

BUGS

A ten minute play

Characters

Mr. Wagner, 30's, a teacher

Mrs. Fox, 40's, a principal

Maddy, 16, a student

Time

An afternoon during the school year

Place

The Principal's Office

Synopsis: Mr. Wagner tries to convince Mrs. Fox to open Maddy's locker after a disturbing episode in his class. Mrs. Fox turns the tables on Mr. Wagner.

BUGS

A ten minute play

(Darkness.)

MADDY's voice

Oh my God! Oh my God!! Get them off me! Get them off!! Help me! Help get them off me!
AAAHHH!!!!

(Lights up on MRS. FOX's office. MRS. FOX, 40's, wears a smart professional suit. MR. WAGNER, 30's, wears a dress shirt and tie (but no jacket) and dress pants.)

MRS. FOX

Bugs?

MR. WAGNER

Bugs.

MRS. FOX

What kind of bugs?

MR. WAGNER

Why does that matter?

MRS. FOX

All schools have bugs, Mr. Wagner. We do the best we can. If you need Housekeeping to -

MR. WAGNER

There were no bugs, Mrs. Fox. The girl was hallucinating. Right in the middle of her geometry test.

MRS. FOX

She has test anxiety. It's documented.

MR. WAGNER

Tactile hallucinations that bugs are crawling on your skin seems pretty extreme!

MRS. FOX

They say you give hard tests.

MR. WAGNER

She has a 98 average.

MRS. FOX

I would think that would make a teacher happy.

MR. WAGNER

I think you should open her locker.

MRS. FOX

Did you help her?

MR. WAGNER

With the test?

MRS. FOX

With the bugs.

MR. WAGNER

There were no bugs!

MRS. FOX

With her issue.

MR. WAGNER

I had Emily Frobisher take her to the nurse, once she had calmed down.

MRS. FOX

And the nurse...

MR. WAGNER

I asked her to bring Maddy here when it was appropriate. You need to open her locker.

MRS. FOX

Why?

MR. WAGNER

During the test she left the room...

MRS. FOX

You let her leave during a test?

MR. WAGNER

If a girl says she needs to leave the room and get something from her locker...

MRS. FOX

Of course.

MR. WAGNER

And she came back a few minutes later crunching something. And about two minutes after that the bugs came.

MRS. FOX

Miss Barnes always takes good care of her.

MR. WAGNER

She is abusing drugs at school! If you open that lock, I'm sure you will find –

MRS. FOX

How did the rest of the class react?

MR. WAGNER

Some were laughing.

MRS. FOX

Tenth graders can still be juvenile.

MR. WAGNER

Some didn't even seem to notice.

MRS. FOX

So it must not have been that disruptive.

MR. WAGNER

Just open that lock. You have the key.

MRS. FOX

I would prefer to talk to her first.

MR. WAGNER

Then give me the key.

MRS. FOX

I'm the only one with that authority.

(There is a knock.)

Come in.

(MADDY enters. She is 16, very thin. She sucks on a lollipop. She does not smile much.)

MADDY

Ms. Fox?

MRS. FOX

Hello, Maddy. How are you doing, sweet girl?

MADDY

Good.

MRS. FOX

Did Miss Barnes give you that Blow Pop?

MADDY

Uh huh. I'll spit out the gum when I get to it 'cuz I know gum is not allowed in school.

MRS. FOX

Good girl. Was there a problem in Mr. Wagner's class today?

MADDY

Not really. *(to Mr. Wagner)* Did I do OK on my test? I studied nineteen hours.

MR. WAGNER

I haven't graded it yet.

MRS. FOX

What happened during the test, Maddy?

MADDY

Sometimes I get nervous and my skin gets a little itchy. My dad? He's a doctor? He says it's because I don't get enough potassium. So I sometimes keep a banana in my locker.

MRS. FOX

And you went to get a banana during the test today?

MADDY

Yes, Ma'am.

MRS. FOX

And did you eat a banana?

MADDY

No ma'am. I was out.

MR. WAGNER

But you came back eating something.

MADDY

I had Skittles.

MR. WAGNER

You were crunching!

MADDY

They were old!

MR. WAGNER

And Skittles don't have potassium!

MRS. FOX

That's enough, Mr. Wagner.

MADDY

I thought maybe my blood sugar was low, too. So did Miss Barnes! That's why she always gives me a Blow Pop! But I always spit out the gum, Ms. Fox, I SWEAR!!

MRS. FOX

Of course you do, sweetheart.

(MADDY starts scratching herself.)

MADDY

Can I go now? I don't want to miss American History.

MR. WAGNER

Why don't you show us what's in your locker?

MRS. FOX

That's enough, Mr. Wagner.

MADDY

I don't want to go in my locker again. Please don't make me go back to my locker!

MRS. FOX

It's all right, Maddy. You don't have to go back.

MR. WAGNER

Why do you not want to go back to your locker, Maddy?

MADDY

There's bugs. Bugs everywhere.

MRS. FOX

It's not a good idea to keep food in your locker, dear. Especially Skittles. Now we can make sure Miss Barnes has some bananas in the health suite –

MR. WAGNER

She was not eating Skittles. She was crunching a pill!

MADDY

No! NO! Get them off me! Make them stop! Make them stop! AAAAAHHHHHHH!!!!

(MADDY collapses on the floor. MR. WAGNER takes out a phone. MRS. FOX grabs it.)

MRS. FOX

No.

MR. WAGNER

What is the matter with you? Call 911!

(MADDY calms down.)

MRS. FOX

She'll be fine. See.

MR. WAGNER

I want that key.

MRS. FOX

There are things you don't understand.

MR. WAGNER

Why do you not care -

MRS. FOX

She's on prescribed medication. It helps her focus.

(MADDY rocks back and forth on the floor and hums a little.)

It's not perfect, but it does its job. Now go do yours. Grade her test.

(MADDY's hum becomes a song she has created to remember material for her test. She sings it almost trance-like.)

MADDY

Sine is opposite over hypotenuse. Cosine is adjacent over hypotenuse. Tangent is opposite over adjacent.

(MRS. FOX sits on the floor and gently rocks MADDY as she now just hums again.)

MRS. FOX

She just wants good grades. It helps her study. It helps her learn. You should be happy she cares.

MR. WAGNER

Then she's overdosing. If she's chewing pills in the middle of a test -

MRS. FOX

She just wants Harvard. Or Yale. What's wrong with that?

MR. WAGNER

I'm calling her parents.

MRS. FOX

No.

MR. WAGNER

They need to know!

MRS. FOX

They do.

MR. WAGNER

Miss Barnes called them?

MRS. FOX

No.

MR. WAGNER

Then how?

MRS. FOX

They want Harvard or Yale, too. Everyone's on board. Her father prescribed them. The older sister? Huntington. Not a bad school, but not what they hoped for. The brother? Not at all what they hoped for. Maddy? Maddy sees herself as her parents' last chance.

MADDY

(a song) The square of the hypotenuse is equal to the sum of the squares of the other two sides.

MR. WAGNER

(overlapping) I'm going to the Board then.

MRS. FOX

Go to the Board. You'll find no sympathy there. They're all doing it too. Hannah Maclay sees wavy lines and has straight A's. Catherine Finlay hears digital clocks ticking and has a 4.0. It's a small price to pay.

MR. WAGNER

It's child abuse.

MRS. FOX

It's just an edge.

MR. WAGNER

The police then.

MRS. FOX

They're legal prescriptions.

MR. WAGNER

The Department of Social Services.

MRS. FOX

I'm sure your call will be important to them.

MR. WAGNER

I'll get through to someone.

MRS. FOX

Press one to report suspected child abuse. Press two to complain that parents who have a legitimate right to give their children any advantage necessary are doing just that???

MR. WAGNER

The newspaper. TV. A blog. I don't care.

MRS. FOX

Insubordination is grounds for dismissal.

MR. WAGNER

She thinks there are bugs crawling on her skin!! She begged me to pull them off of her.

(A long pause as MRS. FOX rocks MADDY. MRS. FOX gently releases MADDY and rises.)

MRS. FOX

And did you?

MR. WAGNER

What?

MRS. FOX

Did you pull the bugs off her?

MR. WAGNER

THERE WERE NO BUGS!!!

MRS. FOX

Did you touch her?

MR. WAGNER

What?

MRS. FOX

Did you touch her?

MR. WAGNER

I don't know, I...

MRS. FOX

Did. You. Touch. Her.

MR. WAGNER

She was in agony. She was begging...

MRS. FOX

So you touched her.

MR. WAGNER

I rubbed her arms, I didn't know what else to do, I...

MRS. FOX

So you rubbed her. You admit you rubbed her.

MR. WAGNER

Oh, no. No, no, no, no, no.

MRS. FOX

You rubbed her, Mr. Wagner. You rubbed a student. In your classroom. With witnesses.

(MR. WAGNER indicates that he is beaten.)

Go back to your classroom, Mr. Wagner. Grade your tests. I'll ask Housekeeping to leave some bug spray for you.

(MR. WAGNER exits. MRS. FOX kneels by MADDY who is sleeping gently.)

Good girl.

BLACKOUT**End of Play**