

Plays for Young Audiences

A PARTNERSHIP OF SEATTLE CHILDREN'S THEATRE AND CHILDREN'S THEATRE COMPANY-MINNEAPOLIS

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Tale of a West Texas Marsupial Girl

By
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Music and Story Consultation by
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Tale of a West Texas Marsupial Girl was first presented by The Children's Theatre Company for the 2006-07 season.

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Cast of Characters

- Old Man (Dr. Pouch)
- Marsupial Girl
- Woman #1
- Woman #2
- Woman #3
- Doctor #1
- Doctor #2
- Doctor #3
- Mother
- Ms. Ina Shaw
- Sue
- Libby
- Pearl
- Fred Lupberger
- Lacey Rubbertree
- Ms. Pennywhistle
- Actress One
- Actress Two
- Actress Three
- Actor One
- Grocer
- Man
- Kid #1
- Kid #2
- Preacher
- Townsperson One
- Townsperson Two
- Townsperson Three

Ensemble includes: Chorus, Class

A NOTE ON THE TEXT:

The tale of this Marsupial Girl is often framed and moved forward by a character called Dr. Pouch. In the early stages of the development of this work, I wrote the part to be played by Sxip Shirey, the composer of the music for the play. Dr. Pouch was to be positioned high above the stage on a special “perch” surrounded by the many instruments Sxip has used to create the sound world of the play. Dr. Pouch was to play much of the music live, and create sound effects using foley devices and musical instruments.

As we approached production, it became clear that Sxip’s schedule would not allow him to perform the role of Dr. Pouch at Children’s Theater Company. We decided to design and record all of the sound effects of the piece, and allow Dr. Pouch to “trigger” them certain points in the play. This choice freed the character of Dr. Pouch to come down off his perch and be very near scenes as they occurred on stage.

In this script, Dr. Pouch often “lives” up on a billboard at the entrance of town. He spends time up on the front of the billboard, and behind it, where he has set up a kind of hide out for himself, filled with gadgets, toys and special equipment he uses to aid Marsupial Girl as she comes to terms with who she is. The slogan on the billboard changes from time to time, becoming subject headings for the different chapters in Marsupial Girl’s life.

While Dr. Pouch’s billboard perch featured prominently in the CTC production, the director chose not to have the billboard be the medium for the subject headings for Marsupial Girl’s life. Instead, they were represented with signs that were held by actors or that emerged from unexpected places (such as a sign that rolled out, scroll like, from an open book.) Theaters who produce this work are invited to re-imagine the way these subject headings are rendered to suit the needs of their production.

The CTC production also produced the play on a stage nearly devoid of furniture or any kind of naturalistic set requirements: benches became a bed, chairs became a schoolhouse. This minimalist staging helped support the quick changes needed in the play.

A NOTE ON THE POUCH

In the CTC production, Marsupial Girl wore a loose fitting dress with a kind of square “trap door” in the front – almost like the trap door you see in the back of old fashioned long underwear. When she opened her trap door, the top of her pouch was visible. The pouch was made of a flexible material and looked the pouch on an animal, with a touch of magic-looking silver fir. Marsupial Girl often took items in and out of her pouch in full view of the audience.

Other more representational solutions – such as a pocket on the outside of a dress, or a front pocket sewed into some overalls, may also be effective.

-- Lisa D’Amour

BEGIN

A small Texas town surrounded by an expanse of sand and land. A line of telephone poles stretches into a big sky. An old billboard the reads: “Welcome to West Texas – Big Sky, Bigger Dreams.” An Old Man in an old cowboy hat appears beneath the billboard, silhouetted against the sunrise. This is Dr. Pouch. He wears a coat covered in many pockets. He has a guitar strapped to his back. He walks among the telephone poles down until he finds one with a ratty old power box. He flips the switch and – poof! Crackle! Pop! The lights in town come to life. He swings his guitar to the front, and plays a chord. He walks across the stage to a pile of old gadgets, and pushes a button or pulls a lever. He creates the sound of wind. Then, he finds a ratty old microphone. He leans down into it:

DR. POUCH

Hey.

The wind blows.

Some stories start a long, long time ago.

Some stories start in your own back yard.

Some stories start in the teeny tiny room in the center of your head.

And some stories start in Texas.

The wind blows and the and slide guitar slides.

HOWDY.

The “Howdy’s” echo through the space.

Ready or not, my big toe, wiggly little Texas town, here we -

The stage and house instantly black out. Only the “Welcome to West Texas” billboard glows bright. The townspeople enter, whispering.

“The day she was born all the lakes dried up.”

“The day she was born every child in town caught a cold. Achoo!”

“The day she was born was probably the loneliest day of her life.”

“The day she was born all the doctors at the hospital quit.”

“I QUIT!”

“The day she was born people saw giant kangaroos dancing in the clouds.”

“That child is NOT a kangaroo!”

“She is too –“

“Is not!”

“Is too!”

“Is not!”

“Is too!”

Dr. Pouch finds a ratchet in his pocket and cranks it, fast.

DR. POUCH

Holy puppy on a peach tree, fishy on a dog leash, cow chowin’ down at the family dinner table –

What is all this fuss about?

The billboard has changed to read: WHAT IN THE WORLD?

Are they afraid of a monster come out of the sea? A giant hairy beast come down out of the sky?

CHORUS

WHAT IN THE WORLD?

A sudden gasp from the townspeople as a girl cuts through the crowd. A quite regular girl.

MARSUPIAL GIRL

Hey.

DR. POUCH

A girl. Just a girl.

MARSUPIAL GIRL

Not JUST a girl.

DR. POUCH

Pardon me, ma’am.

This girl is something else entirely.

MARSUPIAL GIRL
Something else entirely.

DR. POUCH
That's clear as a cowbell.

Dr. Pouch hits a cowbell.

Been clear since the beginning
When I first spied you with my pigpie eyes.
You certainly stirred up the pot
On that dusty-dogmouth day when:

The billboard changes to read: IT'S A GIRL!

THE OLD MAN
The Marsupial Girl
Gets Born

Dr. Pouch reads the billboard to Marsupial Girl.

It's - A - Girl!

Immediate sound of a new baby crying.

Dr. Pouch takes Marsupial Girl up the ladder, onto the billboard. They watch the following from above.

Lights on a group of women, crowded together around Woman #3, who holds baby Marsupial Girl. Nearby, Marsupial Girl's mother lies in a hospital bed.

WOMAN #1
Oooh! Look at her beautiful toes!

WOMAN #2
Oooh! And her beautiful nose!

WOMAN #3
Oooh! And her earlobes! Stupendous earlobes!

WOMAN #1
And her tiny little fingers -

WOMAN #2
And her teeny little legs -

WOMAN #3

And her teeny tiny soft – OH MY GOD!

Woman #3 practically tosses Baby Marsupial Girl to Woman #2

WOMAN #2

What on earth is the – OH MY GOD!

Woman #2 practically tosses the baby to Woman #1

WOMAN #1

Really, now you ladies are being so silly I declare I just don't know what all the –

Oh.

Oh my.

Three Doctors come on stage, dressed in scrubs and masks. They take off their masks and throw them on the floor.

THE DOCTORS
I QUIT!

DOCTOR #1
It's an abomination!

DOCTOR #2
A freak of nature!

DOCTOR #3
That child is NOT listed in ANY of the GREAT BOOKS.

Marsupial Girl's mother calls out from her room.

MOTHER
Excuse me...is everything all right out here?

Everybody in the room bolts except Woman #1 who looks distressed for a moment but then gets her act together quick:

WOMAN #1
Oh yes, dear, yes everything's fine they're just closing up shop for the night –

MOTHER
(overlapping)
Closing up shop?

WOMAN #1

- yes, closing up shop so here's your little darlin' okay then gotta run now sweet dreams!

And she bolts, too. Mother is alone with Marsupial Girl.

MOTHER

They act like they've never seen a new born child before. What on earth could they be –

Oh. Oh.

You are indeed a special girl aren't you?

You are one of a kind. Those silly old raisin-brains can't even pronounce you.

Baby Marsupial Girl begins to cry.

MOTHER

Shhhhhhh. That a girl, mama's precious, special girl...

Mother gathers Baby Marsupial Girl against her chest.

MARSUPIAL GIRL

Something else entirely.

THE OLD MAN

Yup!

Mother stands up: baby Marsupial Girl is gone. Mother reads from a reference book. Marsupial Girl watches.

MOTHER

Pouch.

See: Marsupial.

MARSUPIAL GIRL

Marsupial?

DR. POUCH

Marsupial.

The billboard reads "Marsupial."

MOTHER

(reading)

A Mar-su-pi-al is a mammal.

A mammal with a --

Dr. Pouch's voice echoes deep and loud in the space, as the billboard changes to read "POUCH."

DR. POUCH
POUCH

As mother continues, the words "marsupial" and "pouch" continue to appear and disappear on the billboard. The words, as spoken by Dr. Pouch and Marsupial Girl become a rich bed of sound underneath mother's speech.

MOTHER
When a baby

MARSUPIAL GIRL
Marsuuuuupial

MOTHER
- Is born.
It comes into the world not quite ready:
So the first thing they do when they get here
Is crawl up into their mother's -

DR. POUCH
POUCH

MOTHER
- and stay there.
Until they are ready
to hop on out into the world.

DR. POUCH AND MARSUPIAL GIRL
Marsupiiiiiiial.

MOTHER
Mar-su-pi-al?

DR. POUCH
From the Latin Marsupium
And the Greek Marsippion

MARSUPIAL GIRL
Well, smell you,
Dr. Pouch.

DR. POUCH
Ouch. Dr. Pouch?

MARSUPIAL GIRL
Dr. Pouch.

DR. POUCH
At your service, ma'am.

MOTHER
The best known marsupial in the world is, of course, the kangaroo.
But there are many other kinds,
With names as strange and wondrous
As the word –

DR. POUCH AND MARSUPIAL GIRL
Marsupiaaaaaaaal.

MOTHER
- Itself.
With names like –

MARSUPIAL GIRL
Sugar Glider

MOTHER
With names like –

MARSUPIAL GIRL
Tasmanian Devil

MOTHER
With names like -

MARSUPIAL GIRL
Agile Wallaby

MOTHER
Pig-footed Bandicoot?

MARSUPIAL GIRL
Black-Striped Wallaby.

DR. POUCH
Marsupial Mole

Mother disappears.

DR. POUCH AND MARSUPIAL GIRL
and the
Boodie Boodie
Boodie Boodie
Burrowing Betons
Wallaby Bibbly
Brush Kangaroo

Dr. Pouch walks over to the pile of gadgets on the side of the stage. He pulls out a record and puts it on a ramshackle record player: it plays the beat to a song. Marsupial Girl helps him turn the record up. Dr. Pouch goes to the microphone, and takes a harmonica out of his pocket. He wails on the harmonica. Then, he sings:

DR. POUCH
Is she a Sugar Glider?
Is she a Wallaroo?
Or a Tasmanian Devil
Boodie Boodie Boodie Boodie
Brush Kangaroo
 To Marsupial Girl

Are you a Sugar Glider?

MARSUPIAL GIRL
Am I a Wallaroo?

MARSUPIAL GIRL AND DR. POUCH
Or a Tasmanian Devil
Boodie Boodie Boodie Boodie
Brush Kangaroo

DR. POUCH
Agile Wallaby
Pig-footed Bandicoot
Black-Striped Wallaby
Marsupial Mole
Little Northern Native Cat
Feathertail Glide
Queensland Koala
Long-nosed Potoroo
Cinnamin Antechin
Red-legged Pandemelon
Brushtail Possum

MARSUPIAL GIRL
Wombat

DR. POUCH
Wallaroo

DR. POUCH AND MARSUPIAL GIRL
and the
Boodie Boodie
Boodie Boodie
Burrowing Betons
Wallaby Bilby
Brush Kangaroo

DR. POUCH
Agile Wallaby!

Marsupial Girl dances the Agile Wallaby.

DR. POUCH
Pig Footed Bandicoot!

Marsupial Girl dances the Pig Footed Bandicoot.

DR. POUCH
Black Striped Wallaby!

Marsupial Girl dances the Black Striped Wallaby.

MARSUPIAL GIRL
Marsupial Mole!

Dr. Pouch dances the Marsupial Mole. A pack of kids has been watching,
They run on stage, singing, dancing the dances they have just seen.

CHILDREN
Agile Wallaby
Pig-footed Bandicoot
Black-Striped Wallaby
Marsupial Mole

Little Northern Native Cat
Feathertail Glider
Queensland Koala

Their parents join, concerned, singing with the kids.

PARENTS AND KIDS

Long-nosed Potoroo

The parents try to push the kids away from Marsupial Girl as they sing.

Cinnamin Antechinis

Red-legged Pandemelon

Brushtail Possum

Wombat

Wallaroo

and the

Boodie Boodie

Boodie Boodie

Burrowing Betons

Wallaby Bilby

Brush Kangaroo

DR. POUCH

Macropus robustus -

MARSUPIAL GIRL

What is that?

DR. POUCH

Another name for Wallaroo.

Then Macropus giganteus

Hypsiprymnodon moschatus

MARSUPIAL GIRL

What?

DR. POUCH

Other names for Kangaroo

PARENTS AND KIDS

Is she a sugar glider

Is she a walaroo

Or a Tasmanian Devil

Boodie Boodie Boodie Boodie

Brush Kangaroo

PARENTS AND KIDS

(Spoken.)

Macropus agilis

Chaeropus ecaudatus

Macropus dorsalis

Dasyurus hallucatus

And the

Boodie Boodie Boodie Boodie

Burrowing Betons

Wallaby Bilby

Brush Kangaroo

And the

Boodie Boodie Boodie Boodie

Burrowing Betons

Wallaby Bilby

Brush Kangaroo

And the

Boodie Boodie Boodie Boodie

Burrowing Betons

Wallaby Bilby

What in the World Are You?

The Song is over. Dr. Pouch ratchets his ratchet.

DR. POUCH

Which brings us right back to –

The girl with the pouch.

The Billboard changes to read: WHAT IN THE THE WORLD?

MARSUPIAL GIRL

Hey.

DR. POUCH

Now I've heard of pouches on possums
and pouches on pretty little hairy-nosed wombats,
but never have I ever heard of a pouch on a girl.

Marsupial Girl opens up her pouch and pulls out a rose.

Ohhh...this is gonna make people nervous.

The Billboard changes to read: MARSUPIAL GIRL: THE EARLY YEARS.

DR. POUCH
Marsupial Girl, the Early Years.

Mother appears, sitting in her house.

MARSUPIAL GIRL
For you, mother!

MOTHER
Why thank you, my girl.

Marsupial Girl pulls another flower out of her pouch.

MARSUPIAL GIRL
For you, mother!

MOTHER
Why – thank you!

Marsupial Girl pulls flower after flower out of her pouch.

MARSUPIAL GIRL
For you and for you and for you!

Mother is a bit dismayed.

MOTHER
Where did you get all these flowers, girl?

Ina Shaw calls from off stage.

INA SHAW
Neighbor! Neighbor! Oh neeeeeighbor!

Ina runs in, out of breath.

INA SHAW
I believe I just saw your girl running from my garden.

Ina takes a sniff of the roses in mother's hands.

And, yes, those are my roses. I'd know their scent anywhere.

MOTHER
Girl, did you get these roses from Ms. Shaw's garden?

MARSUPIAL GIRL

Yes! You should see them all! Enough for the whole town!

INA SHAW

Little girl, do you know how LONG it takes to CULTIVATE the perfect rose? Especially in the heat of Texas?

MARSUPIAL GIRL

No.

INA SHAW

My roses are older than YOU. And better groomed, I might add.

Mother hands Ina the roses.

MOTHER

Here's your roses back, Ms. Shaw. They'll look pretty in a vase.

INA SHAW

Thank you.

Marsupial Girl pulls another rose out of her pouch.

MARSUPIAL GIRL

And here's another.

INA SHAW

Eek!

Ina Shaw shields her eyes.

MARSUPIAL GIRL

And another.

INA SHAW

Eek!

MARSUPIAL GIRL

Don't you want them, Ms. Shaw?

INA SHAW

Do you really think I'd want them after they've been in your....in your....

Ina Shaw turns to mother.

INA SHAW

Really, neighbor, its time to teach your girl some MANNERS. She'll be grown soon and then what? Hmmm?

Ina Shaw storms off. Mother speaks gently and firmly to Marsupial Girl.

MOTHER

Now girl, you can't take other people's things. Stealing is wrong.

MARSUPIAL GIRL

I wasn't stealing. I was collecting.

MOTHER

Girl.

MARSUPIAL GIRL

Isn't that what this thing is for, ma? Holding things like –

Marsupial Girl pulls a smooth stone out of her pouch.

Magic Rocks pulled from the mud of Town Lake.

Marsupial Girl pulls a handful of bottlecaps from her pouch.

And bottlecaps from the beginning of time that I will sell for one billion dollars.

MOTHER

These are plain ole Coke tops.

MARSUPIAL GIRL

Shh!

Marsupial Girl pulls a folded piece of paper out of her pouch.

A take-out menu from the pizza place.

Mother takes the menu: she could use that, actually.

Marsupial Girl pulls another rose from her pouch,

And of course roses! I could fit a whole house full of roses in this thing!

MOTHER

Just because you can doesn't mean you should. Picking up Rocks –

MARSUPIAL GIRL

Magic rocks -

MOTHER

- and bottlecaps is fine, girl, but you can't take things that belong to other people. Not without asking. Understand?

MARSUPIAL GIRL

Got it. Never take roses from that mouse-faced, icy-hearted busybody named Ina Shaw!

Mother runs to grab Marsupial Girl.

MOTHER

Girl!

MARSUPIAL GIRL

That's what you call her, ma!

MOTHER

Girl I am going to tickle you all the way to La-La land!

DR. POUCH

Like a pretty parakeet who barks like a dog.

Or a truck that runs on ice cream.

Like your Daddy playing tennis with big fat frog.

This girl, she leaped right out of a dream.

Marsupial Girl and her best friend Sue are playing in the dust. They've recently abandoned their game of jacks.

SUE

What is it?

MARSUPIAL GIRL

It's like a backpack, only better.

SUE

And located conveniently in the front.

SUE

We've totally got to play something with that thing

MARSUPIAL GIRL

Like what?

SUE

Like, like, like - detectives! And your pouch can hold all the clues we find!

MARSUPIAL GIRL

Or super heroes! And my pouch can hold our super hero special effects!

SUE

Brilliant! Maybe Batman and Robin -

MARSUPIAL GIRL

No, no, no!

Does Marsupial Girl close her eyes and think? She points to Sue.

Sandwoman –

She points to herself.

And The Wind.

SUE

Yes! I'll point my finger at the bad guy and POOF! Turn him into a pile of sand.

MARSUPIAL GIRL

Or hide under the big table where the bad guys eat, and turn every bowl of soup to Sand.

SUE

But what does the wind do?

MARSUPIAL GIRL

Well.

SUE

What?

MARSUPIAL GIRL

Come here.

Sue crosses to Marsupial Girl. Marsupial Girl opens her pouch just a little bit. We hear the faint sound of wind. Marsupial Girl closes it. Sue looks at her.

SUE

Woah.

MARSUPIAL GIRL

I know.

I open it up, and I hear sounds. Words even.

SUE
What kind of words?

MARSUPIAL GIRL
Shivery-inside-out words. Run-to-your-mom words.

SUE
Can I listen?

MARSUPIAL GIRL
You won't be scared?

SUE
Of course not. We're super heroes. Sandwoman and The Wind.

MARSUPIAL GIRL
Okay.

Marsupial Girl opens her pouch. Sue puts her ear close to it.

MARSUPIAL GIRL
What do you hear?

SUE
I hear....shhhhhhhoooooo....

MARSUPIAL GIRL
Yes?

SUE
Shhhhhooooopialius pop top.

MARSUPIAL GIRL
Shoopialius pop top.

SUE
Abbamara pip shop

MARSUPIAL GIRL
Abbamara pip shop

SUE
Abba-da

MARSUPIAL GIRL
Abba-dee

MARSUPIAL GIRL AND SUE
Abba-dip-dip-dip-dip doo.

Dr. Pouch accompanies the two girls on his slide guitar. They sing:

MARSUPIAL GIRL AND SUE
Liputmanish Hyi Op
Double unc unc Q
Q Q double mop
Shoopialus pop top
Shoopialus pop top
fie wop sue!

Marsupial Girl and Sue crack up laughing. Marsupial Girl closes her pouch.

SUE
It's like, it's like, it's like – a secret language!

MARSUPIAL GIRL
What do you think it means?

SUE
Shoopialus pop top?

MARSUPIAL GIRL
Yes.

SUE
Shoopialus equals....secret.

MARSUPIAL GIRL
Yes!

SUE
Pop top equals....bicycle.

MARSUPIAL GIRL
Secret Bicycle!

SUE
And Abbamara pip shop?

MARSUPIAL GIRL
Riding On the Wind.

SUE AND MARSUPIAL GIRL
Secret Bicycle Riding On the Wind!

SUE
It talks! It's very own Super Duper language!

MARSUPIAL GIRL
I guess it does! And only you and me understand it.

SUE
You –

Sue points to Marsupial Girl.

Me –

Sue points to herself.

and the –

Marsupial Girl opens her pouch. We hear, deep and echoing sound:

POUCH VOICE
POUCH

The girls crack up laughing.

MARSUPIAL GIRL
Are you ready for more?

Marsupial Girl opens her pouch. Slide guitar again, a song emerging:

MARSUPIAL GIRL
Abba Dabba Dip Dop

SUE
Abba Dabba Dip Dop
Shoopialus Pop Top

MARSUPIAL GIRL
Shoopialus pop top
Marialus Possum Shoe

SUE
Marialus Possum Shoe
Abba Da

MARSUPIAL GIRL
Abba Dee

MARSUPIAL GIRL AND SUE
Abba Dip Dip Dip Dip Doo.

MARSUPIAL GIRL AND SUE
Liputmanish Hyi Op
Double unc unc Q
Q Q double mop
Shoopialus pop top
Shoopialus pop top
fie wop sue!

Liputmanish Hyi Op
Double unc unc Q
Q Q double mop
Shoopialus pop top
Shoopialus --

LIBBY AND PEARL
Suuuuuuuuuusiiiiiiiie.

DR. POUCH
Aw, Blast it.

Marsupial Girl closes her pouch. Song evaporates like a sparkler doused with water. Susie stands. Libby rounds the corner, with Pearl. Libby is obviously the ring leader, even at age 5.

LIBBY
There you are. Your Dad's looking for you.

SUE
I'm coming.

LIBBY
You better, or I'm gonna tell him who you're playing with.

SUE
I'm coming!

I gotta go.

MARSUPIAL GIRL
But –

SUE
We'll play later, OK?

Almost whispered, a pact, just for Marsupial Girl.

Shoopialus Pop Top.

MARSUPIAL GIRL
Fie wop Sue.

LIBBY
What's that crazy talk you're talkin' anyway?

PEARL
Yeah, what's that goofy talk?

SUE
Nothing.

MARSUPIAL GIRL
Nothing.

SUE
Let's go.

As the three girls go. Marsupial Girl alone, for a moment. Then, she tucks their jacks into her pouch as she sings.

MARSUPIAL GIRL
Liputmanish Hyi Op

THE POUCH
Op op op op....

Marsupial Girl stops. She creeps open her pouch. She sings into it. It seems to answer back.

MARSUPIAL GIRL
Double unc unc Q

THE POUCH
Q Q Q Q....

MARSUPIAL GIRL
QQ double mop
Shoopialus pop top
Shoopialus pop top
fi wop sue...

THE POUCH
Q Q Q Q
You you you
ready ready ready
???????

Marsupial Girl closes her pouch tight and runs for home, scared and exhilarated.

MARSUPIAL GIRL
Mooooooooommmmmmm!

Marsupial Girl leaps into bed. Mother by her side, telling her a bedtime story. As mother speaks, the people of the town slowly gathers around Mother and Marsupial Girl, one by one, spying.

MOTHER
The story of my Girl.
Chapter one.
And so one day I was swimming at Blue Lake
And the water was so clear and cool I just couldn't stop swimmin'
Even though everybody else had gone home for dinner.
I was floating on my back watching the sun set

MARSUPIAL GIRL
By yourself?

MOTHER
By myself.
Gazing up up up into the blue and the purple and the yellow...
And then -
The sky unzipped itself
Unzipped itself and peeled right open
And out of the hole in the sky
Flew an enormous -

MARSUPIAL GIRL
Kangaroo –

MOTHER
That's right.
And she reached deep into her
Pouch
And pulled out –

MARSUPIAL GIRL
Me!

MOTHER
That's right. And she handed you down, down, down and placed you in my arms and said:

MARSUPIAL GIRL
This is a special creature -

MOTHER
Love her and care for her –

MARSUPIAL GIRL
And teach her to be strong –

MOTHER
And then the kangaroo went up –

MARSUPIAL GIRL
- up, up into the clouds...

MOTHER
And I had myself a girl.

MARSUPIAL GIRL
That's how it really happened?

MOTHER
That's how it really happened.

The neighbors gossip.

INA SHAW
Such a shame, spinning those wild tales.

FRED LUPBERGER

Now stranger things have happened ‘round here Ina I’ve seen ‘em...

INA SHAW

She’s just a GIRL. A girl with an unfortunate deformity that allows her to steal my roses.

FRED LUPBURGER

One time I saw Bill Wiggin’s Pig save a child from a burning house. Stranger things have happened...

MARSUPIAL GIRL

Where’s she go mother? The kangaroo from the sky?

MOTHER

I don’t know. Back up there, I guess.

LACEY RUBBERTREE

Saw her layin’ in the delivery room just hours old. That girl didn’t come outta no sky –

INA SHAW

Course it’s true there’s no sign of a Father –

LACEY RUBBERTREE

Probably why they’re both so UNRULY.

Marsupial Girl nestles her head in her mother’s belly.

MARSUPIAL GIRL

Can we go up there with her?

Mother laughs.

MOTHER

I’m afraid we’re doomed to the ground, girl. Here in the big wide world.

MARSUPIAL GIRL

The big wide world –

MOTHER

Whether we like it or not.

MOTHER

Now close your eyes...

INA SHAW

We all better keep an eye on that un-usual, un-ruly, un-fathomable

INA AND LACY
P-O-U-C-H.

They turns their backs. Sound of doors shutting and locking.

DR. POUCH
Oh the fringe benefits of being
Of being
Something Else Entirely
Even at five years old.

MARSUPIAL GIRL
Tell me about it, Pouch.

Mother and Marsupial Girl.

DR. POUCH
Stub yer toe and the whole town smarts.

The townspeople wince.

DR. POUCH
Speak a bad word-

MARSUPIAL GIRL
Foosball!

DR. POUCH
And the whole town clicks its tongue.

The townspeople click their tongue.

Mother and Marsupial Girl at home, at lessons.

MOTHER
We'll keep you home, for now.
When I'm on the night shift, I'll teach you during the day.

MARSUPIAL GIRL
When you're on the day shift, you'll teach me by candlelight.

Mother kisses Marsupial Girl on the head, and turns her back to audience, tending to something else.

MARSUPIAL GIRL

(To Dr. Pouch.)

It's better than school.

Mama has so many books.

I read them all day long.

History, science, reading, math

Days, weeks, months, years.

History, science, reading, math

Days, weeks, months, years

Until one day –

Until one day -

Dr. Pouch is snoring loudly, fast asleep.

Hey, Pouch.

Marsupial Girl walks over to one of Dr. Pouch's gadget microphones.

DR. POUCH!

Dr. Pouch wakes with a start.

DR. POUCH

What! Hup!

He ratchets his ratchet and the billboard changes to read "Happy Birthday!"

MARSUPIAL GIRL

Until one day I am ten years old!

DR. POUCH

Holy puppy in a peachtree.

That was some loooooong nap.

Mother turns around, holding a cake with ten candles, singing "Happy Birthday."
Marsupial Girl blows out the candles.

MOTHER

Girl, you're reading me out of house and out of home. I can't keep up with you anymore.

We've got to stop this.

MARSUPIAL GIRL

(A little distressed)

I don't get to learn anymore?

MOTHER

No, sweet thing. Its time to go to school.

The billboard changes to read: MARSUPIAL GIRL GOES TO SCHOOL!

DR. POUCH

MARSUPIAL GIRL GOES TO SCHOOL!

As Dr. Pouch speaks, we see pairs of parents seeing their kids off to school. Kiss Mom, Kiss Dad, go to school. Sometimes a Dad leaves for work, sometimes a mom leaves for work, sometimes both

DR. POUCH

School Days, School Days

Follow all the rule days

No time to worry –

No time to pout –

.Marsupial Girl and her mother, brushing Marsupial Girl's hair. Mother is nervous.

MARSUPIAL GIRL

Ow! Ma! You're pulling my brains out!

MOTHER

Smooth your dress.

MARSUPIAL GIRL

Ma, we gotta go.

Marsupial Girl dumps her bookbag out on the floor.

MARSUPIAL GIRL

Hey look! I can carry my notebooks and pencils right here in my pouch

Marsupial Girl opens her pouch.

MOTHER

No!

MARSUPIAL GIRL

Why not?

MOTHER

I got you a backpack, see?

MARSUPIAL GIRL

But this is better than a backpack.

MOTHER

School rules.

Mother puts Marsupial Girls supplies into the bag.

Now let's see, three pencils, one, two, three, two notebooks, one –

MARSUPIAL GIRL

Mom.

MOM.

I'm going to be fine.

MOTHER

Really?

MARSUPIAL GIRL

Come on. I'll let you walk me to the corner.

MOTHER

Oh, you'll let me, will you...

Marsupial Girl squeals with laughter, grabs her bookbag and runs out the door.

DR. POUCH

School Days, School Days

Throw your teacher in the pool days...

Marsupial Girl and Mother walk to school. They walk by the grocery store. Bins of candy stand outside. A pack of kids passes them.

MARSUPIAL GIRL

Hey.

They ignore her and walk by. Mother stops walking and looks at her.

How bout a gumball, ma. In honor of my first day of school? Pleeeeze?

Mother opens up her change purse, counts her change, closes it.

MOTHER

No gumballs in class. School rules.

Libby and Pearl walk arm in arm. Sue walks next to them. Sue is carrying Libby and Pearl's bookbags.

MARSUPIAL GIRL

Hey, Susie!

Libby and Pearl giggle. Sue breaks the chain and goes over to Marsupial Girl. Libby goes to the grocer and buys 3 gumballs.

SUE

It's Sue. People call me Sue now.

MARSUPIAL GIRL

Hey, Sue.

SUE

You're going to school?

MARSUPIAL GIRL

I'm going to school.

SUE

But you go to school at home.

MARSUPIAL GIRL

Not any more!

LIBBY

Come on, Sue –

Libby hands gumballs to Sue and Pearl.

PEARL

Come on, Sue-

LIBBY

I thought you wanted to walk with us.

MARSUPIAL GIRL

That's alright. I know the way.

Sue looks at Marsupial Girl, then at Libby and Pearl.

SUE

Y'all go ahead.

She gives Libby and Sue back their bookbags.

LIBBY

Sue!

SUE

I'll see you there.

Sue puts the gumball in her mouth.

LIBBY

Then give me back my gumball.

Sue spits it out and gives it to Libby.

SUE

You're just going to have to spit it out when you get to school.

Sue speaks in a lower voice to Marsupial Girl: a secret plan.

Come on, girl. Let's take the short cut, through Ina Shaw's garden. We have to be quiet, though...

She speaks or sings quietly.

Liputmanish Hyi Op?

MARSUPIAL GIRL

Double Unc Unc Q

MARSUPIAL GIRL AND SUE

Q Q Double Mop Shoopialus Pop Top

Shoopialus Pop Top -

Marsupial Girl and Sue take off.

LIBBY

HEY! WHICH WAY ARE YOU GOING! HEY! WAIT FOR US!

Libby and Pearl follow. Mother waves. All four girls slide into their school desks in the nick of time. Ms. Pennywhistle, the 5th grade teacher, addresses them.

MS. PENNYWHISTLE

Ok, class, as you know my name is Ms. –

THE CLASS
Pennywhistle!

A smart aleck blows a pennywhistle.

MS. PENNYWHISTLE

Now that's enough of that. My name is Ms. Pennywhistle and I'm new in town and I will be your English teacher for the entire 5th grade year. Now you were all asked to bring in a brief essay for the first day of class. Who would like to go first?

PEARL

I'll go first!

MS. PENNYWHISTLE

Thank you, Pearl.

PEARL

What I want to be when I grow up: When I grow up, I would like to be a teacher. I would like to be able to teach students as well as Mrs. Pennywhistle, the best teacher I ever had. I like to learn. That is why I want to be a teacher.

The class claps.

MS. PENNYWHISTLE

Why thank you, Pearl. I think it is lovely that you want to be a teacher. But remember: studying will help you go far; flattery will get you nowhere.

The class groans: Pearl's just been dissed.

MS. PENNYWHISTLE

Who's next?

MARSUPIAL GIRL

I'll go, Ms. Pennywhistle.

MS. PENNYWHISTLE

Wonderful. Go right ahead.

MARSUPIAL GIRL

What I want to be when I grow up.

Nt ng shoopialus en ruppa hup too nnd farfarht pepper, liputmannish hyi op thug seroop por fhj jk larty. Bmt vghing grtshyt couirdft rompavaty est furtivliking nmc unc cedrid fe fe hyt.

Waaa! uiyyyt shoopialus ui ui ui quarb, quarb hutti pa putti pop top. cd jh gk vw axz. Mii uno yatrokler frudbunner wohnk. yret bah.

Silence. No one dares speak.

MARSUPIAL GIRL
Well?

MS. PENNYWHISTLE
Well...I think it is just wonderful that you want to be an astronaut when you grow up.

Silence.

MARSUPIAL GIRL
An astronaut?

MS. PENNYWHISTLE
Now who would like to go next?

MARSUPIAL GIRL
I'm sorry, Ms. Pennywhistle but I believe you misunderstood me. Susie, could you help me explain?

Silence.

LIBBY
Come on, Susie. Tell us what she said.

Sue stands up, looks at Marsupial Girl

MARSUPIAL GIRL
I'm sorry, Ms. Pennywhistle, I forgot that I was speaking a different language. Very few people understand it. Only me, Sue and the –

SUE
No!

Sue stops Marsupial Girl from opening her pouch.

MARSUPIAL GIRL
No?

SUE
(Low, to Marsupial Girl.)
Not here, girl, not now.

MS. PENNYWHISTLE
Girls!

LIBBY

Forget it, Ms. Pennywhistle. Nobody can understand her. Ever since she was a little girl she's been DIFFERENT from the rest of US. My Dad says she should be put in a "home" but the "homes" probably wouldn't even take her.

MARSUPIAL GIRL

Stop it.

LIBBY

When my dad heard you were coming to school well you should have heard him, you should have heard him. You don't belong here. You don't belong here. You don't -

MARSUPIAL GIRL

Stop it!

And poof! Marsupial impulsively reaches towards Libby's mouth and grabs her voice. She pulls it out of Libby's mouth, and puts it in her pouch.

Libby continues to talk, though we only see her mouth move.

MS. PENNYWHISTLE

What...What is going on here?

Marsupial Girl is terrified – she's never done this before.

MARSUPIAL GIRL

I I I.I don't know.

MS. PENNYWHISTLE

Where...where is her VOICE.

PEARL

She's got it – that girl! She's got it in her...her pouch!

MS. PENNYWHISTLE

Don't be ridiculous.

MARSUPIAL GIRL

I didn't mean it.

Libby, realizing what has happened, starts to freak.

PEARL

Give it back, girl! I said give it back!

Pearl and several other kids run towards Marsupial Girl.

MS. PENNYWHISTLE

Children, stand back! Don't touch it, DON'T GET NEAR IT!

The kids recoil. Ms. Pennywhistle speaks to Marsupial Girl.

Is it really in, in, in there?

SUE

Girl, you've got to give it back.

MARSUPIAL GIRL

Hold on. I think I can fix it.

Marsupial reaches inside her dress and throws Libby's voice back into her mouth.

LIBBY

I WANT MY MOMMY!!!!

Oh.

Testing her voice.

Hello. Helllooooo.

To Marsupial Girl.

You're gonna pay for this one day. Just you wait.

PEARL

Just you wait.

MS. PENNYWHISTLE

Back in your seats! And you, new girl –

MARSUPIAL GIRL

Yes?

Ms. Pennywhistle whips out her red "detention" notebook.

MS. PENNYWHISTLE

Detention.

MARSUPIAL GIRL

Detention!

DR. POUCH
Aw, Double Blast It!

MS. PENNYWHISTLE
I'll see you in detention. This afternoon.

The stage is filled with whispers from the town. Pieces of words emerge from the whispers.

INA SHAW
- Reached right down that little girl's throat –

LACEY RUBBERTREE
- In the middle of class -

INA SHAW
- Right down her throat and tried to take her breath away -

LACEY RUBBERTREE
I'm telling you she's not all human – she's one part girl, one part crafty kangaroo!

FRED LUPBERGER
Now wait just a minute –

Marsupial Girl at detention. Marsupial Girl is working. Ms. Pennywhistle is nearby.

Outside the window, several kids chant a nasty rhyme. Sue sits apart from them, alone.

KIDS
Fee Fie Fo Fouch
There's the girl with the creepy AHHH.
Fee Fie Fo Foo
Smelly as a kangaroo!

The kids continue their chant while the neighbors speak.

INA SHAW
- And she keeps an army in there, a crafty kangaroo army –

LACEY RUBBERTREE
No!

INA SHAW

She speaks their language! An up-to-no-good kangaroo language –

Ms. Pennywhistle places a hand on Marsupial Girl's shoulder. Marsupial Girl covers her ears.

MS. PENNYWHISTLE

Don't listen to them.

MARSUPIAL GIRL

How can I not listen? All they do is talk about me.

MS. PENNYWHISTLE

You've got to learn to shut them out, girl. You've got a whole life to live, and nobody can stop you.

LACEY RUBBERTREE

What if she is planning a rebellion?

Ina and Lacey gasp

INA SHAW & LACEY RUBBERTREE

A crafty kangaroo rebellion!

FREB LUDBERGER

Oh please

LACEY RUBBERTREE

She and that momma of hers -

INA SHAW

They're gonna crawl out of there, hopping all over town, dozens of kangaroo girls, crushing the post office and even the school with their hop hop hop.

Ms. Pennywhistle sends Marsupial Girl on her way. The chants and gossip continue.

LACEY RUBBERTREE

Never, never turn your back on that wiggly, squiggly, girl!

INA SHAW

Amen, Brother Ben, Shot a Goose and Killed a Hen.

Marsupial Girl opens her pouch. A whimper comes out, a sad little whimper.

MARSUPIAL GIRL
Shhhh, it's OK.

The pouch cries softly. Marsupial Girl walks towards home, comforting it. She sees Sue sitting alone. Marsupial Girl walks over to her and sits down. They share a cautious smile. Libby and Pearl enter and walk up to Sue. Sue ignores them at first. Libby holds out the gumball. Sue ignores her. Libby holds it out again. Sue looks at it. Finally, Sue takes it, and the three girls run off stage.

Marsupial Girl, alone now, opens her pouch. It is crying like a baby, now.

MARSUPIAL GIRL
There you go.
Just let it all out...
Shhh....

The pouch cries. We see Dr. Pouch holding up a large book from his perch. Using some gadget – a fishing pole? A mechanical hand? -- he drops the book from a great height at Marsupial Girl's feet. The book lands – poof! – stirring up the dust on the ground. Immediately, the pouch stops crying. Marsupial Girl closes her pouch, and picks up the book,

MARSUPIAL GIRL
Imaginary Creatures and Mythic Beasts. Huh

The pouch seems placated.

DR. POUCH
Heh heh heh.

MARSUPIAL GIRL
Huh.

Marsupial Girl arrives at home. Mother waits for her in the front yard.

MOTHER
A detention!

MARSUPIAL GIRL
I can explain -

MOTHER
News spread round the factory faster than a fire in a field of dry wheat -

MARSUPIAL GIRL
It's my secret language. I was being creative.

MOTHER

Creative? I'll show you creative. Come down to the assembly line and watch the cans roll by now doesn't that sound CREATIVE?

MARSUPIAL GIRL

Ma!

MOTHER

And here I was worried about what other kids would do to you.

MARSUPIAL GIRL

Come on, ma. Let's have story time. It'll make us feel better.

MOTHER

I don't think even a kangaroo from the sky can get us out of this one.

MARSUPIAL GIRL

I'm sorry, ma. Really sorry.

Pause. Mother sighs. She puts her hands on Marsupial Girl's pouch.

MOTHER

What are we going to do with this thing.

MARSUPIAL GIRL

They say I'm not human, ma. They say I'm some kind of -

MOTHER

Hush.

Marsupial Girl hugs mother.

Did you really try and choke that girl?

MARSUPIAL GIRL

No! I don't know what happened.

MOTHER

You want to go back?

MARSUPIAL GIRL

Yes.

The clock chimes 9 o'clock.

MOTHER

Get to bed and wake up early. We'll talk about it in the morning.

Mother picks up her things.

MARSUPIAL GIRL

You're on the night shift?

MOTHER

Yes.

MARSUPIAL GIRL

But you just worked the day shift.

MOTHER

I couldn't say no.

MARSUPIAL GIRL

You couldn't?

MOTHER

Some people have to work twice as hard just to keep from being called lazy.

Mother kisses Marsupial Girl.

MOTHER

Keep the door locked tight, okay sugar?

Mother leaves. Marsupial Girl turns out the light. Fred Lupberger, alone.

FRED LUPBERGER

I'm tellin you it's all in the way you cast your eye. My cousin the mechanic knows the butcher who knows the postman and the postman told the butcher that he has seen her, get this, he has seen her fill her pouch full to burstin' with cool water from Town Lake –

Marsupial Girl, in bed. She is reading by the light of her bedside lamp. The book: "Imaginary Creatures, Mythic Beasts"

- fill it full to burstin' and bring it to Old Lady Willins in the trailer park cuz Old Lady Willin's don't have no running water. Now you tell me does that sound like a monster to you?

Mother at the factory, working on the assembly line.

It's all in the way you cast your eye.

FRED LUPBERGER

I been castin' mine about for years now. I've seen miracles and I've seen abominations.
That girl is not an abomination. I don't know what she is, but she ain't that.

Marsupial Girl Looks at Her Hands. Music begins

THE TOWN

Centaur

Minataur

MARSUPIAL GIRL

What am I?

THE TOWN

Cyclops

Unicorn

MARSUPIAL GIRL

What am I?

THE TOWN

Centaur

MARSUPIAL GIRL

What am I?

THE TOWN

Minataur

MARSUPIAL GIRL

What am I?

Marsupial sings:

What Am I?

With my fingers five

and again makes ten

It's all that I need

What Am I?

With my two eyes open wide

And again

To see all I can see

THE TOWN

Feet –

MARSUPIAL GIRL

To climb to the mountains

THE TOWN

Arms –

MARSUPIAL GIRL

To swim through the sea.

I'd walk I'd walk I'd walk every desert

To find

What am I

THE TOWN

Boom boom diddy da

Boom boom ba diddy diddy (REPEAT 4 TIMES)

MARSUPIAL GIRL

I am not an astronaut

I am inside out

I am stopped in my tracks

I am right side down

Lights rise on mother, working in the factory.

MOTHER

I am not an astronaut

I am inside out

I have two hands

One heart

One mind

But these will not put my girl's

troubles behind her

The following section is sung in syllables, with each actress singing a single syllable in each word. Slashes indicate alternating syllables. Non-slashed lines are sung together. The effect is fluid, like one voice singing.

MARSUPIAL GIRL AND MOTHER:

Wha/t Am/ I?

Wi/th my/ fin/gers /five

An/d a/gain /make/s ten

It's all that I need

Wha/t Am/ I?

Wi/th my/ two /eye/s o/pen /wide

An/d a/gain

To see all I can see

THE TOWN

Feet –

MARSUPIAL GIRL

To climb to the mountains

THE TOWN

Arms –

MARSUPIAL GIRL:

To swim through the sea.

I'd walk I'd walk I'd walk every desert

To find

MARSUPIAL GIRL

What am I

THE TOWN

Centaur Minataur Cyclops Unicorn

Boom boom diddy da

Boom boom ba diddy diddy

Centaur Minataur Cyclops Unicorn

Boom boom diddy da

Boom boom ba diddy diddy

CONTINUES UNDERNEATH THE FOLLOWING DIALOGUE

Mother walks over to Marsupial Girl. She's just come home from the late shift.

Marsupial Girl closes the book and places it under the table.

MOTHER

It's late.

MARSUPIAL GIRL

I know.

Mother pulls an ace bandage out of her bag.

MOTHER

We're going to keep you safe.

MARSUPIAL GIRL

Okay.

Mother starts wrapping the ace bandage around Marsupial Girl's middle. A whimper from the pouch.

MOTHER

This will keep you out of trouble. Nothing goes in your pouch, nothing comes out.

A sharp intake of breath from Marsupial Girl – the ace bandage is tight.

MARSUPIAL GIRL

Okay.

MOTHER

People will forget.

MARSUPIAL GIRL

Will they?

A shared look: They both know that's not true. The pouch is silent.

MARSUPIAL GIRL

I'll keep really quiet. I'll blend right in.

Mother and Marsupial Girl embrace.

MOTHER

My precious girl. My little Marsu –

Marsupial Girl places her fingers on mother's lips.

MARSUPIAL GIRL

I'll blend right in.

CHORUS

Boom Boom ba Diddy Diddy Boom.

END OF ACT I