

A BULLY'S BALLAD

By Jason Brooks

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SYNOPSIS: Billy torments his classmates, his little brother and his girlfriend daily. With nods to Charles Dickens, Billy's long-dead British pet bunny, Fluffy, visits and warns him that it's time he bear witness to the havoc and hurt he's caused. Billy is visited by three ghosts: a short-tempered fairy, a surfer dude with great strength, and a tall, dark and really creepy reaper. It's not long before Billy is scrambling to apologize to - wait, was it all a dream? This is a play about how we choose to treat others, and the consequences of those choices. A dramatic-comedy that uniquely addresses bullying.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(6 females, 4-5 males, 2-3 either)

NARRATOR (f/m)	Omniscient guide to all the news fit to print. <i>(8 lines)</i>
BILLY (m)	Middle school bully. <i>(88 lines)</i>
FLUFFY (f/m)	Long-dead pet bunny and best childhood friend. Optional British accent. <i>(5 lines)</i>
PAST (f).....	Ballet dancing fairy princess with sweet and mean streaks. Optional New York accent. <i>(17 lines)</i>
PRESENT (m)	Huge, strong, gentle giant, party animal. <i>(15 lines)</i>
FUTURE (f/m).....	Angel of death. <i>(Non-Speaking)</i>
FRED (m).....	Billy's long-suffering little brother. <i>(15 lines)</i>
BELLE (f).....	Billy's friend/girlfriend. <i>(22 lines)</i>
EVERY (f).....	Student council member. Leader of a group of Billy's victims. <i>(25 lines)</i>

- ADDISON (f)..... Student council member.
Another one of Billy’s victims.
(15 lines)
- AIDAN (f)..... Student council member.
Another one of Billy’s victims.
(17 lines)
- YOUNG BILLY (m)..... A younger (slightly) more
innocent version of Billy.
(12 lines)
- YOUNG BELLE (f)..... A young pigtailed version of
Belle. (8 lines)
- BABY FRED (m) Voice over. Infant version of
Fred. (2 lines)

— ALL LINE COUNTS ARE APPROXIMATE —

CAST DOUBLING: *Ghost of Bullying Present could double as Ghost of Bullying Future. Fred could double as Baby Fred.*

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

- SCENE 1 BARE STAGE
- SCENE 2 MIDDLE SCHOOL HALLWAY
- SCENE 3 BARE STAGE
- SCENE 4 BILLY’S HOUSE
- SCENE 5 BILLY’S HOUSE
- SCENE 6 BARE STAGE
- SCENE 7 SANDBOX/CRADLE/TABLE*
- SCENE 8 BILLY’S HOUSE
- SCENE 9 BARE STAGE
- SCENE 10 THREE CHAIRS*
- SCENE 11 BARE STAGE
- SCENE 12 HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY
- SCENE 13 BILLY’S HOUSE

**Scenes 7 and 10 should be split into sections. For Scene 7, the three sections are as follows: Sandbox with toys, baby cradle, and card table with three chairs. For Scene 10, the three sections are as follows: Stage right is a loveseat (or two chairs pushed together), center stage is a chair, and stage left is a chair. The chairs could be something as simple as folding chairs.*

Additional set pieces include: Small loveseat/large chair/beanbag, coffee table, bassinet.

PROPS

- Clipboard/pen
- Box of non-perishable items (2)
- Pringles
- Xbox controller
- Basketball
- Diary/pen
- Sandbox toys
- Cell phones (2)
- Baby doll
- Black Sharpie
- Signature sheets (pre-loaded) and log gag sheets
- Girl Scout cookies (6-8 boxes, empty save for a few cookies in each)
- Teddy
- Selfie stick

SOUND EFFECTS

- ◆ Clock bell
- ◆ Crashing cans

SUGGESTED MUSIC

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COSTUMES

Belt buckle (AVERY)

Dress, fancy shoes (BELLE)

Basketball jersey, letter jacket (FRED)

Middle school “cool” clothes (BILLY)

Pink bunny costume (FLUFFY)

Hawaiian shirt, shorts, flip-flops (GHOST OF BULLYING PRESENT)

Tutu, tiara, fairy wings, wand (GHOST OF BULLYING PAST)

Black cloak with hood, scythe (GHOST OF BULLYING FUTURE)

Student council outfits, vests (AVERY, ADDISON, AIDAN)

Junior Girls Club uniforms (AVERY, ADDISON, AIDAN)

Letter jackets (AVERY, ADDISON, AIDAN, FRED, BELLE)

Loafers, tall socks, short pants, suspenders, propeller beanie (YOUNG BILLY)

SCENE 1

SETTING: *Bare stage.*

AT RISE: *Enter NARRATOR stage left. Spotlight on NARRATOR.*

NARRATOR: *(Entire speech is done with slyness but warmth.)*
Greetings to the audience! In all my years representing my benefactor Mr. Charles Dickens, I **cannot** recall having **ever** laid eyes upon such an agreeable and distinguished audience of ladies and gentlemen! In the rare case that you do not recognize me... My name is Tiny Tim and I am your narrator! Now before everyone gets too excited about having such a legendary literary figure—such as I—standing before them, you know, asking for a picture, an autograph, all those trappings of modern life that frankly make my head spin, we need to get a few necessary points of order out of the way. As the guardian and omniscient observer of all variations and versions of Mr. Dicken's legacy, it is my pleasure to welcome you to *A Bully's Ballad*. *(Short pause.)* I have one more **very** important job to do before we begin however. I need to humbly and politely ask for **all** guests to turn off all manner of those very same modern devices that ring, click, flash, store, sing, break, track, crack, talk, text, level, read, delete, record and annoy the person sitting next to you. This **especially** goes for the teachers and grandparents in the audience! We all know how educators and retirees are with their technology these days! *(Pauses for laughs and for phones to actually be turned off, about to move on but notices something near the back of the house.)* Wait a **minute**... *(Puts both hands on hips, hips shifted to the side, and with a big sigh says...)* I should have known. [Insert teacher or principal's name here], you **do** know that the **entire** conceit of the omniscient narrator is... well... omniscience don't you? Did you **really** think you could hide from **me**? I have been narrating one version or another of this story for nearly two centuries! The turning off of devilish devices applies to **you** as well! *(Pauses, sighs, shakes head and rolls eyes.)* Grownups. *(Back to sly, bubbly version.)* Let's move forward with the show, shall we? Allow me to introduce to you Billy, a bully, as you will see. Let's take a moment and look in on how Billy moves

through the world during a typical middle school day. I **am** warning you in advance, it is not pretty, nor pleasant, and you might, juuuuust might recognize a bit of yourself somewhere on this stage. I'll be checking back in with you, but for now, sit back and relax. In all my years of safeguarding the legacy of this story I hold so near and dear to my heart, this version... is one of the **best!** Enjoy the show! (*Exit stage left.*)

Curtain opens.

SCENE 2

SETTING: *Middle school hallway with lockers, signs for a dance, and signs for the student council fund-raiser or petition.*

AT RISE: *The three student council members are standing stage left of center in a very loose semi-circle with ADDISON on the right, AVERY in the middle, and AIDAN on the left. They are talking amongst themselves and gesturing to the contents of the clipboard in AVERY'S hands and the box of non-perishable items at ADDISON'S feet.*

AVERY: Well girls, six months of planning and hard work are about to pay off! A few more signatures, a few more donations, and **all** of our goals will have been met.

ADDISON: It **is** pretty impressive. Just **think** of all the cool opportunities those signatures will allow us to provide for students, not to mention all the hungry people that the donations will feed!

Enter BILLY stage right. He is sullen, head down, hands in pockets, an aimless stroll.

AIDAN: (*Spots BILLY, speaks with dread.*) Oh no. Ever heard of speaking too soon?

AVERY: What?

ADDISON: What's wrong?

AIDAN: Something wicked this way comes.

AVERY: Macbeth?

AIDAN: (*Nods head in direction of the approaching BILLY.*) Worse!
Look!

BILLY looks up to notice the student council members and a devilish grin breaks over his face. He is no longer directionless. As he speaks, he moves with confidence, arms spread wide, toward the members.

BILLY: Ladies!

AVERY, ADDISON, and AIDAN look deflated, annoyed and terrified all at once.

BILLY: (*Fully crosses the stage and sidles next to ADDISON.*) It is so...

BILLY wets his finger and gives ADDISON a wet-willy and then quickly slides behind her and pops his head between ADDISON and AVERY. ADDISON shows a physical reaction of pure disgust.

BILLY: ...Good...

BILLY grabs AVERY'S belt and gives her a wedgie, then pops his head between AVERY and AIDAN.

BILLY: ...To see you!

BILLY wraps an arm around AIDAN and gives her a noogie and then steps to the left of the group.

ADDISON: Billy.

AIDAN: (*Sheepishly.*) Hey, Billy.

AVERY: (*Sneers.*) Jerk.

BILLY: (*Mock sincerity.*) Ohhh come on now. There's no need for attitude, I'm just foolin' around right?

AVERY: (*Flatly.*) Sure Billy, whatever you say.

BILLY: There, see? Everybody's havin' fun! Now, what are my three favorite **student crapsil** do-gooders up to today?

ADDISON, AIDAN, and AVERY'S next lines are said simultaneously.

ADDISON: *(Perks up a little bit.)* Donations!

AIDAN: *(Perks up a little bit.)* Signatures!

AVERY: *(Said a fraction of a second behind and louder than ADDISON and AIDAN, said with wide-eyed panic.)* **Nothing!**

AVERY slaps forehead, droops, and shakes her head. ADDISON and AIDAN cover their mouths with both hands. A huge, nasty-looking grin crosses BILLY'S face. AVERY drops her hand and lets out a huge sigh.

AVERY: We are collecting canned good donations for Civic Concern, and gathering petition signatures to build a new blended learning, internet-style café down in the old basement with couches, and tablets built into all the coffee tables... and it's student **council**.

BILLY: *(With mock shocked, over-dramatic enthusiasm.)* Oh my goodness! That sounds amazing! Two worthy student crapsil causes, if I have ever heard any! You **must** let me help!

AVERY: That really isn't necessary Billy.

ADDISON: Yeah, we're fine. Almost done in fact.

AIDAN: Totally.

BILLY: *(Slow, biggest grin yet. Close to pure evil.)* Oh, I wasn't asking permission... In fact... I **insist**.

BILLY snatches the clipboard out of AVERY'S hands and grabs Pringles out of the donation box. He tucks the clipboard under his arm, pops open the Pringles and eats a couple chips. The student council members look absolutely aghast.

BILLY: *(Talking with his mouth full, chips spray.)* I'll take it from here dolls. *(BILLY caps the chips, drops them, takes the papers off the clipboard, drops the board, and tears the pages into several pieces, grinning widely.)* You can leave now.

AVERY: No! Please...

BILLY: *(Turning on them viciously and loudly.)* I said **get lost!** Beat it! **Scram!**

AIDAN, AVERY, and ADDISON hurriedly exit stage right. BILLY picks the chips back up and begins to munch on them again.

Enter FRED stage right carrying a basketball. As AIDAN, AVERY, and ADDISON rush past him, he does an agile spin move to avoid getting run over by them.

FRED: *(Jovial.)* Hey there big brother! What was **that** all about?

BILLY: *(Still eating, not looking at FRED, disinterested.)* Nothing. What do **you** want?

FRED: *(Very jovial.)* Well, team tryouts are next week, and while I didn't have any luck last year, I totally have a feeling that this is **gonna'** be my year! I've been practicing and working out but I am kinda' missing one thing....

FRED waits for BILLY to respond. BILLY continues to ignore him and sloppily eats. FRED is not deterred and continues more jovial than ever.

FRED: I could really use a bigger guy, like, say, my brother, to practice post defense on and a couple pick-and-roll moves! What do you say?

BILLY: *(Flatly.)* Sure thing James Harden.

FRED: *(Shocked, grinning happily.)* Wait... what? **Really?!**

BILLY: No, not really. I'm busy, no time for losers who can't make a stupid basketball team. Now get out of here and leave me alone Darko.

BILLY grabs the basketball from FRED and chucks it stage left. FRED turns to see its trajectory at which point BILLY places a boot on FRED'S posterior and gives him a swift shove or kick. FRED falls forward and exits stage left. BILLY returns to his chips.

BELLE enters stage right looking resplendent in her dress, ready for the dance. She crosses, all nervous energy, and smiles to stand next to BILLY.

BELLE: *(In a sing-song kind of voice, biting her lip.)* Hi Billy.

BILLY: *(Sparing her the quickest of glances.)* Oh, hi Belle.

BELLE: *(More sing-song, arms behind her back, rocking heel to toe.)*
I'm dressed and **ready!**

BILLY: *(Very flat.)* Sure are.

BELLE: *(Slight concern in her voice, but still with a nervous and kind smile.)* I couldn't help but notice that **you** aren't dressed and ready.

BILLY: Ready for **what?**

BELLE: *(Face shows concern.)* For the **dance** Billy.

BILLY: *(Showing no concern at all, very cold.)* What dance?

BELLE: *(Her smile is gone. She is exasperated. There is a history of this behavior.)* **What** dance?! *(Small pause for a response that she knows will not come.)*

BILLY rolls his eyes.

BELLE: *(Bit more of an edge to her voice now.)* **The** dance! The dance that I **bought** this **dress** for! The dance that I bought tickets for... over **two** months ago! The dance you **promised** that you would take me to! The dance that starts in less than an hour from **right now!** *(Pauses, her head droops, she speaks softly and defeated.)* That dance...

BILLY: *(Cold and heartless.)* Yeah, about that... I'm not gonna' be able to make it. I'm busy tonight. I have a date, with a much less high maintenance girlfriend. I like to call her... **Xbox.**

BELLE: *(Crushed.)* OK, Billy... I...I understand. Maybe next time, huh?

BILLY: Sure, whatever.

BELLE slowly exits stage right, head hung low. BILLY tilts up the can of chips to "drink" the last crumbs. Taps the last scraps into his mouth and throws the empty container behind him. Self-satisfied "ahhh" of contentment, big smile to the audience, tucks the clipboard into the box of food, picks up the box and struts off to exit stage left.

Curtain closes. Suggested transition music: "Unbelievable" by EMF.

SCENE 3

AT START: *Curtain closed. Enter NARRATOR stage left. Spotlight on NARRATOR. NARRATOR sighs before speaking.*

NARRATOR: Reprehensible no? Mean, vicious... downright **nasty** even. We are talking about bullying classmates, family members, even the one girl who clearly has feelings for him! Yet these examples beg the question, was Billy **always** like this? And maybe more importantly, is he **forever** doomed to behave this way? Are there no **consequences** for such **hurtful** actions? Does Billy get, does he even **deserve**, a second chance? *(Pause.)* Good and fair questions all. *(Leans in, brings the audience in on a "secret," uses hands here.)* Let me answer the first question for you. No. No, Billy was not always this broken, this abjectly callous. In fact he was once a sweet, lonely, sad little boy whose only friend in the world was a pet rabbit named Admirable Halsey P. Fluff-n-Stuff... **Fluffy** for short. Some have posited that it was the untimely and **tragic** loss of Fluffy that sent Billy down this dark path. As for redemption... Second chances? Tonight, Billy will be granted an opportunity to change his life, to see the error and consequences of his ways, past, present, and future. What he does with this opportunity however, is **entirely** up to him.

Curtain opens.

SCENE 4

SETTING: *Loveseat center stage. Small coffee table in front of loveseat. Xbox controller on couch. Optional backdrop: House interior.*

AT RISE: *BILLY enters carrying the box and clipboard. He sets the box behind the couch. He then hops the back of the couch, plops down, and picks up the controller to begin playing games. FLUFFY is hidden behind loveseat.*

BILLY: Ahhhh, time to spend six or seven hours relaxing, expanding my mind, and blowing crap up with *Call of Duty*. **Nothing**, no stupid do-gooders, brother, or stupider dance, will be ruining **this** perfect evening!

Lights flicker on and off a few times.

BILLY: *(BILLY looks around confused and annoyed.)* Oh come on!

Lights up, BILLY smiles, and turns back to the game. Lights go OFF, stage dark.

BILLY: What the...?

Spotlight on the loveseat, music starts, and FLUFFY menacingly rises from behind the loveseat with his arms raised as if to strike. BILLY is wide-eyed with terror. BILLY sees the ghost of FLUFFY, pauses, and then screams bloody murder. FLUFFY goes from menacing to terrified and responds to the scream with a scream.

If possible, lights come back up to about 3/4.

FLUFFY throws hands up in the air and runs around the couch stage left. BILLY gets up and runs around the back of the couch stage right. They exchange a few more screams back and forth. FLUFFY changes direction, doubles back and the two crash into each other behind the couch resulting in a huge scream from both. Both run back around the loveseat on opposite sides, BILLY stage right and FLUFFY stage left side. Both are huffing and puffing now, loud exaggerated breathing.

BILLY is the first to pause, freeze and realize that he recognizes this other character.

BILLY: *(Amazed questioning.)* Fluffy?

FLUFFY: *(With a British accent.)* Yes, who else?

BILLY: But, but you're **dead!** I... I saw you get run over by a VW bug with 14 teenagers packed into it on their way to clown college!

FLUFFY: You betcha! Nine years now! Messy business that was! *(Getting breath back finally, hand over chest, plops down on loveseat.)* Pheeew! Goodness Billy, you sure gave me a fright there... *(Realizes how that sounds considering his ghost status, cocks head to one side and addresses the emptiness.)* ...Heh, which is quite ironic considering that is what I am here to do to you!

BILLY: *(Sits next to FLUFFY.)* Awww man no way Fluffy, you were the best! Dead giant ghost bunny or not, you could never scare me!

FLUFFY: You don't think so, do you? Well, listen. To. This! *(Stands up, gets very dramatic, drops voice into a loud, low "scary" voice, throws arms out dramatically, bellows out and up into the ether.)* You young Billy have done wrong by your friends and family these many years! If you do not **change** your bullying ways, you will be forever doomed to end up like me, walking in an endless **purgatory!** *(Lets the words hang in the air, still staring forward and up.)*

BILLY: *(Scrunches face incredulously.)* Yeeeahhhh, interesting. Listen, I've been meaning to ask you... *(Gesturing a small size with his hands.)* ...Didn't you used to be a tiny little bunny? How did you get so big?

FLUFFY: *(Complete tone change, turns toward BILLY and speaks very conversationally.)* Oh, they let you eat whatever you want whenever you want, it is one of the delightful little perks of being dead! *(Realizes he is being distracted from his mission, catches himself.)* No side tracking me Billy! Now where was I? Oh yes. *(Turns back to staring out and up and becomes very dramatic again, getting louder as the line progresses.)* Your terrible actions are ruining the lives of many innocent people, and they will soon ruin **yours!** Mark my words Billy, mend your ways, turn over a new leaf or you are doomed, **doomed, DOOMED!** *(Not as loud, but even more serious.)* **My** awful behavior in **life** has locked me into the grim state you see before you now! **Don't** suffer the same fate as I!

BILLY: *(Big grin spreading over his face as he remembers something from the distant past.)* Yeah, you were pretty **nasty** weren't you? Remember how you would lure people to your cage looking all cute and then when they tried to pick you up you would **jump** on their heads and **bite** their ears until than ran away screaming?

FLUFFY: *(Completely distracted this time, grins and turns to sit primly next to Billy as if sharing a good bit of gossip.)* Oh that was a good bit of fun was it not? I was all like... *(Pulls hands up, sticks teeth out, and makes a “thhh-thhh-thhh” sound in cliché bunny manner.)* ...and they would all be like...*(Folds hands against cheek and tilts head.)* ...Awww, come here you darling thing! And then I would be all like... *(Shows vicious, angry face with hands out like claws, makes growling noises and bites wildly at the air. Finishes and then sits back and sighs contentedly with a big grin. Small pause, face falls, realizing he has been distracted from his mission once again. He clenches up in frustration.)* Ohhhghh! You did it **again!** *(Stands up and walks around behind the couch and once more gets big and dramatic.)* This is your **last** chance Billy. Tonight, you will be visited by **three** ghosts! Heed what they show you and mark their words, you will **not** be warned again! Expect the first spirit when the clock strikes one! *(Slowly descends behind couch.)*

BILLY: *(Big stretch with both arms and a giant yawn, speaking very disinterested and dismissive.)* Sure thing Fluff. Three ghosts, I'll get right on that.

BILLY curls up on the loveseat and goes to sleep.

Fade to black. Curtain remains open.

SCENE 5

SETTING: *Same as SCENE 4.*

SOUND EFFECT: *Long loud bell is heard striking one o'clock.*

Fairy music plays. (Suggested song: “Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy” by Pyotr Tchaikovsky, Simon Holland recording.)

AT RISE: *Spotlight on GHOST OF BULLYING PAST as she enters stage right. She is moving toward the couch on her “ballet” toes, arms above her head, wand in hand. She primly, sweetly leans over sleeping BILLY'S head.*

PAST: *(High pitched, sing-song, New York accent if possible, very soft.)* Wakey-wakey.

BILLY shifts but does not wake up.

PAST: *(Stands up, resets, sighs, hands on hips, leans back in, whispers.)* I said... *(VERY loud gravelly voice, crazy look in eyes.)* Wakey-wakey!

BILLY shoots up, now awake, rubs his eyes. Looks at GHOST OF BULLYING PAST with a shocked frown on his face.

BILLY: Who are **you**?

PAST: *(Back to sweet and innocent, standing up and twirling around once.)* I am the Ghost of Bullying Past, here to show you where all your misbegotten ways began!

BILLY: *(Incredulous.)* I **must** be dreaming.

PAST: *(Ballet tip-toes behind the couch to BILLY's stage left side, speaks in her sweet innocent voice.)* If you were dreaming, would I be able to do...

BILLY turns head to the left and up to follow her movements.

PAST: *(She leans in, big wind up with hand and with her crazy mean gravel voice flicks BILLY in the middle of the forehead.)* ...**This?**

BILLY: *(Recoils in pain and horror.)* **Owwwww!**

PAST: *(Standing up, dancing around to the left side of the couch, back to sweetness and innocence, sing-song.)* Follow me, and we will take a magical journey into your past to witness all the **wicked** little nastiness you got up to as a teeny, tiny **whipper-snapper!**

BILLY: *(Sour face.)* Are you joking? I'm not going anywhere with **you!**

PAST: *(Shocked concern.)* Ohh, you're not going? *(Hand to mouth gasp.)* Did I hurt your itty-bitty head?

BILLY folds his arms defiantly, closes his eyes, and turns his head away from her with a harrumph.

PAST: You poor thing. Maybe if I asked extra, extra nice, like... (*She pinches BILLY'S left ear, and pulls him up off the couch toward the exit stage left.*) ...This!

BILLY: (*Wincing, following in a low crouch.*) Ow, ow, ow, ow, ow, **ow!**

PAST: (*As they are exiting, back to sing-song.*) Come on Billy-boy!
This will be so much fun!

Both exit stage left. Curtain closes. Suggested transition music: "Piranhas are a Very Tricky Species" by Mark Mothersbaugh.

SCENE 6

AT START: *Curtain closed. Enter NARRATOR stage left. Spotlight on NARRATOR.*

NARRATOR: Time is a **tricky** animal, and the **past** is trickier than most. Your memory **rarely** matches the reality. We are **all** the heroes of our own stories you see? Even someone like Billy would find it difficult to remember clearly, or pin-point when and how he began his career in making others miserable. Will witnessing these events as a spectator make a difference in his temperament? Only **time** will tell.

Exit NARRATOR stage left. Curtain opens.

SCENE 7

SETTING: *Stage right forward a small sandbox filled with sand toys and implements for building. Center stage forward is a baby cradle. Stage left forward is a folding table with three chairs and a stack of Girl Scout cookies on the table.*

AT RISE: *YOUNG BELLE is sitting in the back right corner of the sandbox playing contentedly in her sun dress and pig tails. BABY FRED (a doll) is in the cradle (BABY FRED VOICE is in the wings stage left). Younger versions of ADDISON, AVERY, and AIDAN are sitting*

in the chairs behind the table in Junior Girls Club uniforms. They are "stage talking" to each other and interacting with the cookies.

Enter BILLY and GHOST OF BULLYING PAST stage left. She is flittering and floating, dancing around him, a ball of energy. He is treading cautiously, amazed at what he is seeing. They cross behind the set scenes to half-way between the sandbox and the cradle. They move up amongst them. BILLY recognizes BELLE.

BILLY: *(Amazed.)* Hey, it's Belle! She looks so **young!** *(Billy moves over to her, crouches down, and waves a hand in front of her face.)*
Can they see us?

GHOST OF BULLYING PAST dances around the other characters without them noticing – she occasionally "blesses" them upon their heads with a flick of her wand.

PAST: *(Sing-song.)* No, no you silly boy! This isn't live. It's....
(Pauses to consider, big smile at her own cleverness.) ...Like a **re-run!**

BILLY: *(Stays crouched, scrunches up face.)* What's a re-run?

PAST: *(Disappointed body language, faraway look while speaking. She sighs.)* Kids these days. What you don't know could fill a VCR warehouse!

GHOST OF BULLYING PAST crosses to BILLY.

BILLY: *(Totally perplexed.)* VCR?

GHOST OF BULLYING PAST wallops BILLY on the head with her wand, he winces and grabs his head. PAST grabs his arm, pulls him to his feet and drags him stage right.

PAST: Come along laser disc/cassingle/discman/eight-track. The show is about to begin!

Exit GHOST OF BULLYING PAST and BILLY stage right.

Enter YOUNG BILLY stage left. His head is down, he kicks at imaginary stones, hands in pockets, sad and mad at the world. He crosses in front of characters until he reaches just left of the sandbox.

YOUNG BELLE: *(Looks up from playing, notices YOUNG BILLY, considers him, speaks matter-of-factly, as only a five-year-old can.)*
You look sad... and lonely. **Are** you sad and lonely?

YOUNG BILLY: *(Still looking at his feet with his hands in his pockets.)*
My bunny just died.

YOUNG BELLE: That **is** sad...

YOUNG BILLY: Stupid clowns had somewhere to be I guess.

YOUNG BELLE: ...And weird. *(Considers for a second, then gets an idea.)* You wanna' play in the sandbox with me?

YOUNG BILLY: *(Looking up for the first time.)* I guess so.

YOUNG BILLY sits down in the sandbox opposite of YOUNG BELLE. He curls up his knees to his chin and wraps his arms around his legs, his head is bent.

YOUNG BELLE: What's your name?

YOUNG BILLY: *(Not changing his curled up position.)* Billy.

YOUNG BELLE: *(Very care free and matter of fact, said fairly quickly with no pausing.)* I'm Belle and I'm building a sand castle where all the people of the nearby village will be having a giant dance with fancy dresses and rented tuxedos and a big punch bowl and 99 balloons and little hors-d'oeuvres that look funny but taste really good and the DJ will play music by semi-famous British super-groups from the 70s that you can slow dance to but you can kinda dance faster if you want.

YOUNG BILLY: *(Staying in his "closed off" position.)* That sounds really dumb!

YOUNG BELLE: *(Hurt, but still trying.)* Oh... well that's ok, I hadn't really put much thought into it anyway. We can build something else. *(Brightens.)* How about we build **castles** and **moats**, and have imaginary **fire-breathing** dragons called Todd and Gladys swoop down and **destroy** everything?!

YOUNG BILLY: *(Tightening up even further.)* That's your worst idea yet!

YOUNG BELLE: *(Trying one more time, with a look of pained concern on her face.)* Well let's play something you want then. Anything at all.

YOUNG BILLY: *(Finally coming out of his physical shell with a nasty look on his face and venom in his voice.)* Let's play you're a stupid girl with dumb **pigtails** who should go away and leave me **alone!**

YOUNG BILLY picks up a handful of sand and throws it at YOUNG BELLE. She sighs big, stands up, and dusts herself off.

YOUNG BELLE: *(A little bit of hurt and a little bit of bite in her voice.)* You're a mean bully Billy. I hope you can be nicer next time we play. I just want to be your friend!

YOUNG BELLE exits stage right her head held high. YOUNG BILLY gives a physical and verbal "Harrumph" and gets up and makes his way over to the cradle where BABY FRED is sleeping. He peers into the cradle and sneers.

YOUNG BILLY: *(With a sour look on his face and bitterness in his voice.)* Little Fred, baby brother, **bane** of my existence! *(Turns outward to address the ether, speaking in a mocking sing-song tone.)* Everyone thinks you are just **soooo** cute, **sooooo** perfect. The **happiest** little guy! *(Turns back to the cradle to address BABY FRED.)* Well what makes you so special, huh? Why does everyone adore **you?**

BABY FRED: *(From offstage.)* Gooo gaaa, aggle plabble snurp?

YOUNG BILLY: *(Gives a "harrumph" and nods head.)* I **knew** you would say something like that! So predictable... what makes you so happy? Is it your favorite bear? *(Reaches into cradle and snatches bear away, holds it up to examine.)* Mr. Karl Harrison isn't it?

BABY FRED: *(From offstage. Sounds are sad and on the verge of tears.)* Wumby flappy huuhu!

YOUNG BILLY: A likely story, but this little piece of happiness now belongs to **me!** *(About to leave, when he realizes one more mischievous deed is in order.)* Oh, and before I forget. *(Pulls giant black Sharpie out of his pocket, bends down and draws a moustache on BABY FRED.)* It is a proven fact that **all** baby brothers look better with moustaches!

YOUNG BILLY storms off in the direction of our three scouts tucking the bear in the back of his waist band and Sharpie back in his pocket. YOUNG BILLY has passed the cookie table and is about to exit stage left when he is addressed by AVERY. He stops and turns to listen to their pitch.

AVERY: *(Very cheerful and inviting.)* Good day kind sir, could we interest you in supporting our scout troop?

ADDISON: *(With pride.)* Every box of these cookies we sell helps fund our organization so we can continue to do good, and serve the community!

YOUNG BILLY moves to the table, grabs a box and moves to the right side of the group.

AIDAN: We have several delicious varieties to choose from as you can see!

YOUNG BILLY rips open the box and begins to eat a cookie. The first one does not agree with his palate so he grimaces, very disgusted, and tosses the box behind him. He grabs a second box and rips it open to eat as well.

AVERY: *(Nervous now, confused as to what YOUNG BILLY is doing.)*
Each box costs only \$3.50.

YOUNG BILLY: *(Sly grin.)* So you need to **sell** all these cookies for your little **vest** club, huh?

AVERY, ADDISON and AIDAN: Yup.

YOUNG BILLY: *(First time in his life showing a little bit of snark.)* It would be my honor to help you out. I will just take all these off your hands... *(Moves to the table and scoops up all the remaining boxes.)* ... And take them back to my house where I will conduct several hours of research and I will get back to you with my findings.

YOUNG BILLY, arms full, struts across the stage and exits stage right.

AVERY, ADDISON, and AIDAN stare after him. AIDAN smiles and waves innocently. AVERY and ADDISON are frowning.

AIDAN: *(Sweetly with blind enthusiasm.)* Bye! Hurry back!

ADDISON: *(Dejected.)* He just stole all our cookies didn't he?

AVERY: *(Sighs.)* Yes he did. I have a feeling this might be the beginning of a long and **terrible** relationship. *(Stands up.)* Come on girls.

AVERY exits stage left, AIDAN and ADDISON stand and follow her.

GHOST OF BULLYING PAST and BILLY enter stage right. They cross to center stage front. GHOST OF BULLYING PAST is standing next to the cradle and BILLY is just to her right.

PAST: *(Looking at BILLY expectantly.)* Well? You see? Even at such a tender young age you were taking out your own anger and hurt and placing it on others.

BILLY: *(A half conciliatory "come on" vibe.)* OK, OK. Maybe I was a little rough from time to time, but you should see them now! They can take it. They **know** I'm just joking around. *(Turns front, folds arms, self-satisfied smirk on face, nods head as he speaks, lots of space between each word.)* It doesn't bother them a bit!

PAST: You're as **foolish** as your words are **stupid**!

GHOST OF BULLYING PAST turns away from BILLY abruptly and bends down to pay BABY FRED some attention. BILLY turns on PAST ready to defend himself and bends down into the path of her wings.

BILLY: *(Angry.)* Now wait just a...

BILLY is whapped in the face by PAST'S wings as she turns and bends to interact with BABY FRED.

PAST: Goochie goochie goo!

BILLY: *(Grabs face, pulls hands down to make eyes wide, and looks stunned.) Ahhhhhh!*

PAST stands back up and turns toward the stunned BILLY brandishing her wand.

PAST: *(Very disappointed in him, bit of menace in her voice.)* You have **much** more to see, and **much** more to learn. You will be visited again this night when the clock strikes two!

BILLY is raising his hand and opening his mouth to protest when PAST bonks him on the head with her wand.

PAST: Now **sleep!**

BILLY spins to the right about 90 degrees and then crumples in a heap to the floor asleep in roughly the same position he fell asleep on the loveseat.

Curtains closes. Suggested transition music: "Bad Moon Rising" by Credence Clearwater Revival. Curtain opens.

SCENE 8

SETTING: *Loveseat center stage forward. Small coffee table in front of loveseat. Optional house interior backdrop.*

AT RISE: *BILLY is asleep on the couch in the same position he fell asleep in at the end of SCENE 4.*

SOUND EFFECT: *Clock strikes two o'clock. GHOST OF BULLYING PRESENT enters stage right with a spotlight on him (low light everywhere else). He creeps across the stage trying to be quiet in his "dude crush" manner. Sneaking up on BILLY, he trips and falls behind the couch out of sight. SOUND EFFECT: Crashing cans.*

PRESENT: Ommmpffff...

BILLY shoots up on the couch, eyes wide, light come up further. Pats himself all over checking to see if this is "real."

BILLY: *(Amazed relief. Sighs)* It was all just a dream!

GHOST OF BULLYING PRESENT leaps up from behind the couch with a big, loud California-dude voice. Lights come up further.

PRESENT: Nope! Sorry dude, no such luck!

BILLY cringes away from the voice, remembering the physical abuse he took with the last ghost.

BILLY: Oh no! You're him aren't you? The second ghost?

GHOST OF BULLYING PRESENT hurdles the back of the couch to sit next to BILLY. He immediately settles into a relaxed position.

PRESENT: Ghost of Bullying Present at your service dude! Got some pretty gnarly stuff to show you Billy boy!

BILLY: *(Scrunching up face as the thought is not appealing.)* Nahhh, that's OK. You really don't have to.

GHOST OF BULLYING PRESENT'S face lights up as if BILLY has told a hilarious joke. He throws a huge arm around BILLY and gives him a side hug that is casual for PRESENT but overpowers BILLY and crushes him awkwardly into PRESENT'S side (these interactions are as if a body builder was using their strength to interact with another body builder but it was actually a small child).

PRESENT: Right on man! I heard you were **totally** funny!

GHOST OF BULLYING PRESENT stands up, he has not released BILLY yet, and thus BILLY—almost stuck to PRESENT’S side—rises as well. In fact, it should appear that PRESENT has completely forgotten that he is crushing BILLY.

PRESENT: *(Sudden tone shift to “dude” serious. Gesturing out into the ether with his arm.)* However, we must set such hilarity aside for time is short dude, and you must bear witness! Let us journey from this abode and examine what all your Middle School bullying has **wrought** shall we?

BILLY: *(Almost whimpering.)* Ohhh please, let’s not!

PRESENT: *(Back to jovial, he releases BILLY and throws his hands in the air.)* Haw haw, there you go with your hilarious jokes again!
Dude!

GHOST OF BULLYING PRESENT slaps BILLY on the back in good nature but the blow is so powerful it sends BILLY stumbling into, and almost over, the coffee table. PRESENT looks down and sees BILLY on the table.

PRESENT: What are you doing down there man?

BILLY groans. GHOST OF BULLYING PRESENT lifts BILLY up by the back of his shirt with great strength. BILLY all but flies up. PRESENT puts BILLY in a “happy” headlock and starts leaving stage right dragging BILLY with him.

PRESENT: Let’s go funny dude!

PRESENT and BILLY exit stage right. Curtain closes. Suggested transition music: “Time in a Bottle” by Jim Croce.

SCENE 9

AT START: *Curtain closed. Enter NARRATOR stage left. Spotlight on NARRATOR.*

NARRATOR: Finding empathy for others can be a struggle for teenagers on the very best of days. But for someone like Billy... well you have a better chance of explaining Snapchat (*Note: Feel free to update Snapchat to current, popular platform.*) to your grandma than cracking that nut! (*Moves a few steps to the right, speaking conversationally.*) Lucky for us, Billy is now in the hands of our second ghost, a being of great strength, a love of tasty waves, tastier breakfast burritos, and nearly limitless sympathy and compassion for those who have been wronged by others. He **is** jovial and gentle by nature but not to be crossed when it comes to the defense of the oppressed. Let's hope Billy sees the error of his ways **sooner** rather than later.

Exit NARRATOR stage left. Curtain opens.

SCENE 10

SETTING: *Three optional backdrops. Each one includes a window. There are three sitting areas on stage: a beanbag chair/loveseat stage right, a chair stage center, and another chair stage left. The chairs can be as simple as kitchen chairs.*

AT RISE: *BELLE is curled up on the beanbag chair/loveseat in her dress. She appears to have been recently weeping. She has a diary and pen in hand. FRED is in the center-stage chair. His head is down and in his hands. AVERY is sitting in the stage-left chair, ADDISON and AIDAN flank her. All three look sullen and depressed (they are back in their student council outfits). Lights are low.*

Enter BILLY and GHOST OF BULLYING PRESENT stage right. PRESENT leads. They walk in and amongst our tableau as they talk, crossing the entire stage, right to left. Spotlight follows them the whole way until they get to AVERY, ADDISON, and AIDAN. This is where they finish their conversation and begin their exit. Spotlight stays on the three student council members.

BILLY: Where are we?

PRESENT: *(High spirits, jovial.)* Awwwhhhh, we are in the **now** dude! We're checking in on all the dudes and dud-ets you cruised with today, each in their own harshed mellow, dealing with...**you!**

BILLY: *(Cocky.)* I know how this works. Can't see me or hear me. It's a... *(Thinks about it.)* ...Rerun!

PRESENT: *(Still big and jolly.)* Awww no way dude, open your ears man. This is **now!** This is totally happening!

BILLY: *(A bit confused, not really showing sympathy but closer.)* Everyone looks so... sad.

PRESENT: Yhaaaahhh! No kidding Kreskin! Actions have consequences dude, whether you stick around to see them or not. *(Makes the final move toward stage left.)* This way Sherlock, I totally snagged us front row seats!

Exit GHOST OF BULLYING PRESENT and BILLY stage left. Spotlight on AVERY, ADDISON, and AIDAN.

ADDISON: *(Gloomy.)* All those signatures, just... **gone.**

AIDAN: *(Just as gloomy.)* All those food donations... **vanished.**

AVERY: *(Broken.)* It's not even the **time** or **effort** we put into these projects, it's all those people who would have **benefited.** Once again **he** took it all away from us... from **them.**

ADDISON: Where do we even **go** from here?

AIDAN: We've had to start over so many times because of **him.** *(Deep sorrow, near tears.)* I don't know if I can do it again!

AVERY: *(Resigning herself to her decision.)* You won't have to. *(Pauses for effect.)* We're done. He wins. Cookies, signatures, donations, we are finished. No matter how much potential good it might bring... what's the point if it's all going to get crushed and stomped out, **every single time**, by some unfeeling, remorseless bully?! *(AVERY stands up.)* Come on, let's go... *(AVERY takes a few steps stage right, pauses, considers, slumps.)* ...Whatever.

AVERY, ADDISON, and AIDAN exit stage right moving behind the other characters. Spotlight follows them until it hits FRED. The spotlight stays on him.

FRED: *(Sullen and depressed, addressing the ether.)* Billy's right! I'm a loser. I couldn't make the team last year on my own, and there is no way I can make it this year... with or without his help. *(Stands up, hurt passion begins building in his voice.)* I **quit**. No point in trying anymore. I'm done with basketball! All those years watching it, playing it, living and breathing it... forget 'em! I am never going to amount to anything anyway. *(FRED removes his jersey, crumples it into a ball and tosses it onto the chair behind him. Absolutely crushed, speaking distantly.)* Thanks big brother. Without your years of... **Advice**, who knows how much more time I would have **wasted** on my stupid dreams...

FRED exits stage right behind BELLE. Spotlight follows him until it reaches BELLE. Spot stays with her. BELLE begins writing in her diary.

BELLE: *(Sad.)* Dear Diary, All I wanted was a dance. A single dance with him. All the years of hurt and pain, all the thrown sand and hurled insults, would have melted away... with one, simple, dance. *(She leans into it a little, writing with a bit more determination.)* He is a bully, and everyone hates and fears him for that... and yet, and yet there is that sad, lonely little boy that still lives inside him. The one I met so many years ago now. *(Pause.)* He has so much suffering inside him that he **lashes** out and places it on others. It is **not** an excuse... but it **is** a reason. *(Pause.)* Nobody can see that, nobody but **me!** And yet every time I try to be his friend, every time

I extend him my hand, offer him my heart... he hurts me, deeply, deliberately... and I keep coming back for more... *(Stops writing, sets pen and diary aside, stands up and addresses the ether.)*
Congratulations Billy. I don't know if I feel anything anymore.

Exit BELLE stage right. Spotlight follows her and then turns off as she exits. It then swivels to stage left and turns back on to catch the entrance of GHOST OF BULLYING PRESENT and BILLY. Spotlight follows them as they cross the stage to behind the middle chair. They begin speaking as they walk.

PRESENT: *(Still bright and lively, but slightly more serious.)*
Whoohhhh dude! That was **so** heavy! **All** that is on you man!
These people have done **nothing** to you. In fact, they seem to be totally chill peeps trying to make the world a better place, follow their dreams, or send a bit of love your way.

BILLY and PRESENT stop at the middle chair. BILLY is leaning into it from behind with his hands on the back of the chair, head down.

PRESENT: And how do you repay them for that dude?

BILLY: *(Anguish on his face.)* OK, **OK, OK!!!** *(Picks up the jersey and clutches it in his hands, he looks up and turns to PRESENT. Pleading with the ghost, trying to play to his jovial nature.)* I know this looks bad, I know this is my fault... but it will all be OK right? They're tough, they will be fine "ha-ha"... right?

PRESENT: *(Solemn and serious, pointing at BILLY.)* No, no it will not.
Not unless you change, really change. They are all on dark paths now, set there by **you**.

BILLY: *(Bit of panic.)* I'll change... I'll...

PRESENT: *(Cutting BILLY off.)* Our time here grows short. Soon you will see where all this pain you set in motion leads. Your third ghost awaits.

BILLY: *(More panic.)* Come on, this is **not** that big a deal! We **don't** need to keep doing this! I can stop, that will make everything alright, I can...

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