will be  
the same.

ALEC  
All our favorite old books will  
probably disappear, one by one.

BRENDA  
It will be tougher and tougher to  
fall asleep.

ALEC  
We may never fall asleep ever  
again.

Their eyes STAY OPEN an extra-long time that night. Finally,  
much later, they fall asleep with the walkie-talkies in their  
hands.

INT. BRENDA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Brenda HEARS a loud KNOCK on the door. She has great  
difficulty waking up.

MOM (O.S.)  
Brenda, time to get up. Breakfast  
is on the table.

Brenda HEARS her mom's footsteps going down the hallway.

MOM (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Alec, wake up. School day.  
Breakfast is ready.

Brenda HEARS her mom descend the stairs. Brenda looks around  
her room to see that her dresser has been moved away from the  
wall. She grabs her walkie-talkie as she PEEKS behind the  
dresser. She BUZZES Alec in the next room.

BRENDA  
Alec! Get in here. We have a  
problem!

Brenda SHAKES in fear.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Mom and Dad scurry about, checking their phones and drinking coffee. We still see only the lower half of the parents.

BRENDA  
Did you at least lock the doors  
last night?

DAD  
It's a safe enough neighborhood.

MOM  
We don't always check the locks.  
Maybe we should.

ALEC  
Ya think?

MOM  
What's that supposed to mean?

ALEC  
Old man Rapple lives just down the  
street!

BRENDA  
And strangers from out of town  
drive by all the time.

ALEC  
Could be gangs?

BRENDA  
Or escaped convicts!

DAD  
You're perfectly safe. Don't be  
late for school again. Eat up!

MOM  
If we get another note from your  
Mrs. Scoggins, you're both on  
restriction!

DAD  
Alec, how did you sleep last night?

ALEC  
Couldn't get to sleep.

BRENDA  
Me either!

ALEC

Don't think it was a good idea to  
move out with all this commotion  
about.

MOM

Don't be silly. There's no  
commotion. You're both in third  
grade. Practically fourth-graders!

DAD

I have to get to work, honey.

MOM

Me, too, dear. Don't forget your  
lunches, kids.

Mom and Dad RACE out the door. Alec and Brenda take backpacks  
to school. We see Alec's T-ball bat sticking out of his  
backpack and Brenda's badminton racket sticking out of hers  
as they leave the house.

EXT. OLDER NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

ALEC

Something very strange is going on  
around here!

BRENDA

And we're gonna find out what!

They stop at Old Man Rapple's place and STARE between the  
wrought-iron rails.

ALEC

Just gotta look closely.

BRENDA

I am. I am.

Alec sees a three-foot-tall 2x4 piece of wood sticking out of  
the ground halfway to the front door of the old house. He  
points at it for Brenda's sake.

ALEC

See that?

BRENDA

What?

ALEC

There it is!

BRENDA

What?

ALEC

The Sword in the Stone!

Alec is excited!

BRENDA

Huh?

ALEC

Looks like a piece of lumber now,  
just to trick us.

BRENDA

(sarcastic)

Doing a pretty good job!

ALEC

It's no coincidence that one of my  
favorite books gets stolen, and we  
find a sword stuck in the ground  
the next day!

BRENDA

(mumbles)

Sword?

ALEC

Made to look like a piece a wood.

(beat)

Probably by a sorcerer.

Brenda starts looking elsewhere in the junkyard.

BRENDA

Sorcerer?

Finally, Brenda sees an old, wooden hobbyhorse with rusty  
springs. She points and yells.

BRENDA (CONT'D)

The hobbyhorse is probably *Black  
Beauty*! That's it!

Alec looks over, nodding in agreement.

ALEC

Now, do you believe me?

Brenda realizes the time.

BRENDA  
We'll be late for school!

They RACE to school.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Again, Alec and Brenda are late for school, but so are Willy, Chelsea, and half of the class standing behind them. We see the legs of Mrs. Scoggins, with one foot tapping the floor in anger. Alec, Brenda, and the other kids FREEZE and STARE at the tapping foot.

MRS. SCOGGINS  
There will be plenty of notes sent home today.  
(beat)  
Put your things in the back of the classroom, and take your seats.

Alec begins to whisper to Willy, but he is interrupted by Mrs. Scoggins.

MRS. SCOGGINS (CONT'D)  
Alec, do you have something to share with the class?

All the children, but Alec, take their seats.

ALEC  
Mrs. Scoggins, I'd like to report a crime!

All the children GASP as they turn toward Alec.

MRS. SCOGGINS  
A crime?

ALEC  
Mrs. Scoggins, two days ago, only Brenda and me were tired.

MRS. SCOGGINS  
Brenda and I.

ALEC  
Brenda and I. But yesterday, six kids were overly tired.

MRS. SCOGGINS  
What are you saying, Alec?

Brenda HOPS up and joins Alec in the back of the classroom.



BRENDA

My brother's right. And today, half the class was late, and they looked exhausted.

MRS. SCOGGINS

Maybe they were studying for the big exam tomorrow. Multiplication tables, sentence structure: subjects, verbs, adjectives, and especially the creative writing essays!

BRENDA

And adverbs, naturally.

MRS. SCOGGINS

Yes, and adverbs. Maybe studying kept them up later than usual. It's perfectly normal to study for exams. Don't you agree, Alec and Brenda?

Alec and Brenda stare at each other with their EYES WIDE OPEN.

WILLY

Busted.

CHELSEA

Totally!

MRS. SCOGGINS

Class, while Alec and Brenda return to their seats, perhaps we can all take out our mathematics books and review the multiplication tables.

Alec whispers to Brenda as they return to their seats.

ALEC

Geez! Nobody believes us.

BRENDA

I know, right?

MRS. SCOGGINS

Many of you had problems with the elevens. Let's see if we see a pattern there.

EXT. SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - DAY

Alec and Brenda sit alone at a lunch table, while the other kids play a slow game of soccer (most are tired).

BRENDA

Pattern.

(imitating Mrs. Scoggins)

Let's see if we see a pattern there.

Alec is excited.

ALEC

That's it! I see a pattern! Each day, double the number of kids are late and too tired for school.

BRENDA

I'm more worried about the books.

ALEC

Some of the classics, stolen!

BRENDA

If mom and dad didn't do it, it means somebody is coming into our house! Who moved the dresser? Who stole the books?

ALEC

Maybe we should go to the police!

BRENDA

They'd say we were crazy.

ALEC

Yep. They'd say we just lost 'em.

Silence.

BRENDA

Maybe we are crazy.

Soon, Alec and Brenda are joined by Willy and Chelsea.

WILLY

Hi, Brenda. Can we talk?

Brenda wrinkles her face, confused.

BRENDA

We can talk right here.

WILLY

You've been acting a little weird lately.

ALEC

She's got a lot on her mind.

Willy turns to Alec.

WILLY

You've been acting even weirder.

Alec stands up, but Willy is much bigger, so Alec just stares meanly.

BRENDA

What's going on, Willy?

Willy pauses and looks around a bit.

WILLY

I think we should stop going out together.

Brenda looks more confused. She gets defensive.

BRENDA

Going out? Who said we were going out?

WILLY

The other kids.

CHELSEA

It was common knowledge.

Alec turns angrily to Chelsea.

ALEC

Common knowledge?

CHELSEA

Same with me, Alec. I think we should start seeing other people!

Brenda stands to defend her brother. She turns to Chelsea.

BRENDA

Seeing other people? You see other people every day at school!

WILLY

That's what I'm talking about.

Willy and Chelsea STORM away to the classroom, as the other students file by Alec and Brenda with a look of pity. Alec and Brenda LOOK confused.

EXT. OLDER NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Alec and Brenda struggle to walk. They are exhausted as they leave school, and their backpacks contain extra books, along with Alec's T-ball bat and Brenda's badminton racket.

ALEC

What do you suppose got into Willy and Chelsea today?

BRENDA

Have no idea. I didn't know I was Willy's girlfriend! Your fault for starting rumors!

ALEC

Not my fault. I didn't know I was going out with Chelsea. You started that rumor.

They get angrier as they walk.

BRENDA

You're such an idiot!

ALEC

You're such a dummy!

BRENDA

I don't think we've been acting weird.

ALEC

Me neither! I don't know what to think, but I know one thing.

BRENDA

What?

ALEC

I know where we need to stop.

BRENDA

No way! We're going home to study for our big test tomorrow.

ALEC

Wrong.

BRENDA  
No! Absolutely not!

ALEC  
Old Man Rapple's place!

BRENDA  
We'll get in big trouble!

ALEC  
Something I gotta do!

As they approach Old Man Rapple's place, their eyes open wider when they see a new item in the front yard: a rusty metal sculpture of a DRAGON (six feet tall), sitting across from the three-foot-tall, 2x4 post stuck in the ground. Brenda sees it first. She POINTS.

BRENDA  
It's *Pete's Dragon*! You were right  
all along.

Alec sees the dragon.

ALEC  
I knew it.

Alec sees the BRIGHT LIGHT in the upstairs room. He POINTS at the light.

ALEC (CONT'D)  
*Goodnight Moon*! Let's investigate!

Alec tosses his T-ball bat through the fence railing and begins to climb the treacherous wrought-iron fence.

BRENDA  
Investigate what?

ALEC  
I'm going to poke around! Coming  
with me?

Alec and Brenda YELL at each other.

BRENDA  
You're nuts! Old Man Rapple will  
kill you!

ALEC  
I'll never be able to sleep if I  
don't find out what happened to our  
books!

BRENDA

You can't sleep 'cause you're in  
your room, and there's no  
nightlight!

ALEC

Couldn't sleep before that! No  
bedtime story, and no peace and  
quiet 'cause you won't stop talking  
at night. Big mouth!

BRENDA

You're the big mouth!

ALEC

I'm going in there!

BRENDA

Outta my way, I'm going in there  
first!

Brenda tosses in her badminton racket and starts climbing. It's dangerous, but they both make it. Alec GRABS his T-ball bat like a war club. Brenda does the same with her badminton racket. They advance toward the house. Alec drops his bat next to the 2x4 post. He's exhausted, but he tries to pull the post out of the ground. He can't. He picks up the bat and STARES at the dragon sculpture, while Brenda (also exhausted) tries to wrestle the post free. It doesn't budge. She picks up her badminton racket.

They look suspiciously at each other as they investigate the old dragon sculpture, the rocking horse, the cement pig lawn ornament, and several other nondescript pieces of junk. They can't figure it out!

Their level of anxiety builds just as Willy and Chelsea stroll by the property and see Alec and Brenda with raised weapons.

WILLY

See what I mean?

CHELSEA

What's gotten into them?

Alec puts the T-ball bat behind him, and Brenda puts her badminton racket behind her, as they nonchalantly pick their way through the junkyard back to the wrought-iron gate. Alec and Brenda are defensive and angry.

ALEC

Just poking around. So what?

WILLY

That's private property. That's so what! And that's against the law!

BRENDA

We were just leaving! So what?

CHELSEA

Studying for the big tests?

ALEC

Extra books right there in our backpacks! Don't believe us, see for yourselves.

WILLY

My mom says Old Man Rapple can get pretty mean. Hope he catches you for your good.

Alec and Brenda turn and look at the junkyard and the house.

CHELSEA

I bet there are rats in there!

ALEC

Rats?

CHELSEA

Maybe you heard of them? They carry the bubonic plague.

(beat)

Fingers, feet, and tongue turn black. You get all swollen and sore as the bacteria multiply in your body like maggots.

BRENDA

That's enough, Chelsea. We're not going to get plague!

WILLY

Sure, acting weird. Maybe they already got it!

(beat)

I gotta get home to study.

CHELSEA

Me, too!

Willy and Chelsea walk on. Alec and Brenda watch them leave.

BRENDA

We should get home.

ALEC  
Maybe we should.

BRENDA  
This was a dumb idea of yours.

ALEC  
You climbed the fence first!

As they start to climb back, they HEAR the SCRAPING of steel behind the house.

Alec grabs Brenda's arm. They turn to look at the old house and whisper.

BRENDA  
What was that?

ALEC  
I told you. Something strange is going on here.

BRENDA  
Spooky.

ALEC  
Very.

BRENDA  
Dangerous.

ALEC  
Very.

They timidly CREEP toward the front door, taking small steps, and looking all around.

Alec raises his bat. Brenda raises her badminton racket.

They reach the front door and PEEK in the windows, which are so dirty they can't see in. Cobwebs are everywhere.

BRENDA  
Willy wouldn't like this.  
(beat)  
Cobwebs and spiders!

ALEC  
Let's go.

Brenda keeps peeking in the windows.

BRENDA  
We came this far!



ALEC

Okay.  
(gulps)  
I'll ring the doorbell.

It RINGS. No one answers.

BRENDA

Okay, let's go.

ALEC

We came this far!

Alec KNOCKS on the door, loudly. No one answers.

They HEAR a SIREN. They turn to run, but standing between them and the fence is an elderly giant of a man, MR. RAPPLE! (85; six-foot-four, unshaven for days, dressed in old work clothes; frightening), though we see only his backside.

MR. RAPPLE

What are you two doing in here?!

Alec and Brenda turn to see a Police Car pull up to the house.

ALEC

Uh oh!

BRENDA

We are in so much trouble!

Alec and Brenda are temporarily relieved to see Willy's dad exit the police car, but their mood changes when they see the scary LOOK on his face.

MR. GREENLEY

Sorry, Mr. Rapple. I know these two. They won't bother you again.

Alec and Brenda step past the mean-looking Mr. Rapple.

BRENDA

Sorry, Mr. Rapple. Weren't gonna take anything.

ALEC

Didn't mean anything, Mr. Rapple.  
Didn't want to hurt anything.

MR. GREENLEY

Come with me, kids. I'm not coming in there to get ya. I've got a twisted ankle.

Alec and Brenda walk like common criminals toward the police car. Mr. Rapple is right behind them, escorting the kids off his property, but the kids are too scared to face him.

MR. GREENLEY (CONT'D)  
I'll call you for a statement in a little while, Mr. Rapple.

Officer Greenly opens the back door to the police car and points to the back seat. Alec and Brenda are stone silent.

MR. GREENLEY (CONT'D)  
Get in, and buckle up.

The officer waves at Mr. Rapple, while the children SHAKE in fear, getting into the police car with their backpacks, T-ball bat, and badminton racket in hand. Officer Greenley drives off without a siren.

INT. POLICE CAR - DAY

MR. GREENLEY  
Trespassing and destruction of private property are serious offenses.

ALEC  
Yes, Sir. We went into the junkyard, but we didn't hurt anything.

BRENDA  
We didn't hurt anything, honest.

MR. GREENLEY  
Your parents aren't going to be happy about this.

BRENDA  
What's going to happen to us?

MR. GREENLEY  
I've got to take you to the station and fill out a report after I talk to Mr. Rapple.

ALEC  
Fill out a report?

MR. GREENLEY  
Have to find out if he's pressing charges. Shouldn't take long.

Officer Greenley looks back at the scared children as he parks at the tiny police station three blocks away.

MR. GREENLEY (CONT'D)  
Is this your first offense?

Alec and Brenda nod, "Yes."

MR. GREENLEY (CONT'D)  
(laughs)  
They should go pretty easy on ya!

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

The front desk Officer (40; black female, uniformed) LAUGHS when Mom and Dad enter the station frantically. We don't see anyone's face, but we HEAR the commotion of a police station.

DAD  
Our little girl and boy?

MOM  
Are they safe?

OFFICER  
Right behind me.

Dad and Mom PEEK behind the Officer to see Alec and Brenda fast asleep on a wooden bench.

OFFICER (CONT'D)  
Officer Greenley offered to take them home, but he had to get his ankle checked out at the doc's. The kids were so tired, we thought they might be safer here. They were rambling on about dragons and steam shovels, and a tiger of some kind!

DAD  
And Mr. Rapple?

OFFICER  
He helped the officer guide them to the police car after they had almost fainted.

MOM  
Oh my!

OFFICER

He's not pressing charges. He didn't want them to get tetanus or uncover a rat. We know his place is an eyesore, but we didn't write him up.

DAD

Are they going to have a police record?

OFFICER

(laughs)

Maybe for sleeping the most while in captivity.

MOM

Were they trespassing?

OFFICER

Old man Rapple says they were just retrieving a baseball bat and a badminton racket that fell through the fence. That's the story we're going with. You can take Bonnie and Clyde home anytime. Don't be too tough on them, they're just overly tired.

Mom and Dad collect their sleeping kids from the bench and lead them to the door of the police station.

DAD

Had an exciting afternoon?

ALEC

Didn't mean to.

BRENDA

Sorry.

MOM

Oh, you'll be sorry. We know about the recent 9-1-1 call, too. They made Officer Greenely spill the beans.

DAD

What's gotten into you kids?

ALEC

Just tired, I guess.

BRENDA  
Overly tired.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Mom and Dad scurry around, checking their phones and serving grilled cheese sandwiches to the sleepy kids.

DAD  
You two are so grounded!

MOM  
On restriction!

DAD  
No TV.

MOM  
No phoning friends.

DAD  
No nothing!

MOM  
Except for studying.

ALEC  
We're sorry.

BRENDA  
Yep. Sorry as can be.

ALEC  
Not entirely our fault, though.

Brenda kicks Alec under the table.

DAD  
I hope you can explain!

MOM  
(sarcastic)  
Please enlighten us!

BRENDA  
Just not getting enough sleep.

ALEC  
Not used to my new room.

MOM  
Not used to the other bed? Same manufacturer?

ALEC

I haven't moved over all my stuff,  
so it doesn't feel like my room.

MOM

You can do it tonight, right after  
dinner!

ALEC

(sarcastic)

Thanks, Mom.

DAD

And hurry up with the move, I want  
you to study for those big exams  
tomorrow.

MOM

Multiplication tables and sentence  
structure: subjects, verbs,  
adjectives, and your creative  
essay!

Brenda is about to speak, but Mom interrupts her.

MOM (CONT'D)

And adverbs, naturally.

BRENDA

Do we still get to go to the  
costume parade and picnic after the  
exams?

DAD

Yes. Your mom and I will bring your  
costumes just before the picnic.

ALEC

And we get to go home after the  
picnic, right?

MOM

Yes, and you're to walk right home.

DAD

Right past Old Man Rapple's place  
without even looking in. Got it?

BRENDA

Got it.

ALEC

What if we find our stolen books?

MOM

If you get arrested again, they are going to lock you up and throw away the key!

DAD

Stay out of Mr. Rapple's yard at all costs! Got it?

ALEC

Got it.

(beat)

It's just that today, I swore we saw the *Sword and the Stone*.

BRENDA

And *Pete's Dragon*.

ALEC

And *Goodnight Moon* in the attic, all lit up.

DAD

Okay! That's enough. Upstairs, you two.

MOM

This nonsense has to stop!

DAD

Alec, I want you to move all of your stuff out of Brenda's room tonight! You hear me? Brenda will help!

BRENDA

Yes, Dad.

ALEC

Okay, but...

MOM

No buts!

ALEC

We still can't find our books that were stolen!

DAD

I don't want to hear another thing about stolen books.

MOM

If you're so worried about stolen bedtime storybooks, each of you can pick out your two favorite books, and your father and I will lock them in our closet tonight for safekeeping.

DAD

I'm fine with that!

Alec and Brenda's eyes light up. They HUG their parents.

ALEC

Okay, I'll move, then pick out books to save.

BRENDA

Thanks, Mom and Dad. We can't afford to lose any more bedtime stories around here.

Alec and Brenda RACE upstairs to the bookcase.

INT. BRENDA'S AND ALEC'S BEDROOMS - NIGHT

In Brenda's bedroom, Alec is moving sets of LEGOs and other toys over to his room through the adjoining Jack 'n Jill bathroom. The mood is solemn.

ALEC

I'm taking the Starship LEGOs.

BRENDA

Go ahead. I'm keeping the pirate ship.

ALEC

Go ahead.

BRENDA

You're not getting any of the stuffed animals.

ALEC

Stuffed animals are for kids.

(beat)

Except the lion.

Alec retrieves a STUFFED LION for the corner of the room.



BRENDA

That's mine. I got it for my third birthday.

ALEC

I got it for my third birthday.

BRENDA

Same day, you idiot.

ALEC

My memory is better. Dad gave it to me for being so brave.

BRENDA

Your legs were shaking like Jello in that police car.

ALEC

So were yours!

BRENDA

It's my lion!

ALEC

Take it from me!

They scuffle and make too much noise. Mom and Dad HEAR them and shout up.

MOM (O.S.)

Move going well? I hope there's no trouble!

BRENDA

(yells)

No trouble.

ALEC

(yells)

Almost done.

Alec tosses down the stuffed lion. Brenda and Alec whisper.

BRENDA

Keep your stupid lion. I've got *Winnie the Pooh*.

ALEC

Take the stupid lion! I don't want any of them. Stuffed animals are for kids.

BRENDA  
What about your pillow?

ALEC  
No-brainer. That's coming with me.

BRENDA  
You got another pillow in your room.

ALEC  
This one's my favorite.

BRENDA  
Let's go see how your room is coming.

They walk through the bathroom to Alec's less-cheerful room.

BRENDA (CONT'D)  
Your room looks bigger.

ALEC  
(sadly)  
A little emptier.

BRENDA  
You'll get used to it.

ALEC  
(tougher)  
Yep. I'm tough.

BRENDA  
Almost a fourth-grader.

ALEC  
Yep.

BRENDA  
We gotta divide the books.

ALEC  
I know.

BRENDA  
Come on.  
(beat)  
Back to my room.

LATER

Alec and Brenda have most of the books divided into two piles.

They sit closely on the floor and pore over the remaining books like long-lost friends. The decisions are the toughest they've made in their young lives. They are so busy, they fail to realize that Mom and Dad are standing halfway up the stairs listening in.

ALEC

What about *Casey at the Bat*?

BRENDA

You have it memorized. What about *Stone Soup*?

ALEC

Good one. Yep! And my all-time favorite is *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss.

BRENDA

"Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, Nothing is going to get better. It's not."

ALEC

What's your all-time favorite?

BRENDA

I guess mine is *The Grinch Who Stole Christmas*.

ALEC

Yep, all the Whos down in Whoville agree.

BRENDA

I can't pick just two.

ALEC

Me either. You can't break up a set.

BRENDA

Like me and you?

ALEC

I'll go ask Dad and Mom if I can sleep in your room tonight.

BRENDA

And I'll go ask if we can lock away all the books in their closet.

ALEC

Good idea.

Mom and Dad quickly tiptoe to the bottom of the stairs, turn, and start up the stairs noisily. Alec and Brenda HEAR them and poke their heads out the door.

DAD

Just coming up to tuck you in and  
kiss you good night.

ALEC

Can I sleep in my old bed tonight?  
Just to sleep better?

MOM

I don't know, Alec. You only gave  
it one night. You're a big boy now.

DAD

I agree, Alec. You'll get used to  
having your room, and soon you'll  
grow to love it!

BRENDA

I'm okay if Alec wants to sleep  
over tonight. Just to be safe? His  
room doesn't have a nightlight.

MOM

You're perfectly safe in your  
rooms. You're practically fourth-  
graders.

DAD

Come on, kids, you need to get some  
sleep for your tests, the costume  
parade, and the picnic!

The kids crack a weak smile.

ALEC

Can you lock away a few more books  
tonight?

DAD

A few more? How many?

ALEC

All of 'em. Except for a couple of  
them, ya know, for tonight.

Mom and Dad don't seem to get the hint.

BRENDA

We'll help carry them downstairs.

MOM

You're missing out on valuable study time!

DAD

And lights are going out at nine-thirty.

MOM

You need a good night's sleep for that big day tomorrow.

ALEC

Okay, Mom and Dad. I love you.

BRENDA

Me too.

DAD

We love you too. To the moon and back.

Alec looks down.

ALEC

*Goodnight Moon* is still gone.

MOM

It's probably misplaced.

BRENDA

We looked everywhere!

DAD

When you should have been studying your multiplication tables?

MOM

And parts of speech?

ALEC

I guess so.

MOM

You get ready for bed, and we'll carry the books downstairs.

The kids get ready for bed, and Mom and Dad cart the books downstairs.

LATER

The kids are in their beds, clutching their walkie-talkies. They whisper back and forth.

BRENDA

Sorry about calling you an idiot so often, I've been tired and cranky lately.

ALEC

Sorry for calling you a moron lately, but you've been a moron.

Alec laughs. Then Brenda laughs.

BRENDA

Do you know your multiplication tables?

ALEC

Most of 'em. Don't care about the others, especially the elevens and twelves.

BRENDA

Why?

ALEC

Ridiculous to memorize stuff. When we get older, we can use a calculator anytime we want.

BRENDA

Good point.

ALEC

And when we get cell phones, maybe next birthday, they have calculators on 'em.

BRENDA

Chelsea already has one.

ALEC

See. I might just wait 'til I can look up everything: parts of speech, long division, maps about where Peru is, everything.

BRENDA

What if you lose your phone?

ALEC

I'll know where to look for it.

BRENDA

Where?

ALEC

Old Man Rapple's place. That's where!

BRENDA

We can't go near that place. Tomorrow, we're crossing the street just to avoid it.

ALEC

At least our books are safe tonight, locked in Mom's and Dad's closet.

BRENDA

Yeah! That's good.

ALEC

I'm gonna be a Star Wars guy in the parade tomorrow. Who you gonna be again?

BRENDA

Pirate. My Wonder Woman costume is degrading.

ALEC

Geez! You are getting older.

BRENDA

Okay, we gotta get to sleep.

SILENCE

ALEC

What book did you put by your door? I put *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*.

BRENDA

*The Empty Pot*, by Demi. I kind of felt like the little seed that didn't grow.

ALEC

(sadly)  
Three nights in a row.

BRENDA

(even sadder)  
I know.

Pause.

ALEC  
Good night, *Baby Beebee Bird*.

BRENDA  
*Goodnight Moon*.

Neither child can get to sleep. They STARE at their doors, hoping for a bedtime story. Their eyes are wide open.

INT. BRENDA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Both children hear a loud KNOCK on their bedroom doors.

MOM (O.S.)  
Time to get up. Get dressed immediately, will you?

DAD (O.S.)  
We have a little problem.

BRENDA  
Okay, okay!

ALEC (O.S.)  
(excited)  
Right away.

Alec sees that his book is gone.

ALEC (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
*Alexander and the Terrible,  
Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day!*  
(beat)  
It's gone!

Brenda sees that her book is gone.

BRENDA  
*The Empty Pot* is gone too!

The twins RACE to brush their teeth and get dressed. They RACE downstairs to see their parents, and Willy's policeman father, Mr. (Officer) Greenley (in uniform). The parents scurry around looking at their phones, serving coffee to Mr. Greenley and breakfast cereal to the kids. We see only the lower halves of their bodies.

MOM  
Officer Greenely was kind enough to stop by before his shift.

ALEC  
Hi, Mr. Greenley. Is Willy okay?



MR. GREENLEY

Willy's fine. Morning kids. You had a rough afternoon yesterday, but this might be worse.

DAD

Seems that you kids might be right about a burglar in the neighborhood.

BRENDA

What happened?

MOM

Your books are gone.

DAD

Vanished.

MR. GREENLEY

We're looking into the matter, I assure you.

ALEC

Did you lock them in your closet like you said?

DAD

Well, you see, our closet doesn't have a real lock.

MOM

In fact, neither of us remembers locking the back door.

BRENDA

What? That's how somebody stole *The Empty Pot*!

DAD

Or the front door, for that matter.

ALEC

Huh! That's how somebody stole *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*.

(beat)

Now, we're gonna have a terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day!

MOM

Our fault entirely. We left the books right here on the kitchen table, so we could carry them up to your rooms in the morning.

DAD

Then, this morning...

(beat)

Gone. But don't worry, Officer Greenley will find them.

MOM

He promised.

MR. GREENLEY

I'll have to fill out an official report.

ALEC

Okay.

BRENDA

Okay.

MR. GREENLEY

Can you kids make me a list of all the books you have in your collection?

BRENDA

All of 'em?

MR. GREENLEY

I'm going to need all of them.

ALEC

But we'll be late for school?

MOM

And today is a big test day. Multiplication tables, parts of speech, and creative essays.

MR. GREENLEY

Willy's been studying all week.

DAD

At least there's a costume parade and a picnic afterward.

MR. GREENLEY

That's right. I have to bring Willy his baseball uniform and plastic bat at lunchtime.

ALEC

What about finding the thief who stole our books?

MR. GREENLEY

I can check out the used-book store and pawn shops, but cases like this are hard to crack if your doors were left unlocked.

BRENDA

Because the thief can say the books were left out by the garbage cans or something?

MR. GREENLEY

Exactly.

MOM

We were unforgivably negligent.

The kids are sad.

BRENDA

Good adverb, Mom.

ALEC

Should have locked the door, Mom and Dad.

DAD

We know, now!

MR. GREENLEY

I'll still need a complete list of the missing books for my report.

BRENDA

Some we hadn't read in a while.

MR. GREENLEY

How long?

ALEC

A really long while.

MR. GREENLEY

Day?

(beat)

(MORE)

MR. GREENLEY (CONT'D)

Weeks?

(beat)

Years?

ALEC

It's hard to read them all, all the time.

BRENDA

We get busy with other things.

ALEC

LEGOs.

BRENDA

Engineering kits.

ALEC & BRENDA

X-Box.

MR. GREENLEY

I see.

ALEC

Doesn't mean we didn't like the books.

BRENDA

Being a kid is busy. We had lots of homework too.

MOM

That's true.

DAD

Maybe the thief took the books for his young children, who weren't as busy.

MR. GREENLEY

I could hunt down possible thieves with younger children?

ALEC

I can't believe they're gone!

BRENDA

Something funny is going on around here. Why isn't the TV gone?

ALEC

Or the computer?

MR. GREENLEY

Maybe the thief is a book-lover?

ALEC

It's not fair. We like 'em too.

MOM

Maybe you could make a complete list of stolen books after school?

BRENDA

I suppose we could try.

DAD

Good plan.

MR. GREENLEY

I'll look into the stolen books. Don't worry, kids. I'll get to the bottom of this! Thanks for the coffee.

DAD

Thanks, Officer Greenley.

The kids notice as Mr. Greenley LIMPS out. The children do not look comforted.

EXT. OLDER NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Alec and Brenda are tired after the first few steps toward school. Willy and Chelsea join them from across the street, but they walk several steps behind Alec and Brenda.

Alec

Hi, guys.

CHELSEA

Hi, guys. Tired too?

BRENDA

Didn't sleep much.

Willy

Me either. We had a four-fifty-nine.

ALEC

What?

WILLY

Burglary.

BRENDA  
Your dad is a cop!

WILLY  
(defensive)  
He still goes to sleep.

BRENDA  
What did they take?

WILLY  
Bedtime storybooks.

CHELSEA  
Our house too!

ALEC  
Something really strange is going  
on!

BRENDA  
Anything else stolen?

WILLY  
Nope.

CHELSEA  
Nope.

They walk a few steps and stop.

WILLY  
You guys go on ahead. My mom said I  
shouldn't associate with common  
criminals.

ALEC  
Common criminals?

CHELSEA  
It's common knowledge you were  
hailed downtown by the police.

BRENDA  
It was just Willy's dad, and it  
wasn't downtown. It was three  
blocks away.

WILLY  
You guys are acting so weird  
lately.

CHELSEA  
Weird.

BRENDA

We're the same as we were last week, except a little more tired.

ALEC

Willy, why is your dad limping?

WILLY

His leg got stuck in a sewer drain.

BRENDA

How's he gonna catch the book thief?

WILLY

He's gotta do office work for three more weeks. How should I know?

They walk toward school, with Alec and Brenda leading by several steps. They start to pass Old Man Rapple's place. Brenda guides everyone across the street.

CHELSEA

Why are we crossing the street?

ALEC

Avoiding another arrest.

WILLY

Heard about that. My dad says next time they are going to haul you downtown.

BRENDA

Why would they do that when we have a perfectly uncomfortable police station three blocks away?

ALEC

They can torture us right here.

BRENDA

You two are being ridiculous!

ALEC

We just hopped the fence to get our stuff back.

They stop across from Old Man Rapple's place, and strain to look in.

BRENDA

A flower pot!

ALEC  
It wasn't there yesterday.

BRENDA  
The Empty Pot!

CHELSEA  
What are you talking about?

BRENDA  
You don't see the connection? My book, *The Empty Pot*, was stolen last night, and we see an empty flower pot in Old Man Rapple's junkyard today?

Willy and Chelsea look bewildered. They mumble quietly.

CHELSEA  
I don't see *Harry Potter*?

WILLY  
I don't see *Curious George* or *Dumbo*.

They are interrupted from across the street when Old Man Rapple RACES out from his front door.

MR. RAPPLE  
I warned you kids! Stay away from here!

The children RACE to school.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Alec, Brenda, Chelsea, and Willy are late! Mrs. Scoggins is TAPPING her foot.

MRS. SCOGGINS  
Nice of you to join us! Do we need another note sent home?

BRENDA  
No, Mrs. Scoggins.

MRS. SCOGGINS  
Take your seats. Or should I say, beds.

Alec, Brenda, Chelsea, and Willy SEE that most of the students in class have their heads on their desks.



ALEC  
We didn't sleep well either.

MRS. SCOGGINS  
How am I expected to administer an exam when all my students are asleep?

Alec, Brenda, Chelsea, and Willy take their seats. They, too, are barely awake.

MRS. SCOGGINS (CONT'D)  
I thought you would all be bouncing off the walls with the costume parade and picnic today! It's a Friday, too!

WILLY  
Will that be on the test? Days of the week? I didn't study those!

MRS. SCOGGINS  
No, Willy. Class, you may read quietly for a few minutes, while I go speak with the principal about delaying our tests until Monday.

Mrs. Scoggins leaves the room. Alec comes to life and JUMPS to the front of the room.

ALEC  
How many of you slept last night?

Brenda raises her hand, then races up to join Alec.

BRENDA  
(loudly)  
Come on, show of hands!

Nearly all hands go up.

ALEC  
How many of you have slept lousy all week?

Nearly all the hands go up.

BRENDA  
How many of you have had bedtime story books lost or stolen this week?

Nearly all the hands go up.

ALEC  
I told you!

BRENDA  
We have a terrible, sneaky book  
thief in the neighborhood.

ALEC  
We think we know who! Old Man  
Rapple!

The students GASP!

CHELSEA  
Don't you need proof?

BRENDA  
*The Empty Pot?*

ALEC  
The scraping of steel in the  
backyard has to be *Mike Mulligan  
and His Steam Shovel!*

BRENDA  
And we saw a bird there! Like *The  
Baby Beebee Bird.*

The students GASP!

ALEC  
And how do you explain a bright  
light in his attic, if it wasn't  
the *Goodnight Moon?*

BRENDA  
And you can bet *The Little Engine  
That Could* is in the backyard too!  
Been missing for days!

The students GASP!

CHELSEA  
Should we go to the police?

BRENDA  
Willy's dad is on the case, but he  
has a bad foot since he stepped in  
a sewer drain.

Willy, fast asleep, falls out of his desk and onto the floor  
with a THUD. Several Students help Willy back to his seat.

ALEC  
I think we have to handle this  
ourselves.

CHELSEA  
Uh oh. I don't like the sound of  
this.

They HEAR footsteps coming down the hall.

BRENDA  
Sit up straight. We'll explain the  
plan later!

Brenda and Alec whisper back and forth as they go back to  
their seats.

BRENDA (CONT'D)  
What plan?

ALEC  
We'll think of something!

BRENDA  
We've got to do something to get  
our bedtime stories back!

ALEC  
We need a plan!

Alec and Beth STARE at each other in fright!

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

The students sit up straight and tall in their desks. They  
look alert and smile like angels. The classroom door opens,  
and we see two sets of hands and legs; Mrs. Scoggins' and the  
PRINCIPAL's legs (50; black female in a pantsuit).

PRINCIPAL  
They look wide awake to me.

MRS. SCOGGINS  
But they were all asleep.

PRINCIPAL  
You may administer the test  
immediately. However, the creative  
essay portion of the test has been  
delayed until Monday.

The students CHEER.

MRS. SCOGGINS  
I don't understand.

PRINCIPAL  
Try varying your voice patterns.

The Principal STORMS away.

MRS. SCOGGINS  
Class, please take out two  
sharpened pencils, and do not open  
your test booklets until I tell you  
to do so.

Mrs. Scoggins passes out test booklets.

EXT. SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - DAY

The students gather around Alec and Brenda in the middle of  
the soccer field.

BRENDA  
It doesn't matter how you did on  
the multiplication tables! Tell  
'em, Alec.

ALEC  
Someday, your calculators,  
smartphones, and tablet computers  
will do all that for you. You'll be  
able to say, 'What's eleven times  
twelve?' and an answer will bounce  
right back.

WILLY  
Two hundred and fifteen?

BRENDA  
No, Willy.

WILLY  
Fifty-seven?

ALEC  
No, Willy.

WILLY  
What if your smartphone isn't that  
smart?

BRENDA  
They will be. Back to the plan,  
Alec?

Alec whispers, so they all lean in.

ALEC

The shortest person in class leads  
the parade every year.

BRENDA

Right. So nobody trips on them.

CHELSEA

Uh oh. I don't feel good about  
this.

ALEC

Brenda and I will take over when we  
get outside.

BRENDA

That's Brenda and me.

WILLY

Don't be silly, Brenda, that's two  
of you!

ALEC

Don't worry, Willy, we have until  
Monday to learn grammar.

BRENDA

Just have those lightsabers, Thor's  
hammers, and baseball bats ready!

ALEC

Then just follow our lead!

The bell RINGS.

INT. CLASSROOM

Mrs. Scoggins watches as the Students get into their costumes over their school clothes. Alec is in a Star Wars costume with a lightsaber. Brenda is a pirate with a plastic sword. Willy is a baseball player with a yellow Whiffle Ball bat. Chelsea wears a pith helmet and carries a butterfly net. The other students are equally equipped with some type of potential weapon (e.g., badminton rackets, fishing poles, footballs, swimming pool noodles, golf clubs, etc.).

MRS. SCOGGINS

Be careful with those clubs and  
bats.

(MORE)

MRS. SCOGGINS (CONT'D)

I'll go out and tell your parents  
that you'll be out in five minutes  
so they can get their cameras  
ready.

CHELSEA

Five minutes?

MRS. SCOGGINS

That's right, Chelsea, and you lead  
the group.

(beat)

Remember, everyone, walk in a  
single file line. Give yourselves  
plenty of space to the person in  
front of you, so that you don't  
accidentally hit someone with a  
bat!

Mrs. Scoggins STARES at Willy. Willy pays no attention.

STUDENTS

Yes, Mrs. Scoggins.

MRS. SCOGGINS

March around the playground and  
soccer field, and return to the  
picnic tables for the picnic. Is  
that clear?

STUDENTS

Yes, Mrs. Scoggins.

Mrs. Scoggins exits to the playground. Alec PEEKS out the  
door to see Mrs. Scoggins speaking to twenty-five PARENTS,  
including Mom and Dad, Officer (Mr.) Greenley and Mrs.  
Greenley, Chelsea's parents (Asian, 30s), and random adults  
(30-35 various types).

ALEC

Okay, everyone! We know what we  
gotta do.

BRENDA

Follow us! Let's do this!

Rather than go out the back door to the playground, Alec  
leads the group in a quiet, single-file line, out to the  
hallway, down the hall past the Principal's office, and out  
the front door of the school. They march down to Rapple's Old  
Ancient Secondhand Antique Emporium and Junkyard. Alec and  
Brenda stand at the gate, with the Students behind them. Alec  
and Brenda view the entire field of battle.

ALEC  
Pick an objective, everyone.  
Something to rescue.

Alec points to the 2x4 post stuck in the dirt.

ALEC (CONT'D)  
I'm going after *The Sword in the Stone*!

Brenda points to an old flower pot.

BRENDA  
I'm going to rescue The Empty Pot.

Chelsea looks puzzled at first, but then sees a dragon sculpture.

CHELSEA  
I've got to rescue that dragon for *Harry Potter*.

BRENDA  
This is *Where the Wild Things Are*!

WILLY  
Like Dumbo, or Horton?

ALEC  
Haven't seen any elephants, but we'll be on the lookout.

BRENDA  
Everybody got a target?

CHELSEA  
What do we do if Old Man Rapple comes out?

ALEC  
We storm the castle!

BRENDA  
He means the house.

ALEC  
That's where our books are!

Alec puts his arm around Brenda.

BRENDA  
We're sure of it!

ALEC  
On the count of three!

BRENDA  
We don't have much time. Mrs.  
Scoggins and our parents will find  
us soon! Ready?

ALEC  
One, two...  
(beat)  
Three.

ALEC & BRENDA  
(yell)  
Charge!

The kids charge into the junkyard, yelling, screaming, and hitting everything with their "weapons."

Chelsea charges at the dragon sculpture and swats it with her butterfly net in a comical moment.

Alec charges for the 2x4 post, drops his lightsaber, and tries to remove the post from the soil, but it's too difficult.

Willy swings his plastic baseball bat wildly at everything!

Brenda battles a large empty flower pot with her pirate sword.

The other children are in battles of their own, all across the junkyard. They CHEER and LAUGH. A kid dressed as Superman is lifting an old tire. Spider-Man is climbing an old bench swing. Everyone is having fun!

CUT TO:

EXT. SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - DAY

The children are so LOUD that Mrs. Scoggins and the Parents can hear them from the school playground. They turn their heads toward Mr. Rapple's place.

MRS. SCOGGINS  
Are those my students?

MOM  
I may have recognized a voice.



DAD

Me, too.

BACK TO:

EXT. OLDER NEIGHBORHOOD -- DAY

In Mr. Rapple's junkyard, Brenda RACES over to help Alec with the post. Together, they SUCCEED. Alec hoists the big post up like it's Excalibur! Brenda now has her pirate sword in one hand and Alec's lightsaber in the other.

Brenda SEES a bright light in the attic.

BRENDA

*It's Goodnight Moon!*

All the children look up and GASP!

ALEC

Storm the castle!

BRENDA

Let's go!

The kids hold their weapons high, and CHEER as they follow Alec and Brenda up the stairs to the front door.

As they reach the front door, it mysteriously opens! Behind it is a smiling Mr. Rapple.

The Students charge in and they SEE four long TABLES piled high with books. And books in boxes beneath the tables, each with a Student's name on it.

Mr. Rapple bursts out laughing.

MR. RAPPLE

Come in. Come in.

The Students are stunned.

ALEC

What's going on?

BRENDA

Yes, what?

MR. RAPPLE

Your teacher and parents will be here any second. Ask them!

Mrs. Scoggins is the first to arrive. She RACES into the house and roars with LAUGHTER. We (the audience) finally see her smiling face!

MRS. SCOGGINS

My brilliant students finally solved the case of their missing books! Children, put down your swords, they are useless against knowledge!

Mom, Dad, and the other parents come racing in. Mr. (Officer) Greenley limps in last. We SEE all of their faces!

MOM

Our little secret is out!

ALEC & BRENDA

Huh?

DAD

Mrs. Scoggins will explain.

MRS. SCOGGINS

Students, listen carefully. After you practice creative essays, I called all your parents. I suggested we revitalize your imaginations.

CHELSEA

How, Mrs. Scoggins?

MRS. SCOGGINS

First, I asked the parents to quit reading bedtime stories.

WILLY

That was rotten, Mrs. Scoggins.

MRS. SCOGGINS

(smiles)

Yes, it was. Then, I asked the parents to "borrow" their bedtime storybooks.

ALEC

We couldn't sleep without our nighttime stories! That was especially rotten, Mrs. Scoggins.

MRS. SCOGGINS

(smiles)

Yes, it was.

(MORE)

MRS. SCOGGINS (CONT'D)  
Then, I asked Willy's dad, Officer  
Greenely, to do all the pretend  
investigating.

BRENDA  
That was evil, Mr. Greenley.

Officer Greenly puts his head down and chuckles.

MRS. SCOGGINS  
Then I asked my father, Max Rapple,  
if he'd store all the books  
temporarily.

The Students GASP!

MRS. SCOGGINS (CONT'D)  
Most of you are too young to  
remember that my kind, elderly  
father was a very respected  
Professor of English Literature in  
his day!

The students turn to Mr. Rapple, who LAUGHS heartily.

MR. RAPPLE  
Dear students, all of your books  
are in the boxes, but you are  
welcome to take any of my books  
from the top of the tables.

MRS. SCOGGINS  
Your real creative essay test will  
be administered on Monday morning.

BRENDA  
We can read a lot of books by then.

MRS. SCOGGINS  
I hope your parents read to you,  
too.

The parents nod, 'yes.'

MOM  
Can't wait.

DAD  
Me either!

MRS. SCOGGINS

More importantly, I would like you to have wonderful adventures this weekend. Build a fort, take a hike, camp in your backyard.

WILLY

Watch a Disney movie?

MRS. SCOGGINS

Don't just watch a Disney movie, write your own.

MOM

It might do us good to unplug our TVs and put our cellphones in a drawer this weekend.

DAD

And stay off our computers.

MRS. SCOGGINS

Use your imagination, they are the costumes for your minds.

MRS. GREENLEY

That should be three bedtime stories and three good nights' sleep before your test on Monday.

MRS. SCOGGINS

Okay, everyone, thank Mr. Rapple for storing your books.

STUDENTS

Thanks, Mr. Rapple.

MRS. SCOGGINS

Students, be sure to take those books home with you after our picnic. We have pizza and veggie sandwiches waiting at the picnic tables behind the school. Let's go, everyone.

STUDENTS

Yes, Mrs. Scoggins.

MRS. SCOGGINS

Dad, I hope you can join us at our picnic.

MR. RAPPLE  
(laughing)  
Yes, Mrs. Scoggins.

The Students and Parents thank Mr. Rapple and Mrs. Scoggins.

The parents help carry the books back to the school and the picnic. Mom, Dad, Alec, and Brenda remain behind to talk to Mr. Rapple, who turns to Alec and Brenda.

MR. RAPPLE (CONT'D)  
You two figured it out. You should  
be very proud.

Alec and Brenda smile.

BRENDA  
Our imaginations got a little  
carried away.

MR. RAPPLE  
Your imagination can never get  
carried away, but it can carry you  
on endless adventures.

ALEC  
But you called the cops on us.

MR. RAPPLE  
I couldn't let you figure it out  
too soon. Some parents were behind  
schedule getting their children's  
books to me.

MOM  
And you needed a bit more time to  
appreciate their loss.

ALEC  
You mean, we had to miss the books  
more?

DAD  
Exactly. "You don't know what you  
got 'til it's gone," Joni Mitchell  
said.

MR. RAPPLE  
Before you go, kids, I'd like to  
give you something.

From the top of the fireplace, Mr. Rapple retrieves two very old brass door keys. He hands one each to Alec and Brenda. They all look very carefully at the keys.

ALEC & BRENDA  
Thanks, Mr. Rapple.

MOM  
Look, kids, they have letters on them.

MR. RAPPLE  
These are very special keys.

ALEC  
What do they open?

MR. RAPPLE  
They open your creativity.

BRENDA  
He means, do they unlock anything?

MR. RAPPLE  
They unlock your imagination.

DAD  
What are the letters for?

Mr. Rapple points at each letter.

MR. RAPPLE  
This part of a key is called the bow. It's the part you hold on to. The "B" is for "Beginning," the "M" is for "Middle."

He points to the shaft.

MR. RAPPLE (CONT'D)  
You need a long middle, like the shaft of a key.  
(beat)  
And the "E" forms the wards of the key, which open any lock.

DAD  
Beginning, middle, and end: the parts of every story!

MR. RAPPLE  
That's right! These are the keys to every story!

MOM  
Thank you, Mr. Rapple. The children will cherish them forever!

Alec and Brenda HUG Mr. Rapple.

ALEC  
Thanks, Mr. Rapple.

BRENDA  
Special thanks, Mr. Rapple. We  
won't let anybody steal this story  
from us!

DAD  
We've got to get to that picnic!  
Mrs. Scoggins needs us there!

They all laugh and carry as many books as they can carry.

EXT. SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - DAY

The picnic is in full swing when Dad, Mom, Alec, Brenda, and Mr. Rapple arrive behind the school. The Students CHEER as they enter the picnic area. Five students finishing pizza and veggie sandwiches vacate their seats next to Mrs. Scoggins for the honored guests. Brenda is clutching her key, while Alec clutches his key.

MRS. SCOGGINS  
Take a seat. Enjoy the picnic.  
Thanks, Dad. I hope my students  
didn't hurt your junkyard too much.

They grab slices of pizza and sandwiches.

MR. RAPPLE  
You mean our Old Ancient Secondhand  
Antique Emporium and Junkyard. I  
inherited most of that stuff from  
your Mom, Grandma, and Great-  
Grandma!

MRS. SCOGGINS  
Mom collected junk? All these  
years, I thought it was you!

Mrs. Scoggins HUGS her dad.

Willy stops by to pull Brenda away from the table a little bit to whisper to her.

Brenda rejoins the table, and Willy politely stands behind her, listening in on the conversation. Then, Chelsea taps Alec on the shoulder and indicates with her index finger that she wishes to talk to him privately. Alec gets up and stands a few feet from the table where they whisper.

Alec smiles and rejoins the table. Chelsea squeezes next to him on the picnic table. Willy sees this and sits at the very end of the table next to Brenda. Moments later, Willy falls off the seat. Brenda ROLLS her eyes in delight and extends an arm to help him up. Willy SMILES.

ALEC

What's all the scraping metal  
sounds we heard from the backyard?

BRENDA

We have to know what it is, and the  
steel scraping sounds in the  
backyard, or there's no "E" to our  
story.

MR. RAPPLE

You aren't the kind of children who  
give up easily!

The school bell RINGS.

MR. RAPPLE (CONT'D)

Bring a flashlight! Meet at my  
place, at sundown!

Alec GULPS.

EXT. OLDER NEIGHBORHOOD - SUNDOWN

Mr. Rapple waits outside his wrought-iron fence, as Mom, Dad, Alec, Brenda, Willy, and Chelsea walk slowly up the sidewalk with flashlights lit.

MR. RAPPLE

Sundown! Great. I see you all have  
flashlights.

Mr. Rapple lights an old-fashioned LANTERN and leads them through the junkyard to the side of the house. The kids' flashlight beams bob nervously.

The wind SWIRLS, and they HEAR the scraping of metal in the backyard!

BRENDA

What was that?

MR. RAPPLE

Let's go find out!

They walk on. Mr. Rapple's lantern SWAYS in the wind.



MR. RAPPLE (CONT'D)  
Careful stepping over the antiques.

They walk on slowly and carefully with their flashlight beams pointed in every direction.

They HEAR an owl HOOT, and the children's eyes open widely.

They reach the back of the house. Another GUST of wind comes up, and they HEAR the SCREECHING of steel.

ALEC  
*Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel?*

BRENDA  
*The Little Engine That Could?*

Their flashlights converge on the screeching. We SEE a tipped-over backyard windmill (a ten-foot tall structure), with blades SPINNING and SCRAPING against an old corrugated metal fence.

They make their way to the windmill. Mr. Rapple sets his lantern down, and the others help him push and pull the heavy windmill upright. They grunt and smile.

ALEC  
We did it!

BRENDA  
Sure did!

MR. RAPPLE  
Let's head up to the attic to find  
your *Goodnight Moon*!

BRENDA  
This is great!

MR. RAPPLE  
Watch your step. We'll go in  
through the back door.

ALEC  
How come you're lights aren't on?

MOM  
Would have been too easy, I guess.

WILLY  
Probably so, I can't see all the  
spiders!

CHELSEA

And so I can't see all of the rats!

Mr. Rapple guides them through and over piles of junk on the way to the back door. The flashlight beams SHINE in every direction. The old screen door CREAKS as it opens.

Mr. Rapple comes to a heavy wooden door. He turns the knob and pulls.

MR. RAPPLE

Locked. You kids must have the keys. Gave 'em to you this afternoon.

Brenda fumbles through her jeans' pockets.

Everyone shines a light on the key in Brenda's hand. She inserts the key and turns it. They HEAR a CLUNCK!

BRENDA

It worked.

MR. RAPPLE

It's a narrow staircase, as I recall.

Alec GULPS as they climb the stairs that CREAK.

ALEC

(mumbles)

Could we come back in the daytime?

MR. RAPPLE

What kind of adventure is that?

They reach the top, and Alec pulls out his key. They all provide the light. They don't hear anything.

MR. RAPPLE (CONT'D)

Turn the key the other way.

They HEAR the CLUNK. Mr. Rapple pushes the door open. It CREAKS and SQUEAKS. We see an attic filled with boxes, crates, antiques, and more cobwebs.

MR. RAPPLE (CONT'D)

I'd better go first and test the floor!

The wooden floor CREAKS. They all fight through the cobwebs following Mr. Rapple.

MOM  
Look at all this stuff!

Mr. Rapple STOPS and looks down.

MR. RAPPLE  
Hey, look at this! It's my dad's  
compound microscope. This is for  
Willy.

WILLY  
Me?

Willy examines the antique compound microscope.

WILLY (CONT'D)  
Thanks, Mr. Rapple.

MR. RAPPLE  
Once you start examining insects  
and spiders under a compound  
microscope, you gain an  
appreciation for biology,  
evolution, and bugs!

Chelsea stops at a pile of children's board games.

CHELSEA  
What's this?

All the flashlights turn to the top game, "Mouse Trap."

MR. RAPPLE  
Wow! That's *Mouse Trap*, in the  
original 1963 box. Take it. It's  
yours. It may teach you that some  
rodents are fun! Change the name of  
it to *Rat Trap*!

Everyone LAUGHS.

BRENDA  
Where was that bright light coming  
from?

MR. RAPPLE  
Follow me.

Mr. Rapple leads the group to a stand-up mirror by the  
window.

MR. RAPPLE (CONT'D)  
I bet this mirror reflects sunlight  
in the daytime. What do you think?

Alec and Brenda sound disappointed.

ALEC  
Our *Goodnight Moon*?

Mr. Rapple rummages through a stack of books beside the mirror before he pulls out a thick, old leather-covered book, "*Don Quixote*."

MR. RAPPLE  
What's this?!

The flashlights turn to the old book.

MR. RAPPLE (CONT'D)  
It all makes perfectly good sense now! The treasure!

Now, Alec and Brenda are excited.

MR. RAPPLE (CONT'D)  
You kids were all racing through the junkyard with your toy weapons, reminded me of a certain knight errant who battled a windmill with a broken, old jousting pole!

Alec and Brenda STARE at the old book. Mr. Rapple opens the book to a line drawing of Don Quixote battling a windmill.

ALEC  
We battled the windmill in your backyard!

DAD  
My favorite book of all time!  
Haven't read it since college.

MR. RAPPLE  
It's an early edition. Hundreds of years old! Worth a thousand dollars, I would guess, but I want you two to have it.

DAD  
They couldn't possible accept...

MR. RAPPLE  
You see, this was one of the first novels ever written, where a crazy old man wasn't afraid to see the world not as it is.  
(beat)  
But as it should be.

BRENDA

Wow! Like our brass keys that opened the doors, I bet the story has a beginning, middle, and end!

ALEC

That's the key to every story!

MR. RAPPLE

Someday, *Don Quixote* will become your best friend in time!

Then, Mr. Rapple holds his lantern up to a string coming down from the ceiling. He pulls the string, and a light comes on!

Everyone LAUGHS.

BRENDA

I thought you said there was no electricity in the attic?

MR. RAPPLE

It would not have been such a fabulous adventure if we had made it too easy!

Everyone LAUGHS again.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

The family sits around the table for dinner. We see all their faces. There are no cellphones anywhere to be seen. On the kitchen counter behind them is the old book, *Don Quixote*.

BRENDA

This is nice.

MOM

We all learned a little something from Mrs. Scoggins and her dad.

DAD

We thought stealing and hiding the books was a silly idea, and that it wouldn't work.

ALEC

Worked great, and we got our books back and more!

MOM

You got your love of reading back.

BRENDA  
So, do we get a bedtime story  
tonight?

Mom reaches over and RUBS Brenda's head, while Dad reaches  
over and RUBS Alec's head.

DAD  
What do you think?

MOM  
No one is too old for bedtime  
stories.  
(beat)  
Now, what are some exciting  
adventures we can plan for this  
weekend?

ALEC  
We can build a fort in the  
backyard.

BRENDA  
Or have a campout!

ALEC  
We can storm Mr. Rapple's junkyard  
and attic some more.

MOM  
Wait, wait, wait.

ALEC  
And bring him homemade cookies.

DAD  
Let's have him over for dinner. I  
bet he's a great storyteller.

BRENDA  
We gotta build a campfire in the  
backyard, and roast marshmallows,  
and tell ghost stories until all  
the stars come out.

ALEC  
We can invite Willy and Chelsea.  
This will be great!

BRENDA  
So great!

ROLL CREDITS

BEGIN MONTAGE

We see the same set of bedrooms around the world (as in the opening montage; L.A., rural Mississippi, China, Europe, Africa, South America) with nine-year-old children in pajamas (or culturally appropriate night clothes) playing with toys, video games, or watching TV in their rooms, as their parents knock and enter their rooms holding a bedtime storybook in their hands.

FEMALE TEENAGER (V.O.)

You are never too old for a bedtime story!

MALE TEENAGER (V.O.)

Never!

END MONTAGE

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

We see the Students taking their creative writing exams, filling page after page with great stories. We SEE all of Mrs. Scoggins as she SMILES and walks up and down the aisles. Alec and Brenda have their BRASS KEYS on their desks. They have HUGE smiles as they write "The End" at the end of their very long stories.

FADE OUT.

THE END