

Marshmallow Spirit

By **Joyce Wycoff**

**Be careful ... don't touch
Don't cry ... watch out!
Color inside the lines**

**Within us in the beginning
There's a tender, marshmallow spirit
Gleefully exploring every sight and sound.
Gradually, however, words and worry
Crust over that softness.**

**Don't dawdle ... don't doodle
Stop daydreaming ... Stop playing around
This is the way we draw a pumpkin**

**Don't do it that way
Don't ask so many questions
Don't make a mess
Don't be silly
We don't do art today**

**Word after word after word
And the crust grows harder
And the crust grows darker**

**Go to sleep ... wake-up
Stop running ... hurry up
Don't get dirty ... clean up your room**

**Sit still ... stand up straight
Be quiet ... find the right answer
Stop giggling ... act like an adult**

**Get better ... be the best
Get smart ... run faster
Take responsibility
We don't do art today**

**Layer after layer after layer
And the crust becomes a shell
And the shell grows harder
And the shell grows darker**

**Do it my way
It's policy ... it's procedure
Don't make waves ...
 don't cause problems
Don't take risks**

**Do it right the first time ... do it faster
It's my way or the highway
You're not paid to think
Follow the chain of command
It's not the way we do things
 around here**

**Don't make mistakes
It's impossible ... we tried it last year
It's not in the budget
It's too risky ... get serious**

**You're too young ... you're too old
That's not your problem
That's crazy ... it won't work
We don't do art today**

**And the shell sinks deeper
And the shell grows harder
And the shell grows darker**

**Until
it takes
 a jack hammer**

**To crack it open
To find
 that soft,
 white
 space
 again.**