

(Mr. S sides)  
3-17-07

MR. STECKLEBERG, 40, chubby, pale, enters, carrying a guitar case festooned with stupid stickers ("Visualize Whirled Peas"), a boom box, and a briefcase. He wears a suit and a piano-pattern tie with BRAND NEW "Adidas" type shoes.

He writes his name in GIANT UNEVEN LETTERS on the board. He sets down his stuff, sits on the edge of his desk and just stares at the kids. He self-consciously stretches out his legs, flexes his feet, looks down at his shoes, then back at the kids, zeroing in on Alix and Andre, who is wearing cool vintage Adidas. He points at his shoes, then Andre's, then his...

MR. S  
Where'd you get yours?

ANDRE  
Huh?

Mr. S. points to his feet, then to Andre's.

MR. S  
Adidas, right? "My Adidas...my  
Adidas and me..." (from Run DMC)

Andre gets up and looks closely at Mr. S. shoes.

ANDRE  
ALIX. Come here. You gotta see  
this.

Alix looks too.

ANDRE (CONT'D)  
(struggling not to laugh)  
You DO realize that these  
are...ADIDOS?

ALIX  
(laughing)  
Adidos!?

ALIX (CONT'D)  
Did you get these in Mexico or  
something?

Alix and Andre return to their seats.

MR. S  
(to himself)  
Adidos?

Mr. S. walks behind his desk, and, so no one else can see, takes a pen and adds a little line to the "o" in "Adidos" to make them into "Adidas." Then he stands to address the class.

MR. S (CONT'D)  
Class. Class? Eyes on me. Hello?  
Hello!

The class pays half-assed attention to Mr. S.

MR. S (CONT'D)  
I'm Mr. Steckleberg, and I want to  
welcome you to your new home for  
the next year...the Oswald Annex.

Groans from the kids. Mr. S. hits "play" on his tape recorder and some very quiet, cheesy/dramatic instrumental film theme music plays. Theme from "Dangerous Minds?"

MR. S (CONT'D)  
You're in this alternative program  
because you've done something that  
"society" has deemed "illegal,"  
"antisocial," or "dangerous." But I  
want you all to know that I see you  
for who you REALLY are...mixed up,  
angry kids who think that the  
world's given up on you.

QUICK CUTS - to Viv who is in SHOCK; Andre who looks highly contemptuous; Alix who is entertained and amused; Dug who is nodding seriously like this is a great psychological revelation.

MR. S (CONT'D)  
(near tears)  
News flash. I haven't given up on  
you. I believe in you.

Mr. S. fumbles around with the tape recorder, flips the tape over and hits rewind. As he waits for it to rewind, the only sound we hear is the tape spinning backwards, uncomfortable. He stares "meaningfully" at the kids who look awkward.

MR. S (CONT'D)  
Enough of my "talking head"  
routine. I'm going to explain  
what's going on in here using the  
medium of song...and dance.

Then he hits "play" on the tape recorder - we hear the familiar siren that begins the Beyonce song: "Ring The Alarm." The kids all stop talking and stare. Mr. S. sprawls across the desk and slowly crawls across it.

The music accompanies him as he sings, dances, gets in kid's faces and basically imitates everything Beyonce does. Note he never gets the "two middle rows" line right, he keeps pausing to count the rows and getting it wrong.

<HOOK>

Ring the alarm!  
Listen to this here song!  
And will ya please try your best  
just to follow along!  
(there will be a quiz)

\*He runs around the rows of desks, getting in kid's faces\*

<1/2 CHORUS>

In the back two rows  
I'll let ya know  
In the front two rows  
I'll let ya know  
And in those...two...three middle  
rows  
I'll let ya know  
I can't let ya go  
I can't let ya go

<VERSE>

Well some of you got arrested  
and some of you cheated  
and some of you set fires  
and some of you are straight  
tweakers  
but now you're in the Annex for the  
entire year  
Takin' every single subject in this  
one classroom here

\*For the Pre-Chorus: He wags his finger in a student's face, just like Beyonce.\*

<PRE CHORUS>

You can't go, you gotta stay.  
For every hour of every day.

\*He takes a break. Maybe sits down. Wipes his brow. James Brown false ending. It appears he is finished. But, no, he LEAPS back up into it.\*

<HOOK>

Ring the alarm!  
Listen to this here song!  
And will ya please try your best  
just to follow along!

<VERSE>

Science and Math;  
English and His-to-ry  
You've got one teacher now,  
and that teacher is ME.  
Yeah, ya might think this is  
uncool...  
But the rules are the (SHOUTED)  
RUULES!!!

He does the final robot head thing from the video. The music ends. The kids sit in stunned silence, except for Dug, who thoroughly enjoyed it, clapping and whistling. Mr. S. wipes his face, sips from a water bottle, breathes hard.

ANDRE

Uh, Mr...Steckelberg?

MR. S

Yes...?

ANDRE

Andre. 'Scuse me if I'm getting this wrong, but it sounds like you're saying we have to be in this room, all day, every day, for the whole year.

MR. S

(panting)

Yes, that's what I said...sang.  
Said.

Mr. S. recites the song lyrics again, super fast, monotone.

MR. S (CONT'D)

Science and Math, English  
and History, you've got one teacher  
now, and that...

ANDRE

Yeah, yeah. We heard it.

VIV  
 (to Andre)  
 Didn't you get the letter? We're in  
 here all day except for P.E.

MR. S  
 And YOU are?

VIV  
 Vivian.

MR. S  
 Well, Vivian, don't forget, you  
 also get to leave for lunch!

VIV  
 No offense, Sir, but I am NOT  
 spending my entire year in this  
 classroom. As soon as I can get  
 everything straightened out, I'm  
 leaving.

Mr. S. walks over and looks directly at Andre. He leans his  
 face close to Andre, breathing on him.

MR. S  
 Look. I know exactly what you're  
 thinking.

ANDRE  
 (making a face)  
 Did you just eat Funyuns?

Mr. S. stops talking, moves away from Andre.

MR. S  
 You probably see me as "the man."

Mr. S. does air quotes. Tiny imitates the air quotes at  
 Linda, giggling.

MR. S (CONT'D)  
 ...but I grew up in a black  
 neighborhood...all my best friends  
 were black. I consider myself black  
 on the inside. I'm like...an Oreo.

ALIX  
 Um...last time I checked...Oreo's  
 weren't black on the inside.

MR. S  
 (sheepish)  
 I must be thinking of the white  
 ones, then.

Everyone laughs out loud. Mr. S. looks embarrassed.

-----  
 MR. S (CONT'D)  
 Class. CLASS! Eyes on me!

MR. S (CONT'D)  
 (to class)  
 Eyes on me, class. Now, we are  
 going to write a few Haikus. Haiku  
 is the ancient art of Japanese  
 poetry, and it's also a great way  
 to express your anger...at society,  
 at parents, at authority figures.  
 Find that heavy vein of emotion!  
 Tap into it!

Mr. S. points to the posterboard sign.

MR. S (CONT'D)  
 Remember, kids, this is a JUDGEMENT  
 FREE ZONE. These poems will be kept  
 private, between me and you, only.  
 This is a safe space for ALL  
 expression.

Cut to Viv, one of only a few kids writing. She writes on  
 distinctive BRIGHT PINK scalloped-edge paper with giant "V's"  
 on the corners. On her desk: dictionary, thesaurus, SPORTS  
 ILLUSTRATED FOOTBALL SPECIAL. On her paper she's written one  
 word - "Judgement."

A crackly and unintelligible announcement comes over the  
 school PA (similar to the NYC subway system).

PA VOICE  
 Locker assignments will begin in  
 ...schhhh. You will need your  
 cards...numbered BY CLASS...schhh.

The kids all start to get up.

MR. S  
 Sit down...it's not our turn yet.

We HEAR from the hallway...kids and lockers slamming.

TINY

All the good lockers are gonna get taken.

MR. S

Let's work on our poems...

From the back of the room the HOSTILE PUNK KID screams at Mr. S. His front teeth are coated in black licorice.

HOSTILE PUNK KID/HENRY

You're a GOD DAMN FASCIST!

MR. S

Henry, do you even know what a fascist is?

HOSTILE PUNK KID/HENRY

(condescending)

Yes, a fascist is a middle-aged nerd who thinks he's super cool in his gay pink converse.

MR. S

Well for one thing, they're cranberry...Andre, sit back down!

-----  
INT. MR. STECKLEBERG'S CLASSROOM, LATER - DAY

MR. S

While you were choosing your lockers, I took the liberty of collecting the poems. I bet we have some really talented kids in here! Now it's time for a little "poetry salon."

Certain kids blush, groan and put their heads down. Mr. S. turns off the lights and turns on a single lamp on his desk.

Viv raises her hand.

MR. S (CONT'D)

Okay, Viv, yes?

VIV

You said these were private.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MR. S  
 Ever heard of "reverse psychology?"  
 It's a little teaching trick I like  
 to keep in my little bag of...  
 teaching...tricks.

Viv looks at him like - "idiot." Mr. S. selects a bright pink scallop-edge paper (clearly Viv's stationery).

MR. S (CONT'D)  
 (reading aloud)  
 Unjustly accused.  
 Trapped - a class full of rejects.  
 Dreams crushed - no college.

We see on Viv's face that this is HER poem.

MR. S (CONT'D)  
 Way to bring the whole room down,  
 Viv.

Viv looks PISSED. Mr. S. chooses another poem.

MR. S (CONT'D)  
 Oh, now, I thought this one was  
 super great!

MR. S (CONT'D)  
 (reads aloud)  
 I see him from far away.  
 If he was mine I would never stray.  
 The guy I love is named An...

Tiny leaps up and GRABS the poem from Mr. S. Kids snicker.

-----  
 INT. MR. STECKLEBERG'S CLASSROOM - AFTERNOON

The kids sit around, talking, everyone is mellowed out, post-lunch quiet. A few kids have heads down on desks, napping.

Mr. S. enters wearing a small white turban and a white terry cloth robe. Everyone stops talking and stares at him.

ALIX  
 Why are you dressed like that?

Laughter. Mr. S. remains serious.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MR. S  
 (serious, probing tone)  
 What do YOU think? Have you judged  
 me? Might you assume I am...a  
 terrorist?

Mr. S. waits for a reaction with a raised eyebrow. When there is none, and the kids just look confused, he clarifies.

MR. S (CONT'D)  
 ...because I am wearing a Moo-slim  
 costume?

ANDRE  
 My uncle's Muslim, and he does NOT  
 dress like that.

VIV  
 (to Mr. S.)  
 Is that robe from Victoria's  
 Secret?

MR. S  
 What?

VIV  
 Uh, my MOM has that robe.

Mr. S. nervously, quickly removes the robe and turban.

MR. S.  
 Well, now that we've had a little,  
 as I like to call it, "stress  
 buster"...I think we're ready to  
 tackle some math.

He hands stacks of papers to the front of each row, then approaches the board and begins to write out numbers.

MR. S  
 Will you pass those back? Now,  
 here's something I think you can  
 all relate to. Call it "Urban  
 Math."

He writes "3 grams" and "17 grams" on the board.

MR. S.  
 Everyone turn to your worksheets.  
 Look at problem number two.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MR. S. (CONT'D)

"If your dealer gives you 3 grams of a substance, but your friend needs to buy 17 grams, and he already stole 10 grams from you the week before, how much do you need?"

Mr. S. looks at the kids. Smiles.

MR. S. (CONT'D)

Come on, I KNOW you can do this.

ANDRE

(sarcastic)

Well, speaking as someone who's "urban," I can't honestly answer this question without knowing if the dealer is armed.

ALIX

(mock-innocent)

...and does he work out of his house or is it more of a street-corner operation?

Mr. S is now nervously shuffling papers.

ANDRE

(to ALIX)

Nobody works from home, anymore. WAY too risky. And with cell phones...you don't have to.

ALIX

Dealers in MY hood still rock pagers, so I can't really comment.

MR. S

Um, let's get back to the task at hand, here...what was it...3 grams...

Viv raises her hand. Mr. S. looks RELIEVED to call on her.

MR. S

Viv, yes?

VIV

The first part is like a regular math problem, 17 minus 3, fine. But if the dealer owes you 10 grams, does that mean you want us to subtract 10? I mean...this question is seriously flawed.

Alix and Andre look at Viv, surprised but a little impressed. Viv looks back at them with a proud smile...then realizes what she is doing and looks away, embarrassed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

The bell rings. Everyone leaps up. Mr. S. remains at the board, pointing to the poster, saying:

MR. S.  
Remember, kids, Believe...to  
Achieve! Believe...to Achieve!

The kids walk out of the class, ignoring him.

---