

From The Devil in Sherman Marsh

(A school. The bell rings. Noise. STUDENTS everywhere. SHERMAN, a nerdy, tweedy looking kid holding an overstuffed backpack and another armful of books, makes his way through the crowd.)

SHERMAN

Excuse me. Excuse me. I'm trying to get to class.

(TOBY, a large kid, walks very slowly in front of SHERMAN. SHERMAN can't get around him.)

Um... hello? Boy we're moving slowly. Hello? Hello? Could you move a little quicker please?

(TOBY slowly turns around.)

TOBY

What?

SHERMAN

Could you move faster please? I don't want to be late for class.

(TOBY takes SHERMAN's books out of his hands and tosses them slowly onto the floor.)

That's not helpful.

(TOBY takes SHERMAN's backpack and opens it, spilling everything on to the floor.)

Hey! No! I have some very valuable Yu-Gi-Oh cards in there.

(TOBY finds some Yu-Gi-Oh cards, crumples them up, and eats them.)

TOBY

Mmmm... Tasty. Now you're gonna be late for class.

(TOBY turns and leaves. The bell rings.)

(Students bring in chairs to form a classroom as SHERMAN gathers up his belongings. A teacher, MISS GRACE enters.)

MISS GRACE

Okay, class. Today we're going to be learning about the Salem Witch Trials of 1690.

(One student, JESSICA, raises her hand.)

Yes Jessica?

JESSICA

My English teacher is a witch. Would she have been burned?

MISS GRACE

Well, if there was a young girl who claimed she did witchcraft on her, then yes.

JESSICA

Sweet.

MISS GRACE

The Salem Witch Trials were not, however, very sweet.

(SHERMAN has finally gathered all of his books and sheepishly enters the class.)
Sherman you're late.

SHERMAN

I'm sorry Miss Grace, but I was accosted by an ogre outside. He scattered my belongings.

ROGER *(coughing)*

Dork!

JOHN *(coughing)*

Huge dork!

MISS GRACE

Try to avoid ogres, Sherman.

SHERMAN

Ogres are large, Miss Grace. They are difficult to avoid.

JESSICA

Seriously, why do you talk like that?

SHERMAN *(mimicking her)*

Seriously, why do you care?

(TONYA raises her hand.)

MISS GRACE

Yes Tonya?

TONYA

How come they got burned if they didn't do no magic?

SHERMAN

If they didn't do *any* magic.

TONYA

What?

SHERMAN

If they didn't do any magic. It's called the English language. Learn how to speak it.

MISS GRACE

Okay Sherman. That's enough.

SHERMAN

I'm tired of these subliterate peasants.

TONYA

I am not subliterate!

SHERMAN

What does it mean? Do you know what the word means?

TONYA

No.

JOHN

It means you're a dork!

SHERMAN

Then you're subliterate.

MISS GRACE

Sherman, please. Let's just work on our word search please.

SHERMAN (*sarcastically*)

Word searches. This is education.

(*AMBER enters and sits near SHERMAN.*)

MISS GRACE (*walking around the room and checking papers*)

If you're worried about how to spell the words, you can check the word bank on the bottom.

JOHN

How do you spell witch?

ROGER

Your Mom.

(*The students laugh.*)

SHERMAN

Miss Grace, must we always labor on these mindless projects? Why can't we actually use our minds in class?

JOHN

Shut up loser!

ROGER

Good one.

JOHN

Your Mom.
(They laugh.)

SHERMAN

I don't even know what that means. Your Mom what? What does she do?

JOHN

Your Mom.
(the students laugh.)

MISS GRACE

All right, back to work everyone.
(The students grudgingly go back to work.)

AMBER

Hey Sherman—did you find the Devil?

SHERMAN

Excuse me?

AMBER

The Devil. Did you find the word Devil?

SHERMAN

Oh. Um... third row down six letters from the left.

AMBER

Oh. Thanks.

SHERMAN

So um... Amber.

AMBER

Did you find trial?

SHERMAN

Diagonal backwards from the upper right corner.

AMBER

Oh—there it is.

SHERMAN

So... I've noticed that no one has punched your dance card for the Prom.

AMBER

What?

SHERMAN

The Prom. I've heard it's the social event of the year.

AMBER

What about it?

SHERMAN

I was wondering... if um... you would care to... accompany me to the dance.

JOHN

DUDE! SHERMAN JUST ASKED AMBER TO THE PROM!!!

ROGER

NO WAY!!!

MISS GRACE

Quiet please!

ROGER (*quietly*)

Your Mom.

(*everyone laughs.*)

TONYA

Who's Sherman?

JOHN

He's that dork over there.

TONYA

Grammar boy? She ain't gonna go to the prom with that loser.

MISS GRACE

Quiet!

(*AMBER has pretended not to hear. Embarrassing pause.*)

SHERMAN

I cannot offer you much. I am just a simple man. But if sparkling conversation and an awkward, if earnest dance step are appealing to you, say the word.

(*Pause.*)

I will also pay for dinner. And perhaps ice cream afterwards.

AMBER

Sherman.

SHERMAN

Yes?

AMBER

I think you'd get the wrong idea. We're friends.

SHERMAN

Yes. Friends with romantic possibilities.

AMBER

Sorry. Oh do you have that English paper I had you write?

SHERMAN

Yes.

AMBER

Are there enough grammar mistakes to make it look like mine?

SHERMAN

I did abysmal things with apostrophes.

(He hands over the paper.)

AMBER

You're the best friend ever.

JOHN

Oh! HE TOTALLY GOT SHOT DOWN!!!

(SHERMAN stands up.)

SHERMAN

I have had enough of this neanderthal!

JOHN

What are you gonna do about it, dork?

ROGER

That's what she said.

(Everyone laughs.)

SHERMAN

You don't even make any sense.

JOHN

You know what doesn't make sense? Your Mom.

(they laugh again.)

MISS GRACE

Boys, please! Sherman, stop causing problems.

SHERMAN

What? They're the ones instigating!

ROGER

Your Mom was instigating.

JOHN

Come on, geek. You wanna go? You wanna go?

SHERMAN

Go where?

(JOHN lunges at SHERMAN and gets him in a headlock.)

MISS GRACE

Sherman stop it! You're going to chip the tiles!

ROGER

Kill that dork!

MISS GRACE

That's it! You're all going to the office!

(The bell rings. Lights change as COUNSELOR JONES enters.)

COUNSELOR JONES

Okay... Sherman. This is the first time I've seen you in my office.

SHERMAN

I cannot endure their ridicule any longer.

COUNSELOR JONES

Have a seat.

SHERMAN

I refuse to be intimidated by the dregs of humanity. Which is all we seem to be enrolling at this school.

COUNSELOR JONES

Have a seat, Sherman.

SHERMAN

Fine.

(SHERMAN sits.)

COUNSELOR JONES

Have you ever thought that you seem to be encouraging their behavior? Let me explain. You need to stop acting so intelligent. All these words you use... they confuse and scare normal people. No one knows what you're saying. You stick out, Sherman. And as a result, the ordinary people are going to destroy you. That's what ordinary people do. What you need to do then is... blend in. Watch some television. Try not to do so well on tests. Make a few fart jokes. Really get in there with the common man. That's how people get ahead in the world.

SHERMAN

By pretending to be stupid?

COUNSELOR JONES

By becoming stupid. It really helps you get along with your peers. Tell you what—why don't you go home, open a few bottles of glue and just sniff away for a few hours? You'll be just like everyone else in no time. You really need to trim those brain cells a bit.

SHERMAN

That's the most idiotic thing I've ever heard.

COUNSELOR JONES

Exactly. Which is why I get along well with people. Now... this girl... Amber Thompson. You have a big crush on her?

SHERMAN

How are you aware of that?

COUNSELOR JONES

It's all here in your file. We videotape you every day. It makes for some amusing viewing. Whenever I feel bad about myself, I just pop in your tape and I feel a lot better. At least I'm not you.

SHERMAN

Aren't you supposed to be counseling me?

COUNSELOR JONES

I am. You think I just woke up today knowing how to give this advice? No sir, I went to graduate school for seven years to know all this. Now, you ought to forget about Amber Thompson. You see, she's attractive. And you're not. You need to find someone on the same attractiveness level.

SHERMAN

That doesn't seem to be terribly fair.

COUNSELOR JONES

It's immensely fair. Now, if I were to approximate you with a girl, the girl you should really be dating is... the lunch lady. Oh. Tough break. Although, she's a robust woman—very powerful. Could be rewarding.

SHERMAN

I don't think so.

COUNSELOR JONES

Suit yourself. Have you thought about owning cats? It helps people cope with not being loved. Although, to be honest, a cat doesn't show a lot of love. At least mine doesn't. I try and I try and I try and I give Rascal food all the time and he'd drop me in a minute for someone with a sprig of catnip. I hate him.

SHERMAN

I'll be going now.

COUNSELOR JONES

Oh and you're suspended for three days for fighting. Have a good one.
(COUNSELOR JONES leaves. SHERMAN is left alone.)

SHERMAN

Ignoramuses. Idiots. Morons. They all fall down and worship someone who can throw a ball through a hoop, but when it comes to someone with real intelligence, actual insight? Shoved aside. No, we prefer our mediocrity, thank you. Teachers giving out passing grades to airheaded bimbos and roving sports monsters.

(SHERMAN opens up his backpack.)

Oh my Yu-Gi-Oh deck. Those buffoons nearly destroyed some very rare and valuable cards. I've worked very hard on this collection—

(He begins to spread out his cards)

Oh, Dark Armed Monster, how I wish I could be like you. With Dark Arms. And powerful. If only I could... what's this?

(he takes out a card.)

I've never seen this card before. Why am I talking to myself? But... Lucifer? That sounds interesting. If I were to combine him with my Dark Magician with an upload booster I'd be unstoppable.

(a rumble of thunder)

Hello? Hello?

(another rumble of thunder. Smoke.)

Is there anyone there?

(LUCIFER enters in a cloud of smoke.)

LUCIFER

WHY HAVE YOU SUMMONED ME?

(This play is now published by Playscripts, Inc. To read more of it or order copies, please visit their website at www.playscripts.com)