

What Goes Around...

By

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LIGHTS UP:

Standing in a pool of light center is KAYLA RODERSTEIN. She is an overly cute and precocious 10 year old. She wears a skirt, blouse and black patent leather shoes. She addresses the audience.

KAYLA

(Nervously.)

Hello everyone and welcome to the  
15th Annual Sebastian Cabot  
Elementary School Science Fair.  
Uhm, I'm Kayla Roderstein, and my  
science project for this year is  
entitled "The Magic of Recycling."

50's industrial movie music starts.

KAYLA

Recycling is all around us. It's  
used in the roads we drive on, the  
packages that surround our food and  
clothing and...action figures and  
such. Uhm. But where does recycling  
come from, and where? I have..uhm,  
made a video of my experience in  
the world of recycling. So...let's  
watch, shall we?

She holds up a remote and pushes a button. The lights go black.

In the darkness we hear HOWARD PAJORSKI, a gruff, middle-aged owner of Pajorski's Recycling and Road Kill Reclamation.

HOWARD

NO! NO! No, goddamnit, no!!!

The lights come up full on stage as Howard enters. He wears filthy slacks, a vest over a stained T-shirt and work boots. He keeps an unlit cigar stub in his mouth and yells into a cell phone.

HOWARD

Now you listen to me you  
ball-sucking meat sack! I got two  
rigs in Marionville over-loaded  
with aluminum that I need here now!  
Now!!! And if you don't make that  
pick up by 4 o'clock you are stone  
cold dead! If this falls through,  
so help me Cackling Christ, I will

(MORE)

HOWARD  
 personally drive those rigs up your  
 lubed behind till you piss Pepsi  
 Free for a year!

Kayla enters shyly. She wears a coat over her dress.

HOWARD  
 You understand me?! Do you?! Then  
 say it! Say it! Say you understand  
 me! Say it! Say it, goddamnit! Say  
 it! Saaaaay Iiiiiit!!!...Good!

He hangs up.

HOWARD  
 Dick licker.

KAYLA  
 Hello, Mr. Pajorski. My name is  
 Kayla Rodenstein. I called you,  
 uhm, about my class science fair  
 project.

HOWARD  
 (Cheerfully.)  
 Oh sure, sure, I rememeber,  
 sweetheart. My-oh-my, aren't you  
 the cutest little cock-ring in  
 Daddy's dresser drawer.

Howard looks out at the audience, confused.

HOWARD  
 Uhh, what's with the camera?

KAYLA  
 That's my friend, Cody. He's here  
 to help me document my project "A  
 Day in the Life of Pajorski's  
 Recycling and Road Kill  
 Reclamation Company."

HOWARD  
 Oh...well, isn't that something,  
 huh? Well I can tell you, there's a  
 lot of interesting stuff in the  
 recycling business, little missy.

KAYLA  
 I bet.

HOWARD

Cans and bottles and old aluminum siding and...cans. Why you could do a whole piece on found human remains, alone. In the last two weeks our sorters have dug up four torsos, five feet; two left, three right...

KAYLA

Cool.

HOWARD

And more hands than you could shake a pinky finger at.

KAYLA

Excellent.

From backstage appears THE OBSERVER. She has an eerie, calm, alien quality about her. She stands behind Howard, invisible to he and Kayla.

HOWARD

Yes sir, the recycling business is--

The Observer waves her hand. There is a sound effect as Howard stops speaking.

KAYLA

Mr. Pajorski? Are you okay?

HOWARD

(struggling.)

Sure, kid, sure. Tell you what, why don't you and Scout...

KAYLA

...Cody.

HOWARD

Go out back and video the giant plastic shredding machine, huh? Ask Moe to fire it up for you. He's the guy with the hook hand who smells like greasy soup.

KAYLA

Okay.

Kayla exits.

HOWARD  
(calling after her.)  
And wear safety glasses.

The lights change as the Observer makes her way closer to Howard. She waves her hand again and a pool of light appears that Howard collapses into on his knees. He never looks at her as they speak, as if her voice is in his head.

OBSERVER  
Hello Howard.

HOWARD  
(Weakly. Fearful.)  
Oh God...what...what do you want?

OBSERVER  
(calmly.)  
You know what we want, Howard. Time is running out.

HOWARD  
Oh sweet Jesus...

OBSERVER  
You need to give us everything we demand, Howard. Our supply is dwindling.

HOWARD  
I've got drivers scouring every dump and scrap yard in the States and Canada. I need more time.

OBSERVER  
There is no more time.

HOWARD  
Oh Jesus sweet Lord...

OBSERVER  
You have forty-eight hours, Howard. After that, we cannot guarantee the safety of your world.

HOWARD  
Oh heavenly God Lord Jesus sweet...

OBSERVER  
If you do not meet our demands in that time, everything you know will be gone.

HOWARD

Oh good Jesus sweet heavenly God  
father...

OBSERVER

No more family or friends, no more  
home, none of the things you love.  
No more NASCAR Fridays...

HOWARD

Oh God...

OBSERVER

No more Buffalo Wild Wings...

HOWARD

Oh Jesus...

OBSERVER

No more Pick 3 Lotteries...

HOWARD

Oh Heaven...

OBSERVER

No more Cocoa Pebbles...

HOWARD

Oh Jesus sweet God...

OBSERVER

Everything...gone. Think about it,  
Howard. Think about it.

She waves her hand as she exits. The lights return to normal  
as Howard gets to his feet. Kayla enters with something  
behind her back.

KAYLA

Mr. Pajorski! Mr.Pajorski! That  
shredding machine was neat! Mr. Moe  
let us throw in a whole live  
raccoon. He really made some funny  
noises.

HOWARD

(Collecting himself.)  
That's good, kid...That's real  
good.

KAYLA

And I found the main focus of my  
video.

She pulls an empty liter bottle of Squirt from behind her back.

KAYLA

Ta-da!

Howard sees the bottle and recoils in horror. He falls to his knees, tearfully.

HOWARD

Oh sweet God Jesus of mercy in heaven!

The lights go black. The front stage spot comes up and Kayla steps into it, addressing the audience.

KAYLA

We, uh, had to stop tape here, 'cause when I showed Mr. Pajorski the bottle he started breathing funny and crying and then he peed himself. So we're just gonna jump ahead here.

The lights change. Howard sits morosely center as Kayla paces around him with her Squirt bottle.

KAYLA

See, my idea is, to follow this one bottle through the whole recycling process; from getting shredded up and washed, to getting melted and poured into molds to make TV remotes and toilet valves and horses hooves and stuff.

HOWARD

(weakly.)

Yeah...yeah, that's some idea, kid.

KAYLA

Well, we should get started. Where does the bottle go first?

HOWARD

Look, kid, why don't you go out and find a different bottle, huh? We got piles of Coke and Pepsi and eight different kinds of Mountain Dew.

KAYLA  
But...this is Squirt, though.

HOWARD  
It's an off brand.

KAYLA  
But it's my favorite soda.

HOWARD  
Oh Christ...

KAYLA  
I know. I'll set up a glamour shot of the bottle to highlight the "before" portion of the video. Can I use your office?

HOWARD  
Sure, kid, sure.

KAYLA  
Thanks!

She starts to leave. he calls out, stopping her.

HOWARD  
Oh, and kid...

KAYLA  
Yeah?

HOWARD  
Move the skin mags off my desk if you need to.

KAYLA  
Sure thing!

She exits. Howard's cell phone rings. He answers.

HOWARD  
Yeah, Pajorski...What?! God damnit, what?!...No! No! Now you listen to me, you shriveled dick, hole sucking, teat milking, zit licking, sad excuse for a human being! I want the full shipment here in twenty-four hours! Twenty-four! Or so help me Hannah I will polish your toenails a deep emerald green, snip them off and shove them into your still beating heart that I

(MORE)



HOWARD  
 will rip from your chest! So you  
 get loaded up and leave now! Now,  
 you here me?! Noooooow!!!

He hangs up. The Observer enters and waves her hand. Howard falls into the pool of light that appears.

OBSERVER  
 Time is almost up, Howard.

HOWARD  
 Oh sweet God...

OBSERVER  
 I know you've tried your best,  
 Howard. But it just wasn't meant to  
 be. I like your little world, here.  
 I will be quite sad to see it go.

HOWARD  
 She has one, you know. She says she  
 wants to document what happens to  
 it. From beginning to end. What do  
 I tell her? What do I say?

OBSERVER  
 She has one?

HOWARD  
 She says...it's her favorite  
 flavor.

OBSERVER  
 Interesting. I would very much like  
 to meet her.

Upon hearing this, Howard stubbornly forces himself to his feet.

HOWARD  
 (struggling.)  
 No!...Don't...you...touch her! She  
 is sweet...and pure! And I won't  
 let you do to her what you did to  
 me! And I'm going to tell  
 her...everything! She needs to  
 know...

OBSERVER  
 Howard...

HOWARD  
She needs to know!

He struggles to the side of the stage and calls out.

HOWARD  
Kid! Kid! Get your squishy little  
butt in here!

Kayla enters with her Squirt bottle.

KAYLA  
Yes, Mr.Pajorski?

Howard kneels next to her and grasps her shoulders.

HOWARD.  
Now you listen up here, kid. It's  
important.

KAYLA  
Yes, sir.

HOWARD  
'Cause what I got to say could save  
our whole planet, okay?

KAYLA  
Okay...

HOWARD  
And what I got to say is this...

The Observer waves her hand.

HOWARD  
Poop shovel.

KAYLA  
What?

Howard is confused by the words coming from his mouth.

HOWARD  
Poop shovel...poop shovel poop  
shovel poop shovel, poop shovel.

He tries to use his hands to explain as he just keep  
repeating the words, becoming more and more agitated.

HOWARD  
Poop shovel poop shovel poop shovel  
poop shovel poop shovel...poop  
(MORE)

HOWARD  
 shovel, poop shovel poop  
 shovel...poop shovel poop shovel  
 poop shovel!

There is a pause.

KAYLA  
 (confused.)  
 Are you done?

Howard runs off stage crying and sobbing.

HOWARD  
 Poop shovel! Poop shovel poop  
 shovel poop shovel!!!

Kayla watches him go as the Observer strolls up behind her.

OBSERVER  
 Hello Kayla.

KAYLA  
 (Turning.)  
 Oh, hello. Who are you?

OBSERVER  
 You might say I'm one of Mr.  
 Pajorski's partners.

KAYLA  
 Oh...he had to leave. I think he  
 had to shovel some poop.

The Observer eyes Kayla's Squirt bottle.

OBSERVER  
 I see you have an empty bottle of  
 Squirt.

KAYLA  
 Uh-huh. It's my favorite.

OBSERVER  
 Mine, too. So, you want to see what  
 happens with the bottle, from  
 beginning to end?

KAYLA  
 I sure do.

OBSERVER

Then take my hand, Kayla, and I  
will show you.

Kayla takes the Observer's hand. The lights change. Kayla  
looks out into the audience.

KAYLA

Gee, this isn't the recycling  
plant. Where are we?

OBSERVER

We have been transported to the  
outer ring of the Helgenon Galaxy.  
Over three hundred million billion  
light years from your Earth. Down  
there is my planet, Quazerith. The  
pink one that looks like a golf  
ball with Micky Mouse ears.

KAYLA

Oh sure, I see it!

OBSERVER

We are a powerful yet peaceful  
people, Kayla. For generations we  
have lived with a sense of calm and  
brotherhood. But there is something  
that is eating away at the very  
fabric of my planet. Something  
that, I'm afraid, will drive us  
into utter madness.

KAYLA

What is it?

OBSERVER

The smell of Squirt.

KAYLA

(confused.)

What?

OBSERVER

Three of your Earth years ago we  
sent out a search party to explore  
your world. They collected  
everything they could find; clocks  
and cats and rocks and bats. And,  
in the midst of their research,  
they found one of these.

She points to Kayla's bottle.

OBSERVER

A harmless, empty bottle of Squirt. On their way home they started to inhale the dried fluid on the inside of the bottle--our sense of smell is quite acute. And what they smelled nearly drove them mad with ecstasy and desire. You see, the smell of dried Squirt to us is like your crack cocaine. Except hundreds of times stronger. We sent out more search parties to bring back as many bottles as they could find. The entire planet became addicted.

KAYLA

Gosh...

OBSERVER

But it's not enough. Squirt is a small, secondary brand with limited distribution in the midwest of the United States. Our supply has about run out. Oh we've tried substitutes; Fresca, Sprite, Sierra Mist cut with a little unsweetened lemonade...but nothing works. And now we are going through the painful withdrawals that lead to madness and, eventually, death. And all this because of a harmless little grapefruit flavored soft drink.

The Observer nods at Kayla's bottle.

OBSERVER

May I?

Kayla hands the bottle to the Observer. The Observer looks at it sadly for a moment, then plunges it into her nose, inhaling deeply.

OBSERVER

Ahhhh! Oh yeah, that's it! Oh God!...Ahhhhh!

Kayla grabs the bottle back from her.

OBSERVER

(sheepishly.)

I'm very sorry. My planet will soon die. But before it does, we must

(MORE)

OBSERVER  
 destroy yours. If we cannot fulfill  
 our dried Squirt supply, then we  
 must destroy the source before  
 another planet becomes infected.

KAYLA  
 I understand...Take me home,  
 please.

The Observer waves her hand, the lights change, and they are  
 back.

OBSERVER  
 Good-bye, Kayla. Please know how  
 sorry I am.

The Observer exits. Howard enters, frantically.

HOWARD  
 Poop shovel, poop shovel poop  
 shovel poop shovel! And that's why  
 we have to save the planet!

KAYLA  
 It's okay, Mr.Pajorski. I  
 understand. And don't worry.  
 Everything's gonna be okay.

HOWARD  
 (confused.)  
 Poop shovel?

The lights darken as Kayla steps to the front of the stage  
 in the light pool.

KAYLA  
 And so ends my science fair video.  
 It was a very demanding and  
 interesting project. And if I've  
 learned anything from the world of  
 recycling, it is this...

She holds out the bottle to the audience.

KAYLA  
 Drink more Squirt!

Lights out. The end.