

SHIELDS

~~STOP~~

*(Lights down on RALPH, who exits. Fantasy lights come up in the classroom area. MISS SHIELDS, wearing a large, wide-brimmed feathered hat, sits behind her desk, which is covered with high, wobbling piles of themes. Wielding a red pencil the size of a child's leg, she pulls a theme from the top of the pile, wildly marks all over it with the pencil and moves it to a second pile as she speaks.)*

MISS SHIELDS. Margins! Margins! Margins! Why don't they listen? Why don't they learn? Semicolon, you dolt, not period! Oh, I can't take this anymore. But I must! It is my duty! One more! Just one more! *(Takes a theme from the top of the pile and reads.)* "Ralph Parker" *(Rolls her eyes.)* Ha! *(Reads silently. The overture from Tchaikovsky's "Romeo and Juliet" creeps in under.)* Why ... why ... this is ... good. This is

... it's wonderful! *(She clutches it to her bosom as the music swells.)* The theme I've been waiting for all my life! It validates my existence! The prose ... it ... it sings! "... legendary official Red Ryder carbine action 200-shot Range Model air rifle with a compass and this thing which tells time build right into the stock!" Why, this isn't prose! It's poetry! Sheer poetry! I am transported! It out-Shakespeares Shakespeare! *(She stands and sweeps the stacks of themes from her desk.)* These are not worthy to be in such close proximity to this ... this ... masterpiece! Let the word go out, past is prologue! The history of theme writing begins here!

~~STOP~~