

# Refrains

a poem by Rose Jermusyk

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## Characters

TEACHER, 4th Grade English/History teacher at a Catholic school in a small town who previously taught F-Student in the 2nd Grade and who over the course of her part and parcel will shift to teachers/professors who “dealt” with F-Student through to the end of F-Student’s undergraduate studies

F-STUDENT, 4th Grader with (undiagnosed) OCD subtype Sinner/Doubter with Pervasive Avoidance who believes that “when you sing, you pray twice.”

MOTHER, F-Student’s mom who blames herself for what’s “wrong” with her child and wants to make it “right”

FATHER, F-Student’s dad and most probable genetic source of OCD who blames the child from the beginning because “logic”

## Scene

TEACHER ( *growing in resentment and disjointedness throughout* ): Rosie has a missing assignment.

Rosie's assignment is a week late.

Rosie's assignment is two weeks late.

Rosie hasn't turned in any assignments in a month.

Rosie has overdue assignments in every class.

Rosie scores well on tests but doesn't turn in homework.

We all know Rosie is smarter than this.

Rosie has recess detention.

Rosie has after school detention.

Rosie is flailing.

Rosie is failing.

Rosie has forged her father's signature on her report card.

Did you ask to see Rosie's report card when her sisters brought theirs home?

Rosie hasn't turned in any homework.

Rosie isn't doing the homework.

Rosie doesn't bother to do the assigned work.

Rosie has been having shaking fits in class.

Rosie has been having shaking fits in Religion class.

Rosie got the Blue Ribbon at the School Science Fair.

Rosie is failing.

Rosie got the Blue Ribbon at the State Science Fair.

Rosie is failing.

Rosie won the School Spelling Bee.

Rosie is failing.

Rosie has shown such aptitude we are moving her to Honors English.

Rosie is failing.

Rosie cannot take Drivers Ed because she failed Freshman English.

Rosie is fighting.

Rosie has been recommended to AP Literature.

Our school does not provide study hall because a free period in addition to the lunch period would only attract students who aren't interested in putting in the work to get good grades.

Rosie is failing.

Rosie made the Dean's List.

Rosie is failing.

Rosie is fighting.

Rosie is failing.

Rosie is fighting.

Rosie is —

F-STUDENT ( *singing Otis Redding's "Sad Song"* ): Faa, fa-fa, fa-fa, faa faa, faa faaaa.  
Faa, fa-fa, fa-fa, faa faa faaaa.

MOTHER ( *pleading with increasing desperation throughout* ): I got a call from your teacher  
saying she's sent notes home.

Why aren't you turning in your homework?

Are you doing your homework?

How's school?

Do you have homework?

I'm getting calls from the school.

You know I know you're smart and your teachers know you're smart.

Is your teacher's checklist working?

Are your teacher's stickers working?

Are your teacher's golden tickets working?

You gave it to me so I couldn't see the back.

What can I do?

I can't give you what you need unless you tell me what that is.

Do I have to sit with you to make sure you do it?

Do I have to stand over you and make sure it gets done?

Do I have to watch you do your homework and put it in your bag to make sure it even  
gets in the same room as your teacher?

Are you saying you want to be homeschooled?!

You see, we all know you're smart enough.

Now you just gotta keep doing what you're doing.

You just gotta keep pushing.

You just gotta keep fighting.

There are so many people willing to go to bat for you.

You have so many champions willing to fight for you.

Just tell me what you need.

What do you need?

I don't how to help you if you don't tell me what you need.

F-STUDENT ( *singing Otis Redding's "Sad Song"* ): Faa, fa-fa, fa-fa, faa faa, faa faaaa.  
Faa, fa-fa, fa-fa, faa faa faaaa.

FATHER ( *building in anger/ferocity and volume throughout* ) How do you think it makes

Mommy look when they call her and she doesn't know what's going on?

How do you think it makes Mommy look when she's here and you're not getting your stuff done?

Get your stuff done.

I know you think it's hard but you don't know hard.

You think I like getting up early to go to work?

You think my job isn't hard?

You don't know hard.

Get your work done or I'll show you hard.

You think missing recess is hard?

Do your work.

You think staying after school is hard?

What about Mommy?

She has to come pick you up.

Get your work done.

You're smarter than this.

Get it done.

Do I have to start taking things away?

No TV.

No music.

No computer unless you ask for permission to use it for homework and tell Mommy how long you need it first.

I don't want to see a book in your hands unless it's a textbook.

Sit down right now and do your work.

Get it done.

Where's your backpack?

Stay in that chair.

I'll get your backpack.

You sit here.

All night if you have to.

For the rest of your life if you have to.

But I don't want to see you out of that chair until it's done.

You don't get to put my name on any kind of document.  
If you had done that in the real world you'd be in prison.  
So guess what?  
You're in the chain gang now.  
All the worst jobs I need help with around the house.  
You're gonna help me while your sisters have fun.  
Don't call me at work because you can't handle school.  
Stop calling Mommy because she's nice.  
You don't get nice.  
Not anymore.  
If you can get one thing done.  
You can get it all done.  
Get it done.  
Get it done.  
Just do it.  
Why can't you just do it.  
Everybody else manages to just do it.  
Just do it.  
Do it.  
Your sisters manage to get all their stuff done.  
Why is Mommy crying?  
I shouldn't come home to Mommy crying.  
You're in high school,  
Rose.  
You're in college,  
Rose.  
Figure it out,  
Rose.  
Get it done,  
Rose.  
Why can't you get it done?  
Why can't you just get it done?  
Don't tell me you don't know.  
You

Do

Know.

F-STUDENT ( *singing Otis Redding's "Sad Song"* ): I've been singing sad, sad songs for sad songs are all I know.