

S.T. Skit

CHARACTERS:

● Narrator

● Jackie

● S.T. (shrew)

● Earthworm

● White Grub

● Black Beetle #1

● Black Beetle #2

● Millie (millipede)

● Sitta (nuthatch)

NARRATOR: Jackie sat down with a “humph.”

JACKIE: I don’t think anything lives here in these woods. I’ve been walking around for a long time, and I haven’t seen anything except for a couple of squirrels.

NARRATOR: Jackie’s teacher had told her, “Pick a place near school or home and investigate what lives there. Then write a report about all the interesting and unusual things you find.”

JACKIE: So I picked this patch of woods behind the playground thinking it would be loaded with animals. But I don’t see anything interesting at all. Now what am I going to do?

S.T. SHREW: So, you don’t think anything interesting lives in these woods, huh?

JACKIE: What was that?

NARRATOR: Jackie looked around and gasped. Next to her was a small, furry animal poking its head out from under the leaves. It had big whiskers and tiny little eyes.

S.T. SHREW: You don’t think anything interesting lives in these woods?

JACKIE: Well, I didn’t... Who are you?

S.T. SHREW: I’m a short-tailed shrew. Everyone calls me S.T. for short. Now, put your finger on my back.

JACKIE: What?

S.T. Skit

S.T. SHREW: Look, you want to know what lives in these woods, right? So c'mon, hurry up!

NARRATOR: Slowly, Jackie reached out her finger and gently touched S.T.'s back. There was a flash and she found herself standing next to S.T., looking him right in the eye. Then she realized that she was standing on four legs and covered with fur. She had turned into a shrew!

S.T. SHREW: There, that's much better. Now, follow me.

JACKIE: Where are we going?

S.T. SHREW: A lot of creatures around here are pretty upset that you don't know they even exist. So I've been appointed to show you around. Stick close to me so you don't end up as someone's lunch!

NARRATOR: With that, S.T. dove into a hole. Jackie hesitated only a minute before she dove in, too!

In the Ground

NARRATOR: Jackie had never crawled through the ground before and wasn't sure she liked it. It was dark and damp and smelled like dirt. And there were so many roots everywhere!

S.T. SHREW: Hey everyone! We're here!

NARRATOR: At first Jackie could hear and see nothing. Then she noticed a rumbling sound that seemed to be getting louder and louder. Suddenly, heads began popping out of the tunnel walls. There were earthworms, beetles, white grubs, and many other creatures.

JACKIE: Do you all live in the ground?

S.T. Skit

EARTHWORM: Yep, and lots of others do, too.

JACKIE: But how do you live? I mean... what is there to eat down here?

EARTHWORM: Well, I eat my way through the soil! I make a tunnel by eating the dirt, then I digest bits of plants and other food from the dirt. It's not for everyone, but I love it!

WHITE GRUB: I suck juices right out of roots. One day, I'll become a pupa and change into an adult. Then I'll crawl up out of the ground and fly around as a beetle.

BEETLE #1: Did you ever wonder what happens to animals that die in the woods? It's thanks to me that they're taken care of.

BEETLE #2: He means, thanks to all of us carrion beetles. We eat them up. Keep the forest clean.

S.T. SHREW: Thanks everyone for coming! Follow me, Jackie, there's still lots more for you to see.

A Rotten Place to Live

NARRATOR: Jackie followed S.T. back to the surface and they ran along the ground under the cover of leaves. Jackie could see spiders, centipedes, and other small creatures crawling around them. Finally S.T. ran onto the top of a log that was covered with a thick, green carpet of moss.

JACKIE: Ohh, it's so soft. And look at the other things growing up here.

NARRATOR: Jackie ran around on top of the log. She rolled in the soft moss, touching the cool, bright-orange fungi, and sniffed at the tops of the tall, red-capped lichens as though they were flowers. There was even a tiny tree, only about three inches tall, growing out of the log.

S.T. Skit

S.T. SHREW: Want to see inside?

JACKIE: OK!

NARRATOR: In just a few seconds a long, dark creature with dozens of legs came crawling out of the end of the log.

S.T. SHREW: This is Millie the millipede. You go with her and I'll wait for you here.

NARRATOR: Millie reared up and touched Jackie's head with several of her legs. In a flash, Jackie turned into a millipede, too. At first she found it a little difficult to move all her legs in a coordinated way. But once she and Millie got inside the log, she found it just came naturally.

MILLIE: In here, it's like a tiny factory, a factory that breaks logs down into soil. Listen for the chewing and look for the tunneling and boring through the wood.

NARRATOR: There were wood roaches, small white termites, and hard-shelled pill bugs that rolled into tight little balls as Jackie and Millie passed by. There were also insect-eating hunters like huge shiny black beetles with giant jaws and centipedes with venomous fangs. Deep inside the log they even saw a salamander resting in a damp hole.

MILLIE: All the nutrients in this log are getting recycled so plants can use them again.

JACKIE: Wow! I had no idea there was so much activity inside a log. This is really neat, Millie!

NARRATOR: Once she got back to S.T., Jackie turned back into a shrew and S.T. led her to the base of a tall tree.

S.T. Skit

Life at the Top

NARRATOR: Immediately a small black-capped bird came racing headfirst down the trunk to meet them, clinging to the bark with its long toes.

SITTA: I was beginning to wonder whether you were coming. Hello, Jackie. I am Sitta. Ever felt like flying?

NARRATOR: In a flash, Jackie was changed into a nuthatch just like Sitta.

SITTA: Let's go!

NARRATOR: Sitta and Jackie flew over the trees where they could see many other birds flying in and out of the treetops. They swooped down into the top of a tree and darted in and out among its branches.

JACKIE: Wow, of everything I've done today this is the best.

SITTA: Check out all the insects, the katydids and the other bugs clinging to the leaves. Watch out for the wasps and flies buzzing around. And there are lots of caterpillars crawling on the leaves too. Let's land and take a walk down this trunk.

JACKIE: There are so many caterpillars and ants crawling on the trunk. And look, these spiders and moths are almost the same color as the bark. I almost missed them.

SITTA: That's called camouflage. They're hiding from predators by blending into the background.

NARRATOR: There were also pale green lichens and moss growing on the bark. Jackie and Sitta reached the bottom of the trunk.

S.T. Skit

JACKIE: This tree is like an apartment building. There are different things living in it all the way from the leaves at the top to the base right here on the forest floor. I guess I should say the dirt, too—I shouldn't forget everyone I met underground earlier!

SITTA: That's right—the forest is teeming with life. I've got to go now. It was nice to meet you!

Home Again

NARRATOR: Jackie turned back into a shrew and once more followed S.T. through the ground, wondering where they were going next. It was dark and damp in the tunnel and root hairs were brushing her in the face. As they ran along, the smell of dirt filled her nose... suddenly Jackie opened her eyes. She was lying on the ground with her face resting on top of the leaves. Her nose was filled with the smell of dead leaves and dirt. Slowly Jackie sat up.

JACKIE: Was it all a dream? There's a dead log over there like the one I went to with S.T. And the bark of this tree is covered with all kinds of things, just like the one I saw with Sitta.

NARRATOR: The adventure seemed impossible to Jackie. But then she looked at the ground nearby and carefully lifted up some of the leaves. Sure enough, there was a small hole in the ground just like the one she had entered with ST!

JACKIE: Boy, do I have a lot to write about in my report!

The End