

SCRIPT

BETTER THAN A BULLY
THE MUSICAL

Book Music and Lyrics by Ben Boecker

Based on the Books: "Better Than a Bully: Carrot Top's
Surprise" and "Better Than a Bully: Justin's
Friendships and Secrets" by Tina Levine

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SYNOPSIS: "Better Than a Bully: The Musical" tells the story of Annie, who is made fun of at school for her red hair. Annie longs to sing in her school's chorus concert, and decides to audition with some friends, but as they practice, they encounter a bully. The kids' parents guide them to resources: tae-known-doh, and a school guidance counselor. Finally the kids take the bully on, and their music wins him over. He apologizes, and praises their music, joining them on guitar. Annie prepares for the final performance, and in the finale, the kids surprise her by wearing big bright red wigs in the concert.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: Tina Levine's "Better Than a Bully" book series gives kids concrete strategies for how to deal with bullying at their schools and in their daily lives, and is recommended reading as a companion to performing this piece. The musical adaptation here enclosed makes changes to the original material, but the intent remains the same: give kids concrete strategies for how to deal with bullying, through an entertaining lens, and hopefully inspire them to believe that we all, truly can be better.

Run-Time: 60 minutes. Audience: 7 & up. Actors: 10-25

Originally Commissioned by Usdan Summer Camp for the Arts

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CAST OF CHARACTERS (10 ACTORS, 25 ROLES)

*NOTE: This is an ensemble show and can be performed within a range of 10 to 25 actors. Doubling is encouraged. See suggestions below.

PRINCIPAL ROLES (IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)

ANNIE (10-11, *Alto Belt*)- A talented singer. Dreams of sharing her voice with her community. Bullied incessantly for her red hair.
TARA (10-11, *Sop/ Mix-Belt*)- Chorus captain. Leader and up-stander.
JUSTIN/J.J. (11-12, *Tenor*)- A bespectacled heart-throb. Doesn't know how cool he is. Dislikes his glasses. Crush on Brittany.
ERIC (13-14, *Baritone*)- The big bad. Poor performer academically. Takes out his lack of success on others. Loves to play guitar.

SUPPORTING AND FEATURED ROLES (IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)

ACTOR 1 (*All ages*)- The ringleader of the whole production.
ACTOR 2 (*All ages*)- The taskmaster. Asks the right questions.
ACTOR 3 (*All ages*)- Intelligent art snob with some doubts.
ACTOR 4 (*All ages*)- Hype-person. Pitches the source material.
LUCKY (6 yr old dog)- Golden Retriever who doubles as Annie's imaginary therapist in the opening scene. Played by actor or puppet.
ACE (12-13)- Playground bully with deep insecurity. He is also bullied at home by his older brother. Talented drummer.
NURSE (30s-40s)- Mature, thoughtful, and good with kids.
LEXI (12-13)- Imaginative, with a dark past. Plays the Bass.
BRITTANY (11-12)- Independent-minded groupie. Likes J.J. back.
TEACHER (MS. TRENT)- (30s- 40s)- Patient and effective choral director who is empathetic yet oblivious to Annie's problems.
PONYTAIL (*All ages*)- A walking talking ponytail. Good dancer.
BRITTNEY'S DAD (30s- 40s, *Bari*)- A calm, grounded, yet concerned dad.
BRITTNEY'S MOM (30s- 40s, *High Mix*)- An anxiously concerned mother.
SHABOM (20s- 30s, *Tenor*)- Intensely non-aggressive Taekwondo teacher.
EXPERIENCED STUDENT (11-12)- Martial arts student with some experience who demonstrates in class. Physical comedy role.
MASTER STUDENT (12-13)- Martial arts student and aspiring blackbelt who demonstrates in class. Physical comedy role.
GUIDANCE COUNSELOR (MS. HOUSE) (*Late 20s/ early 30s, rap*)- Effective disciplinarian with a soft side. Also cool and likes hip hop.
FAN 1, FAN 2, AND FAN 3 (10-11) Imaginary fans who cheer on Annie's band during their rehearsal to hype them up.
ANNIE'S MOM (50s, *alto*)- Wise, caring, and deeply loves her daughter.
ENSEMBLE: ADDITIONAL FANS, BUNCH OF KIDS, CHORUS SINGERS, OPENING/ FINALE STORYTELLERS, AND TAEKWONDO STUDENTS

SUGGESTED DOUBLING (CAST OF 10)

TRACK 1: ANNIE TRACK 2: ERIC TRACK 3: ACE
TRACK 4: BRITTANY TRACK 5: TARA/ ACTOR 1
TRACK 6: JUSTIN/ ACTOR 4/ EXPERIENCED STUDENT
TRACK 7: LEXI/ MASTER STUDENT
TRACK 8: TEACHER/NURSE/BRITTANY'S MOM/ FAN 1
TRACK 9: GUIDANCE/SHABOM/BRITTANY'S DAD/LUCKY/ACTOR 2/ FAN 2
TRACK 10: ANNIE'S MOM/PONYTAIL/ACTOR 3/FAN 3

BETTER THAN A BULLY
THE MUSICAL

SCENE ONE: A MUSICAL ADAPTATION

(ONE LONE ACTOR peers out at the audience, and gasps.)

ACTOR 1

What are you doing here? Did somebody tell you there's gonna be a show? They did?!! Oh gosh!

(Yelling out to their peers.)

Hey guys! There's an audience! Are we ready to do a show?!

ACTOR 2

(Half in and out of costume.)

Of course I am!

ACTOR 3

(Holding a steamer.)

Just finished steaming!

ACTOR 4

(Entering in full costume, they are always ready.)

I have no house and sleep backstage!

(The rest of the ensemble rushes in.)

ALL

Did somebody say places?!

ACTOR 2

Costumes? Check! Lights and Sound? Check! Music? Check!
Only one problem!

(Crashing sounds from the orchestra as the music falls apart.)

We don't have a story!

ACTOR 1

I have an idea!

(ACTOR 1 starts to do a funky dance..)

NO. 1- A MUSICAL ADAPTATION

<< TRACK 1 >>

ACTOR 1

SO YOU WANNA PUT A SHOW ON
BUT YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO
'CAUSE YOU HAVEN'T GOT A STORY
PRESSURE'S BUILDING UP ON YOU

ALL ACTORS

THE AUDIENCE IS READY
TO KNOW WHAT WE'VE GOT IN STORE

ACTOR 2

AN ORIGINAL'S TOO MESSY

ACTOR 3

A REVUE WOULD LEAVE THEM WANTING MORE!

(Music out..)

Sorry, revues...

ACTOR 1

LET'S MAKE A MUSICAL ADAPTATION!
TAKE A STORY THAT WE KNOW
ADD IN SOME MUSIC AND SOME NARRATION,
AND JUST LIKE THAT, IT'S A SHOW!

(They make a magical gesture!)

POOF!

ACTOR 3

What will we base it on?

ACTOR 4

(Picking up the BETTER THAN A BULLY book.)

How about the middle school reader series, "Better Than a Bully"
By Tina Levine—

(Aside to the audience, holding up the book.)

The first book of which, "Carrot Top's Surprise", is available
online for the low cost of \$7.99!

ACTOR 3

What's it about?

ACTOR 4

(Underscore.)

It's about a middle-schooler named Annie who wants to sing in
her school's chorus concert but she's too scared because she
gets bullied all the time. So, she undergoes the challenging
process of self-transformation, so she can feel confident and
brave enough to be in the show!

ACTOR 1

That sounds like an awesome story! I've been shoved in a locker
13 times this year!

ACTOR 2

Will our musical differ from the book in any way?

ACTOR 3

(Nodding.)

WHEN YOU TURN A BOOK TO A MUSICAL
YOU HAVE TO MAKE CHANGES TO IT
CHOOSING WHICH SCENES TO KEEP
WHICH SCENES TO ADD SONGS TO
AND WHICH TO OMIT

ACTOR 2

How will we decide?

ACTOR 1

WE'LL BASE IT ALL ON A CENTRAL PREMISE
LIKE A MORAL OR A RULE

ACTOR 4

(To the audience.)

WE CAN'T TELL YOU WHAT IT IS YET
BUT WE PROMISE YOU... IT'S COOL!

ACTOR 2

JUST LIKE OUR MUSICAL ADAPTATION!
IT'S GONNA BE COOL AND SUPER-LIT

ACTOR 3

WE HOPE YOU LIKE IT'S OUR CREATION!
IF WE'RE LUCKY IT WILL BE A HIT!

ACTOR 1

(Making a magical gesture.)

POOF!

ALL

BUT WE'RE NOT DOING IT FOR THE GLORY
WE'RE DOING IT BECAUSE...

(WE'RE DOING IT BECAUSE...)

WE WANNA SEE OURSELVES IN SOMEONE ELSE'S STORY!
LET'S ADAPT!

(Pose.)

ACTOR 1

Okay, everyone to places! We start with our main character,
Annie, arriving home after a long day at school... ACTION!

BETTER THAN A BULLY
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SCENE TWO: ANNIE'S BIG DREAM

(A small flat representing ANNIE's bedroom rolls on. She walks into it and sloughs off her backpack, while her dog LUCKY, leaps off her bed and rushes up to her, panting and licking.)

ANNIE

Oh, hey there Lucky!

LUCKY

Hi Woof!

ANNIE

Haha, it's good to see you!

LUCKY

How woof your day?

ANNIE

I got bullied at recess again. They called me 'Carrot Top', 'cause of my hair... I pretended not to hear them, but it still hurt.

LUCKY

Woof.

ANNIE

Thank you.

(She takes out her ukulele, and starts to play.)

LUCKY

Ooo. Are we gonna woof to some woof?

ANNIE

Maybe. I've been working on a song. Can I play it for you?

LUCKY

(Nods head up and down vigorously.)

Yeah! We're gonna woof to some woof!!!

ANNIE

Thanks Lucky. You're such a good listener.

NO. 2- HELP ME OUT

<< TRACK 2 >>

ANNIE

The song I'm going to sing you is one I wrote...

THERE'S A SPECIAL SPARK,
IN THE DARK, DEEP INSIDE OF ME
CALLING OUT
TO THE WORLD WHO I AM

IT SAYS "HELP ME OUT
GIVE ME STRENGTH TO BE BRAVE ENOUGH
LET ME SPEAK TO THE WORLD
THROUGH MY SONG"

THERE'S A CONCERT AT SCHOOL IN ABOUT THREE WEEKS
I'M LONGING TO SING AND I KNOW
IF THEY HEARD MY VOICE, ALL THOSE KIDS WOULD CARE
BUT I'M TOO SCARED TO LET IT SHOW...

SO HELP ME OUT
GIVE ME STRENGTH TO BE BRAVE ENOUGH
LET ME SPEAK TO THE WORLD THROUGH
MY SONG...

BUM-BUM BUM BUM BUM, BUM-BUM BUM
BUM-BUM BUM BUM BUM

LUCKY

ARF ARF ARF, ARF-ARF ARF
ARF-ARF ARF...

ANNIE

*(Slower, she drops the ukulele and goes into a
spotlight as her thoughts drift a bit...)*

Do you think I should sing in the concert, Lucky?

LUCKY

Yeah, I think you should woof in the woof!

ANNIE

Really?!

LUCKY

You're such a good woofer.

ANNIE

Okay! I guess I could *try*... I'll talk to some kids about
joining choir tomorrow! Thanks Lucky, you give great advice!

LUCKY

I'm a service animal!

ANNIE

(Tempo kicks in as she picks up the Ukulele.)

HELP ME OUT

GIVE ME STRENGTH TO BE BRAVE ENOUGH

'CAUSE JUST ONE VOICE

CAN HELP THE WHOLE WORLD

ANNIE

JUST ONE VOICE

CAN HELP THE WHOLE WORLD

LUCKY

JUST ONE WOOF

CAN HELP THE WHOLE WOOF!

(Applause.)

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SCENE THREE: TALKING TO TARA

(On the playground, several kids are playing a game together. ANNIE stands alone, listening to her music, and TARA sits off to the side with another child.)

ANNIE

Today during recess, I'm going to talk to Tara, the chorus captain, about joining chorus so I can sing in the concert!

(She begins to make her way across to TARA.)

Hey Tara!

(TARA looks up, but ACE crosses between them)

ACE

Where you going, Carrot-Top? Trying to make a new friend? Hah! Too bad! You're a loser, and you always will be!

(ACE walks backwards laughing, and falls into a hole.)

AH MY TIBIA!

(The kids gather, alarmed.)

JUSTIN

What do we do?!?!?

ACE

I'm stuck. I can't move. HELP!

ANNIE

(Walking up to ACE.)

Ace, listen. It's going to be okay. Jamie, go tell a teacher to call 9-1-1. Robin, have the nurse bring a bandage.

Breathe with me, Ace. It's going to be okay.

(He does so, and becomes noticeably calmer.)

NURSE

(Entering with teacher and stretcher.)

Aaron, we heard you took a tumble!

(Inspecting it.)

Looks like a sprain. Let's get you to office, so we can ice it.

(They lift him into a stretcher.)

Thanks to Annie's emergency responses, Ace will be A-OK!

ACE

Annie, you saved my life. You're my super-hero!

ALL KIDS

(Rushing to cheer as ACE is lifted off.)

YAY!

(A spotlight goes up on TARA sitting SL behind ANNIE.)

NO. 3- BYSTANDER

<< TRACK 3 >>

TARA

(Leaning in, amazed by how ANNIE saved the day.)

SUDDENLY SHE'S JUST THERE
AND OUR LIVES ARE INTERWOVEN...
AND SUDDENLY HER RED HAIR
SEEMS A WEE BIT MORE CORDOVAN—
I MEAN CORDOVEN!

THAT'S AN AWKWARD RHYME...

ALL MY LIFE I'VE BEEN WAITING
FOR A PERSON LIKE HER TO WALK IN
AND SUDDENLY I REALIZE
I'VE SECRETLY ALWAYS BEEN

A BYSTANDER
STANDING BY
WATCHING LIFE
GO BY ME,

AS I STAND THERE...

A BYSTANDER
WOND'RING WHY
NOTHING EVER CHANGES
AND NOTHING EVER CHAYAYAYANGES
EXCEPT FOR THAT MELISMA...

SHE'S OPENED UP A SONG INSIDE ME
THAT I WANNA SING TO
HOW DO YOU SING TO A SONG INSIDE YOU?
YOU JUST DO...

(The kids leave, but TARA taps ANNIE she hangs back.)

TARA
Hey Annie. I was real impressed by what you did back there. I know you've been made fun of, and I haven't been helpful.

ANNIE
That's true. You've been a bystander, standing by, watching life go by you, as you stand there.

TARA
I don't want that to be your life anymore. How can I help you?

ANNIE
Well, actually, I was hoping to ask you if I could join chorus!

TARA
You want to join chorus? For sure! You can sit next to me!

ANNIE
Really?! Wow, that's great! Ok, see you tomorrow!

(She exits, visibly lighter, and TARA turns out.)

TARA

Oh my gosh! What did I just do?! I just invited Carrot-Top to be in chorus, and to sit next to me?! What a bold move!

A BYSTANDER OFTEN FEELS THINGS
SOMETIMES GOOD AND SOMETIMES NOT GOOD
BUT A BYSTANDER RARELY DOES THINGS
THAT'S NOT GOOD
INSERT GOOD LYRIC...

A BYSTANDER...
JUST STANDS BY
WATCHING WHILE
KIDS BULLY
DOING NOTHING...

WELL THIS BYSTANDER
IS DONE STANDING BY
IT'S TIME TO MAKE SOME CHANGES
(*Key change.*)
SOME IMPORTANT KEY CHANGES
(*Key change.*)
IT'S TIME TO MAKE IMPORTANT KEY CHANGES!

AND BE AN UPSTANDER INSTEAD!
(*Holding the note over a series of key changes.*)
THAT'S AS HIGH AS I CAN GO!
(*Blackout.*)

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SCENE FOUR: CHOIR REHEARSAL

(The chorus— played by the FULL ENSEMBLE— is set for rehearsal. THE TEACHER stands opposite them, with a conductors' stick. ANNIE sits next to TARA. BRITTNEY and LEXI are across.)

TEACHER

Hello singers! Today we're preparing for our concert, coming up in three weeks. But before we start, we have a new member.

ALL

Hi Annie!

BRITTNEY

(Under her breath.)

Ugh. What is Carrot-Top doing here?

TARA

(Reaching out to hook her pinky into ANNIE's)

Don't worry. They'll warm up once they see how cool you are.

TEACHER

(Beginning to pass out the music.)

Now, why don't we start with our final song— the one we most recently learned. Sing out nice and loud so Annie can get it!

(TEACHER starts to play the piano. ANNIE listens at first, so she can catch on, as the other kids sing.)

NO. 4- I SING MY PART

<< TRACK 4 >>

ALL KIDS

SINGING MUSIC ALL ALONE
CAN GIVE YOU QUITE A SCARE

IT'S HARD TO HIT THE PROPER TONE
WHEN NO-ONE ELSE IS THERE
BUT THERE'S ONE THING THAT YOU CAN DO
IF MUSIC'S SCARY FOR YOU TOO:
FIND OTHER FOLKS TO SING IT WITH YOU!

I SING MY PART/
I SING MY PART
AND IT ALL JUST FALLS AWAY/
AND IT ALL JUST FALLS AWAY
I SING MY PART/
I SING MY PART
AND EVERYTHING'S OKAY!/
AND EVERYTHING'S OKAY!

'CAUSE WHEN I SING MY PART
YOU SING YOUR PART
AND OUR PARTS GO TOGETHER IN
PERFECT HARMONY:
YOU AND YOU AND YOU AND ME!

TEACHER

Lexi, Brittney, take a solo!

BRITTNEY

ONCE YOU LEARN TO SING YOUR PART
YOU'LL BE CONFIDENT AND STRONG
'CAUSE YOU'L KNOW DEEP IN YOUR HEART
YOU'VE FOUND A PLACE WEHRE YOU BELONG

LEXI

YOU'LL BE PROUD OF ALL YOU DO
AND OTHER FOLKS WILL FEEL IT TOO
AND THEY'LL BE GLAD THEY MADE MUSIC WITH YOU!

TEACHER

Now one more time through the chorus, up a half step!

(Up a half step. ANNIE joins in this time.)

ALL KIDS + TEACHER + ANNIE

I SING MY PART

I SING MY PART

AND THE WORLD BECOMES A SONG

THE WORLD BECOMES A SONG

I SING MY PART

I SING MY PART

AND NOTHING CAN GO WRONG!

NOTHING CAN GO WRONG!

'CAUSE WHEN I SING MY PART

YOU SING YOUR PART

AND OUR PARTS GO TOGETHER IN

PERFECT HARMONY

YOU AND YOU AND YOU—

(TEACHER cuts them off. Kids sing as soloists the words "And Me," when TEACHER points to them.)

KIDS TAKING SOLOS

AND ME...

AND ME...

AND ME...

AND ME...

(TEACHER gestures to ANNIE. It's her turn.)

ANNIE

(Big smile. She sounds good.)

And me?

(TEACHER nods.)

Oh, uh okay, and me!

(TEACHER nods.)

Uh...

AND ME!

(Choir members snap, pop-off, yes girl you are good, even BRITTNEY and LEXI are impressed!)

TEACHER

Everyone!

ALL

I SING MY PART!

(Post-applause.)

TEACHER

Wonderful! Now, I want to remind you that you *must* wear a chorus uniform to sing with in our chorus concert in 3 weeks.

(She shows the class the white and blue uniform.)

ANNIE

(To the audience, an aside.)

Is that the uniform?!

TEACHER

If you don't have one, you can purchase one online for \$34.99.

ANNIE

(Gasps, out to the audience, an aside.)

\$34.99?!

TEACHER

We're also looking for additional acts. One year some kids did a whistling quartet. It was very special. We'll have auditions for additional acts next Thursday. Enjoy your day!

TARA

What did you think?!

ANNIE

That was fun! But I don't want to wear the uniform!

TARA

Why don't you want to wear the uniform?

ANNIE

(Improvising.)

It doesn't...go with my hair!

TARA

Oh! What do you want to do then?

ANNIE

Well, she didn't say the additional groups have to wear uniforms. So... you want to start a band?

TARA

(BELTING IT OUT.)

YEAH!

BETTER THAN A BULLY
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SCENE FIVE: J.J.'S SPECTACLES

(TARA crosses stage right.)

TARA

And now, to put together the best band ever for Annie!

(She makes a phone call.)

Hi, Justin? You wanna play piano in a band with Annie and me?

JUSTIN

(Lights up on JUSTIN.)

What?! No, I don't think so.

TARA

You can invite Brittney to be our groupie.

JUSTIN

Let me think about it...

(They hang up, and JUSTIN faces out.)

Oh Brittney! How I love you! And you don't even know. We've had so many good conversations, not just me imagining myself talking to you. And yet, I am still afraid to ask you... will you be my groupie?

(BRITTNEY speaks voice-over in JUSTIN's imagination, as lighting becomes spooky.)

VOICEOVER BRITTNEY

No, I will not Justin! Because you are a FOUR-EYES! AHAAAA!

(Lighting returns to normal.)

JUSTIN

Snap out of it Justin. You need to get a grip. There's no way you will ever have the courage to ask Brittney to be your groupie in real life. Not with these glasses...

NO. 5- SPECTACULAR (JUSTIN'S SONG)**<< TRACK 5 >>**

JUSTIN

If only the world could see me without my glasses. I just know, if they looked behind these lenses, they'd see my beautiful hazel eyes, and their hearts would melt into little itty bitty pieces...

(He takes his glasses off, and is revealed to be "Incredibly Beautiful").

CAN'T YOU PICTURE ME?
BEING GLASSES FREE
HOW MY EYES WOULD GLISTEN AND THEY'D GLEAM
HEY BABY, WHAT'S COOKIN'?

(Winks)

SET FREE FROM THIS FRAME
FOLKS WOULD KNOW MY NAME

WITHOUT MY SPECTACLES
I'D BE SPECTACULAR
OH SO SPECTACULAR
WITHOUT MY SPECTACLES

WATCH ME BOOGIE!

(He boogies).

WITH NO GLASSES LEFT
I WOULD BE SO DEFT
EVERYONE WOULD LOOK AT ME AND SAY
"OH GOODNESS, I'M SHOOKEN!"

THAT WOULD BE SO TIGHT!
WHO NEEDS PERFECT SIGHT?

WITHOUT MY SPECTACLES
I'D BE SPECTACULAR
I'D BE SPECTACULAR
WITHOUT MY SPECTACLES!

(He boogies, and then stubs his toe on a ledge.)
OW!

WITHOUT MY SPECTACLES
I'D FINALLY HAVE THE COURAGE TO TRY
CALLING BRITTNEY
SHOULD I CALL BRITTNEY?
I'M CALLING BRITTNEY

(Mumbling as he leans in SUPER-CLOSE to dial the numbers since he has a -7.8 prescription.)

Now, let's see, uh, that's a 6, and a 3, and a 1... and a 6, and a 4, and a 3..., and a 7, and a 9, and a 0, and a 0...

(Phone rings and Brittney picks up.)

BRITTNEY
Hey Justin! How you doin'?

JUSTIN
Oh, uh. I'm good.

(He burps.)

BRITTNEY
Woah. Nice. What's up?

JUSTIN
I'm starting a band, and I wanted to know if you wanna be our

"groupie" it doesn't have to be that specific title if you don't want it's just like an organizational label...

BRITTNEY

I'D LOVE TO!

JUSTIN

Really?! You would?! Wow! Here I was all worried you would think our band was nerdy and stuff 'cause I wear glasses, but... you don't?

BRITTNEY

No! I actually like your glasses, I think they're cute.
(*His jaw drops.*)

BRITTNEY

Okay well, I'll see you on Sunday.
(*She hangs up and exits.*)

JUSTIN

(*Putting his glasses back on.*)

PUT THE GLASSES ON
WHO WOULD WANT THEM GONE?
I LIKE THE WAY
THEY MAKE MY VISION CLEAR

At last I'm "good-lookin'"

WHEN PEOPLE LOOK AT ME
IT'S VERY PLAIN TO SEE!

THAT WITH MY SPECTACLES
I AM SPECTACULAR
OH SO SPECTACULAR
WITH MY SPECTACLES!
FOUR EYES ARE BETTER THAN TWO!
(*He poses.*)

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SCENE SIX: WHO'S ACE AGAIN?

TARA

(Entering with ANNIE from SL, scene in One).

Okay, Justin and Brittany are in! Now to find a drummer...
This may be tricky. The only drummer in our school is Ace!

ANNIE

Who's that?

TARA

(Out to the audience.)

FLASHBACK!

(ACE enters, behind a wall. He jeers at ANNIE.)

ACE

You're a loser and you always will be! AH MY TIBIA!
(He ducks behind the wall and disappears.)

ANNIE

Oh yeah, Ace!

TARA

Let's go pay him a visit!
(They exit.)

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SCENE SEVEN: ACE'S BULLY PROBLEM

(We transition to ACE'S house. He walks in with his foot in a cast, sits at his drumset, and begins to play. He is not playing long when ACE's big brother, a high school freshman, ERIC, walks in.)

ERIC

Would you quit playing little bro? You're driving me up a wall.

ACE

I wasn't that loud! This is my art!

ERIC

Some art.

ACE

I gotta practice so I can become a better musician! I want to be the best I can be!

NO. 6- YOU SHOULD FEEL BAD

<< TRACK 6 >>

ERIC

There is no 'best you can be' in this case. You're a terrible drummer, and you always will be!

ACE

(Standing up to his brother for the first time.)

You know when you talk to me that way, it makes me feel really bad about myself.

ERIC

Good!

YOU SHOULD FEEL BAD ABOUT YOURSELF

YOU SHOULD FEEL BAD ABOUT YOURSELF
YOU CANNOT FIX YOUR BADNESS, IT WON'T GO AWAY!

ACE
I've actually been improving!

ERIC
YOU SHOULD FEEL BAD ABOUT YOURSELF
YOU'RE NOT IMPROVED-ED IN THE LEAST
YOU ARE THE SAME AMOUNT OF BAD FROM DAY TO DAY

ACE
That's not true, I'm less bad now!

ERIC
KID THE TRUTH IS EV'RYBODY'S BAD AT SOMETHING
EV'RYBODY TREATS EACH OTHER LIKE THEY'RE DIRT
DON'T RESIST IT, JUST EMBRACE IT, THAT'S THE SECRET
TO BEING SUPER-COOL, IMPERPABLE, AND GREAT!
(He punches himself in the chest three times and growls.)

GRRRR!

ACE
How does that not hurt you?

ERIC
I don't even know...

(Big slowdown.)

YOU SHOULD FEEL BAD ABOUT YOURSELF
IF YOU FEEL BAD ABOUT YOURSELF,
WELL IN THEN, IN FACT, YOU ARE RIGHT WHERE YOU OUGHT TO BE!

IF YOU FEEL GOOD ABOUT YOURSELF
YOU SHOULD FEEL BAD ABOUT YOURSELF

UNLESS YOU'RE SUPER-COOL, IMPERPATRABLE,
NEVER SAD AND OFTEN LONELY,
ONLY ONCE FAILED EIGHTH GRADE ENGLISH ME!

ACE

Dude. You failed eighth grade English!?

ERIC

Yeah I did, 'cause I can't get any work done with you playing
your stupid drums all the time. Now keep quiet. I'm studying.
*(He holds up a copy of "Better Than a Bully: Carrot
Top's Surprise" by Tina Levine.)*
And don't forget...

TO FEEL BAADDDD!

*(He exits on the button. Post-applause, a rock hits
ACE's window, and he opens it up. It's TARA/ANNIE.)*

ACE

Tara and Annie? My superhero! Come upstairs!
(They do.)

ACE

I'm sorry I made so much fun of you, Annie. We gotta help each
other out! I see that now...

ANNIE

Thanks. I appreciate your apology. Our band is looking for a
drummer. Want in?

ACE

Yes, most definitely! Can we practice here?

TARA

(Belts it out.)

YEAHHH!

BETTER THAN A BULLY
THE MUSICAL

SCENE EIGHT: LEXI'S PONYTAIL

(ANNIE and TARA leave ACE to practice and cross SR.)

TARA

A rehearsal space AND a drummer?! That's amazing! Now all we need is a bassist. I just put a call in to my friend Lexi. She's a great bassist. Hopefully she'll join the band with us!

(ANNIE crosses her fingers and they both exit. Lights up on LEXI stress-doodling.)

NO. 7- CAPTAIN PONYTAIL (UNDERScore)

LEXI

(In conversation with herself.)

What are you drawing, Lexi? Just a ponytail. I like it. Thank you. This is your 40th ponytail drawing this month. It's a passion of mine. Why do you draw them so much?

(Suddenly dark and foreboding?)

Because I had a traumatic incident with a ponytail in my past...

(Enter PONYTAIL, a child dressed as a giant PONYTAIL. As LEXI narrates the PONYTAIL dances.)

LEXI

When I had my ponytail, I felt free!

PONYTAIL

Free!

LEXI

All of my friends told me how much they liked it. But little did I know that they were secretly plotting against my ponytail,

plotting to destroy it...

PONYTAIL

(Stops dancing for a moment.)

Oh no!

(Resumes dancing.)

LEXI

They said, come play a game with us Lexi. You'll have fun.

Now, close your eyes...

(LEXI closes her eyes.)

And then, I heard the snip.

PONYTAIL

(Falling to the ground.)

AH!

LEXI

(Opening her eyes.)

They had snuck up behind me, and snipped my ponytail completely off. It took months to grow back. But the worst part was that my friends had broken my trust.

PONYTAIL

(Sitting up and turning to LEXI.)

That's such a sad story...

LEXI

It's the reason why I don't know if I should join this band!

PONYTAIL

Do you want my advice?

(LEXI nods.)

Don't let your fear of the past keep you from moving into the future. That's how you **groooowwww!**

(On, "grow" PONYTAIL tosses their hair and exits)

LEXI

What a smart ponytail...

(LEXI picks up the phone and calls BRITTNEY.)

Brittney! I'm going to do the band!

(Lights fade on LEXI.)

BETTER THAN A BULLY
THE MUSICAL

SCENE NINE: REHEARSAL INTERRUPTED

(The band assembles in ACE's attic: LEXI on bass, ACE on drums, JUSTIN on piano, BRITTNEY, and ANNIE on mic)

TARA

I would like to call this rehearsal to order. We have a full band!

ANNIE

And we have two weeks to practice before the concert!

ACE

You ready guys?! A one two three four!

(They start to play loudly. ERIC enters.)

ERIC

HEY!

(The band stops. ERIC rushes up, grabs ACE's drumsticks and tosses them out the window. Everyone is stunned.)

I told you to quit playing little Bro! You're a no-talent loser! I'll give you guys 3 minutes to clear out, before I bust-up all of your eardrums! I'm trying to study!

(He holds up a copy of "Better Than a Bully: JJ's Friendships and Secrets", by Tina Levine, and exits.)

BRITTNEY

Who was that?

ACE

That's my brother Eric.

JUSTIN

I know Eric! He called me a four eyes at recess and pushed me!

(TARA sees a bruise on ACE's shoulder.)

TARA

Did he give you this?

ACE

(Covering his arm.)

Maybe.

ANNIE

Guys, we've got to fix this Eric situation so we can rehearse!

ALL

(Pick a line, ad lib, etc.)

Enh, I don't know. I think I hear my laundry calling. Ah look, it's an emergency alert on my phone, there's zombies in Greenland. I'm moving to Saratoga on Wednesday... etc., etc.,

NO. 8- HELP ME OUT (REPRISE)

ANNIE

You guys! I need your help! I can't do this all on my own.

(She picks up her Ukulele, and starts to play.)

I THOUGHT WE WERE A TEAM, ALL OF US, FOR REAL
I'VE NEVER HAD FRIENDS OR WAS COOL
FOR THE FIRST TIME IN ALL OF MY LIFE I FEEL
LIKE I DO BELONG IN THIS SCHOOL

SO HELP ME OUT
GIVE ME STRENGTH TO BE BRAVE ENOUGH
LET ME SPEAK TO THE WORLD THROUGH MY SONG

LET ME SHARE MY VOICE

FROM THIS SPARK
DEEP INSIDE OF ME

JUST ONE VOICE CAN HELP THE WHOLE WORLD

ALL

(Joining hands.)

JUST ONE VOICE CAN HELP THE WHOLE WORLD...

*(Before the note resolves, ERIC comes busting in on an electric guitar, which he absolutely **whales** on.)*

ERIC

(Scream-Singing like Judas in Jesus Christ Superstar)
GET OUT!!! GET OUT!!! GET OUT!!!!

(The kids cover their ears and scramble offstage.)

BETTER THAN A BULLY
THE MUSICAL

SCENE TEN: BRITTNEY ASKS FOR HELP

(Lights up on BRITTNEY in her bedroom, dealing with the aftermath of ERIC's bullying. She sits, closed off, journaling. BRITTNEY's parents walk up to her. They sense something wrong.)

BRITTNEY'S DAD

What happened at rehearsal, Brittney?

(BRITTNEY shrugs.)

BRITTNEY'S MOM

You seem different since you came back.

BRITTNEY'S DAD

Do you want to talk about it?

(BRITTNEY shrugs.)

NO. 9- NO PRESSURE

<< TRACK 7 >>

BRITTNEY'S MOM

Well that's okay, there's no pressure.

BRITTNEY'S DAD

Yeah we wouldn't want you to feel pressured to talk about it if you don't want to...

BRITTNEY'S MOM

NO THERE'S REALLY NO PRESSURE DARLING
WE DON'T HAVE TO TALK NOW IF YOU DON'T WANT TO
SO TAKE ALL THE TIME YOU NEED

(Beat.)

HAS IT YET BEEN THE TIME YOU NEED?

(BRITTNEY shakes her head "no")

BRITTNEY'S DAD
SORRY SORRY NO PRESSURE DARLING
YOU CAN KEEP IT TO YOURSELF IF YOU WANT TO

BRITTNEY'S MOM
JUST LET US KNOW WHEN IT'S TIME.

(Beat.)

IS IT TIME?

(BRITTNEY shakes her head "no")

BRITTNEY'S DAD
I WANT YOU TO FEEL COMFORTABLE
BEFORE WE TALK ABOUT THINGS
THAT MAKE YOU UNCOMFORTABLE

BRITTNEY'S MOM
I WANT YOU TO FEEL A-OKAY
WITH FEELING NOT A-OKAY
BEFORE WE TALK ABOUT NOT FEELING A-OKAY
(Beat.)
OKAY?

(BRITTNEY shakes her head "no")

BOTH PARENTS
I SEE YOU FEEL SMALL
AND I WANT YOU TO NOT FEEL SMALL

BRITTNEY'S MOM
BECAUSE IT'S STRESSFUL FOR ME
WATCHING YOU BE SMALL FEEL SMALL

BRITTNEY'S DAD

OH MY OH NO
SHE'S LOSING CONTROL

BRITTNEY'S MOM

HELP ME HELP ME HELP HELP ME
I NEED TO HEAR FROM YOU RIGHT NOW
BABY, MY BABY
I GAVE BIRTH TO YOU YOU CAME OUT OF ME
UNLESS YOU WERE ADOPTED, BUT YOU WEREN'T ADOPTED
BUT IF YOU WERE ADOPTED
I'D STILL LOVE YOU!!!

BRITTNEY'S DAD/MOM

SORRY SORRY NO PRESSURE DARLING/
/I'M GONNA GO NOW!
SURE WE'D LIKE TO KNOW WHAT'S BOTHERING YOU/
/BUT YOU SHOULD KNOW,
IF YOU EVER CHANGE YOUR MIND
WE'LL BE HERE, RIGHT BEHIND YOU

BRITTNEY'S MOM

WE'RE RIGHT BEHIND YOU

BOTH PARENTS

ALWAYS STANDING BEHIND YOU...

(They slowly exit, but BRITTNEY calls them back.)

BRITTNEY

MOM? DAD?

(The PARENTS poke their heads back in.)

CAN WE TALK?

ALL PARENTS

YES!

(Blackout.)

BETTER THAN A BULLY
THE MUSICAL

SCENE ELEVEN: TAE-KWON DO

(Lights up on a TAE-KWON-DO studio, the instructor prepares the materials on the side. ANNIE sits to the RIGHT along with two other kids, as ACE enters CENTER, LEXI enters RIGHT, BRITTNEY enters, L, and J.J. enters FAR L. The full ensemble is on stage.)

ACE

What are you all doing here?

J.J.

My Dad suggested I come when I told him about Eric's bullying.

BRITTNEY

My Dad did also! Did your Dad too, Lexi?

LEXI

Actually no...my Mom did!

J.J.

COOOL!

ANNIE

I've done Tae-Kwon-Do for years. My mom is friends with the instructor, and she signed me up. It *really* helps with bullies.

(The SHA-BOM crosses center to address the kids. As they cross, the kids form two lines to begin class.)

SHA-BOM

Hello *haeksae*— that's Korean for students. I am your Sha-Bom, or your instructor, and I am here to teach you the principles of

Tae-Kwon-Doh, a non-aggressive martial art. Are you ready for
Tae-Kwon-Doh to transform your life?

ALL KIDS

YEAHHH!!

SHA-BOM

Good, because it can! No matter if you are brand new to Tae-
Kwon Doh, or if you have been taking it a long time. Tae-Kwon
Doh will help you to defend yourself...

NO. 10- WALK AWAY

<< TRACK 8 >>

SHA-BOM

SAY YOU'RE A BEGINNER
NOT QUITE YET A WINNER
BARELY KNOW YOUR PUNCHES AND KICKS

SOMEONE'S COMIN' AT YA
WANTING TO COMBAT YA
SOMEBODY WITH STONES AND WITH STICKS

YOU'RE WONDERIN': WHAT DO I DO
TO GET MYSELF THROUGH
THIS PICKLE THAT I'M IN?
I'LL TELL YOU HOW TO WIN...

SIMPLY WALK AWAY
WALK AWAY
DO NOT FIGHT THIS FIGHT TODAY
SIMPLY WALK AWAY
YOU'LL BE OKAY
IF YOU WALK AWAY

(An experienced student steps forward to demonstrate.)

SHABOM

MAYBE YOU'VE BEEN LEARNING

FREQUENTLY RETURNING
TAKING TAE KWON DO FOR A YEAR

*(Another student steps forward and and plays the role
of the aggressor, as the SHABOM describes it.)*

SOMEONE TAPS ON YOUR ARM
THEN PULLS BACK THEIR FOREARM
PREPPING TO STRIKE YOU FROM THE REAR

SHABOM
YOU'RE THINKING WHAT DO I DO
TO GET MYSELF THROUGH
AND GIVE THEM A GOOD SHOCK

*(The experienced student executes a forward block on
the word "block".)*

PULL OUT THAT FORWARD BLOCK

*(Having been successful, on the word 'away', they
burst out into a k-pop 'walk away' dance)*

THEN SIMPLY WALK AWAY
WALK AWAY
THROW THAT BLOCK, AND SAY GOOD DAY
SIMPLY WALK AWAY
SAY KYUNG NAE,
AND WALK AWAY...

(The second student steps forward, now the MASTER.)

SHABOM
SAY YOU'RE NOW A MASTER
YOU'RE STRONGER AND FASTER
GOING FOR YOUR BLACK BELT NEXT WEEK

(The EXPERIENCED student plays the role of the aggressor as described by the SHABOM.)

SOMEONE TRIES TO TAKE YOU,
THINKING THEY CAN BREAK YOU,
AND HIT YOU FROM THE SIDE LIKE A SNEAK

SHA-BOM
YOU CAN SEE THEY'RE A CLOWN,
BUT THEY WON'T BACK DOWN,
THEN THEY TAKE OUT THEIR KNIFE
THE WAY TO SAVE YOUR LIFE...

(SHA-BOM instructs the MASTER as they do the following.)

Is to grab their arm pull it over your shoulder, elbow them in the gut so they drop their weapon, and hit them on the pressure point on the side of their neck, so they are disabled by the overwhelming and disorienting pain and they collapse temporarily on the sidewalk...

(Having been successful, on the word 'away' they burst into a k-pop 'walk away' dance.)

THEN SIMPLY WALK AWAY
WALK AWAY
THERE'S NO REASON YOU SHOULD STAY
SIMPLY WALK AWAY
SAY GOOD DAY!

(All students join in singing and doing the 'walk away' dance.)

SHA-BOM AND STUDENTS

SIMPLY WALK AWAY
SAY KYUNG NAE
SIMPLY WALK AWAY

YOU'LL BE OKAY
IF YOU WALK AWAY!
WALK-WALK,
WALK AWAY!

SHA-BOM

Good class, see you next time!

(The kids disperse, but ANNIE and friends chat.)

J.J.

That was awesome! I feel so much more confident!

LEXI

Me too! I feel like I can take on the world!

ANNIE

Good. Now that we're more confident, we are ready to stop Eric bullying us. We're going to talk to Mrs. Pennick!

BETTER THAN A BULLY
THE MUSICAL

SCENE TWELVE: THE GUIDANCE COUNSELOR

(Stage is set with ANNIE, LEXI, JUSTIN, ACE, and
BRITTNEY at desks in a circle, plus one empty seat.)

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR

(Standing in front of the kids.)

Welcome to the first meeting of the Anti-Bullying Task Force.
Upon hearing from you and your parents and learning what has
been going on in this school, we decided to form this board.
Some of you have been bullied, some of you have been bystanders,
and some of you...

(ERIC walks in.)

Have been a bully.

(Hushed whispering as ERIC takes his seat.)

ERIC

Yo, why am I at this meeting?! I was only teasing...

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR

You don't make that distinction. Whether it's teasing or not...

ERIC

Who even are you? Like... what's your job?

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR

I'm glad you asked.

NO. 11- GUIDANCE COUNSELOR

<< TRACK 9 >>

(The GUIDANCE COUNSELOR lays the beat down.)

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR

I'M THE FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE MY FRIEND
WHERE BULLYS' ANTICS END
I STOP EACH WILD CAROUS'LER

WHEN YOU WALK INTO MY OFFICE BUD
YOU BETTER CUT THE CRUD
'CAUSE I'M THE GUIDANCE COUNSELOR!

WHEN KIDS TELL ME SOMETHING'S GOING WRONG
I DON'T JUST GO ALONG
YOU'LL FIND NO TAME ESPOUS'LER
I'M A FIGHTER FOR YOUR LIBERTY
SO DON'T YOU DARE CROSS ME
'CAUSE I'M THE GUIDANCE COUNSELOR!

UP AT 7 AM, AND STAY 'TILL QUARTER PAST 4
I'M SORT OF LIKE A SOCIAL WORKER
BUT GET PAID LESS TO WORK MORE

AND I ALSO KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT COLLEGE...

ERIC

College?!

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR

YES COLLEGE
WHERE PEOPLE GO TO GET MORE KNOWLEDGE!

ERIC

Knowledge?

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR

YES... COLLEGE AND KNOWLEDGE...

ERIC

I want those.

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR

Then you better know who I am.

ERIC

YOU'RE THE GUIDANCE COUNSELOR!

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR

That's right!

(Back to normal, professional, etc.)

Now, teasing is something that is *fun* for everyone. But if you don't *like* the teasing, then that's 'being mean'... And being mean repeatedly, would become "bullying"...

ALL KIDS

Ohhhhhhhhh...

ERIC

So if they've been hurt by what I've been doing, and I've been doing been doing it repeatedly, then, that would mean... I've been bullying them?

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR

That's right, you got it!

ERIC

I'm sorry. No more bullying from me.

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR

I'm a genius!

ERIC

You're a genius!

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR

(Getting all up in his face.)

YEAH THAT'S RIGHT I AM A GENIUS CHILD

YOU UNDERSTOOD! THAT'S WILD!

I'M SUCH A BRAIN AROUSL'R

YOU HAVE LEARNED WHAT I HAD HOPED YOU WOULD

LIKE EV'RY BULLY SHOULD

NOW YOU ARE FIXED AND GOOD

'CAUSE I'M THE GUIDANCE COUNSELOR

ALL
YEAH SHE'S THE GUIDANCE COUNSELOR

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR
AND I JUST COUNSELED YOU...

THAT'S MY JOB!

(Button. Post-Applause.)

ERIC
I mean it. I'm sorry. No more bullying from me.

GUIDANCE
This meeting of the anti-bullying task force is concluded!

(She bangs a gavel.)

NO. 11A- GUIDANCE COUNSELOR TAG

(We see ERIC's fingers crossed behind his back...)

BETTER THAN A BULLY
THE MUSICAL

SCENE THIRTEEN: THE BIKE RACE

(Once the stage is clear, J.J. enters USC riding a bike. ERIC enters USR walking with a bike of his own)

ERIC

Hey! Where you going Four-Eyes?!

(J.J. makes a sharp turn SR, where ANNIE is with LEXI outside her house reading a book on a lawn chair.)

ANNIE

J.J., why are you at Lexi's house? Your house is that way!

J.J.

(Getting off his bike.)

Eric just called me a four eyes again!

LEXI

You avoided him, that's what you do first in Tae-kwon-doh.

J.J.

(Turning to look.)

He's blocking me, and I don't know enough to strike!

ANNIE

Try distracting him! Say something to throw him off!

J.J.

I'll try...

ANNIE

We're here to back you up.

(J.J. walks up to ERIC.)

NO. 12- DISTRACTION

<< TRACK 10 >>

ERIC

Hey four-eyes, fancy meeting you here.

J.J.

THAT'S A NICE BIKE.

ERIC

Huh?

J.J.

I THINK YOUR BIKE IS PRETTY COOL MAN,

ERIC

All right.

J.J.

ARE YOU A FAST BIKER TOO?

ERIC

Yeah I'm fast...

J.J.

I'LL RACE YOU.

ERIC

Huh?

J.J.

(Out to the audience.)

DISTRACTION!

I'LL THROW HIM OFF WITH A LITTLE DISTRACTION!

(Back to ERIC.)

TAKE OUR BIKES ROUND THE NEIGHBORHOOD?

ERIC

FIRST TO THE CORNER SOUNDS GOOD?

J.J.

You're on!

(They get on their bikes.)

J.J

(Out to the audience.)

DISTRACTION

THAT'S THE KEY TO THIS INTERACTION

KEEP HIM FOCUSED ON SOMETHING FUN AND LIGHT

THAT'S HOW WE WIN THE FIGHT!

(The race has built quite a following, a whole bunch of kids are watching now.)

KIDS

FOCUS ON THE GOAL!

PEDAL TO THE MEDAL

DON'T GIVE UP AND DON'T GIVE IN

DON'T BE SCARED TO FALL

DON'T YOU DARE TO SETTLE

DON'T LET UP, 'CAUSE YOU CAN WIN!

(J.J. crosses the line ahead of ERIC.)

J.J.

I win!

ERIC

Wow, you're pretty fast.

J.J.

Thanks! Wanna hear a joke?

ERIC

Sure!

J.J.

What do you call cheese that doesn't belong to you?

ERIC

I don't know...

J.J.

Nacho Cheese!

ERIC

(Laughing.)

You're pretty funny. You know, I've been reading this book for school, it's called "Better Than a Bully" by Tina Levine—

(Aside to the audience.)

Available online for the low cost of \$7.99—

(Back to J.J.)

And it says if someone's been bullying you, using humor is a great way to diffuse the situation. Turns out that works really well.

(Beat.)

I take my studies pretty seriously J.J., but it's important to lighten up too. I bet spending time with you would be really good for me.

YOU'RE NOT SO BAD

I'M SORRY THAT I CALLED YOU FOUR-EYES

I HEAR YOU'RE FORMING A BAND

COULD I LEND YOU A HAND?

J.J.

Huh?

ERIC

(Aside, to the audience.)

DISTRACTION...

I COULD SURE USE A LITTLE DISTRACTION

(Back to J.J.)

I WILL NOT BULLY YOUR FRIENDS

I SWEAR TODAY THAT ALL ENDS!

(He shows us his fingers crossed again.)

J.J.

Well I appreciate that.

ERIC

SOUNDS LIKE WE GOT SOME TRACTION...

I PLAY GUITAR AND MINE'S GOT GOOD ACTION

CAN I JAM WITH YOUR CREW?

(Turns back to ANNIE, who gives him a thumbs up.)

J.J.

WE'D BE GLAD TO HAVE YOU!

BOTH

WHO KNEW A BULLY COULD TURN INTO A CHUM

WITH A SHIFT IN ATTITUDE AND SOME

DISTRACTION...

J.J.

See you at practice!

ERIC

Sounds good!

(They shake on the button. POST-APPLAUSE, ERIC walks out; J.J. goes over to ANNIE.)

ANNIE

J.J., that was awesome! You turned our bully into a friend!?

J.J.

Now we have the best band ever! I'll see you at rehearsal!

(J.J. exits.)

ANNIE

This is it. Tomorrow is our audition for the concert. My dreams are so close to becoming real!

BETTER THAN A BULLY
THE MUSICAL

SCENE FOURTEEN: BETTER THAN A BULLY

(The scene shifts to ANNIE's living room. The drums and instruments are moved to another larger area of the stage. ERIC, JUSTIN, ACE, BRITTNEY, LEXI, TARA, and ANNIE are all on stage. ANNIE fiddles with a zoom camera.)

ANNIE

There we go, we got it! Hello Ms. Trent!

TEACHER

(Zooming in from her office.)

Hello! Are you ready for your audition?

ANNIE

Yes! Thank you for allowing us to audition virtually, it's difficult to move all of these instruments around.

TEACHER

Of course! Well... show me what you've got!

ACE

One minute, Ms. Trent. Gonna just silence the video for a sec.

(He does and pulls ANNIE to the side.)

What is Eric doing here? I'm not cool with him in our band.

ERIC

(Over-hearing.)

What's your problem, Ace? You afraid to play with me 'cause you're a TERRIBLE DRUMMER?

BRITTNEY

Leave Ace alone! YOU'RE A TERRIBLE PERSON!

ERIC

WELL YOU'RE A TERRIBLE GROUPIE!

BRITTNEY

I am not! I'm a GREAT GROUPIE!

ANNIE

ENOUGH! EVERYONE JUST- **CHILL OUT!** Ace, I invited Eric to be in our band. I should have checked with you all first, and I'm sorry. I'm glad you're here Eric, but I do think if you want to be in our band, a real apology to Ace is in order, not one with your fingers crossed behind your back.

ERIC

GRRRAHHHH!

(He exits.)

ACE

Why would you invite Eric to be in our band, after everything he did to us? If he's in, I'm out.

ANNIE

Just because someone else has bullied us doesn't mean we have to bully him. We're better than that. But we definitely don't want you to quit the band Ace. We need everyone, and we don't want any drama. So let's just leave Eric out for now, and do our thing. It's time to audition.

(Turning the camera back on.)

Ms. Trent! We're back!

TEACHER

Excellent! I'm all ears!

ANNIE

(Turning back to the band.)

All right, now, we are pitching you on more than just a song. This is a movement. We call ourselves the Better Than a Bully Brigade, and we are going to be big! While we sing, I want you

to imagine that we are on stage already...

(On music cue, FANS enter.)

And there is a crowd of screaming adoring kids out there, just dying to hear our music. Can you hear them?

FAN 1

We love you Better Than A Bully Brigade!

FAN 2

I could listen to your music forever!

FAN 3

(Holding out a baby duck stuffed animal.)

Sign my baby duck stuffed animal!

JUSTIN

(As the lead vocalist/ heart-throb of the band.)

This one goes out to all the kids out there who go home every day, and look in the mirror thinking to themselves, "I wish they wouldn't treat me like I don't belong. I wish they would accept me. I wish they would see me for who I really am..."

ACE

A-ONE-TWO-THREE-FOUR!

(They start to play, mime or mock-play specific instruments, ie:// Drums, Bass Keyboard, Guitar, Etc.)

NO. 13- BETTER THAN A BULLY

<< TRACK 11 >>

ANNIE

I HAD A BULLY

THEY PICKED ON ME SINCE I WAS A KID

ACE

I BOUGHT IT FULLY

THEY SAID I SHOULD FEEL BAD SO I DID

JUSTIN

I LET THEIR WORDS DEFLATE
MY MENTAL STATE

LEXI

ONE DAY I WOKE UP!
TOLD AN ADULT I TRUSTED AND KNEW

TARA

I BRAVELY SPOKE UP!
AND LEARNED THE THINGS I SHOULD SAY AND DO

ANNIE

IF I WOULD LIKE TO MAKE
THE BULLY CYCLE BREAK...

ALL (INCLUDING AUDIENCE)

NOW,
I'M IN CONTROL OF MY REACTIONS,
I'M RISING UP ABOVE THE NOISE
I CAN BE BETTER
THAN A BULLY!

TURNING MY ANGER INTO ACTIONS
HOLDING MY GROUND WITH STRENGTH AND POISE
I CAN BE BETTER
THAN A BULLY!

BAND MEMBERS

I AM AN AMAZING PERSON
I DESERVE TO BE PROTECTED
IF I SPEAK UP FOR MYSELF
I KNOW THAT I WILL BE RESPECTED

AUDIENCE

THAN A BULLY-Y-Y!

THAN A BULLY-Y-Y!

BEING BULLIED ISN'T NORMAL
THAT IDEA SHOULD BE REJECTED
YOU AND I CAN FIX THIS
NOTHING LESS SHOULD BE EXPECTED!

THAN A BULLY-Y-Y!

THAN A BULLY!

ALL (EXCEPT ANNIE)
BETTER THAN A BULLY BETTER THAN A BULLY
BETTER THAN A BULLY BETTER THAN A BULLY
(Continues under dialogue.)

ANNIE
US world Report says, 22% of students get bullied each year.

ALL
WE CAN DO BETTER!

ANNIE
43% of students reported they would not intervene in bullying.

ALL
WE CAN DO BETTER!

ANNIE
If you are being bullied. Tell someone! Get the help you need!
'Cause if we work together, we can *fix* the bullying problem, and
make the whole world, a heck of a lot better!

I CAN BE BETTER
YOU CAN BE BETTER
WE CAN BE BETTER!

ANNIE
If you believe we have the power to stop bullying. Stand up!
Let me see you on your feet! Come on!
(The "fans" join the band onstage and they all cheer!)

ALL
WOOOOOOOOO!

(The audience shouts with excitement, and no I don't

mean the literal audience. I mean the actors playing the audience! But then...ERIC comes charging in.)

ERIC

STOP THE MUSIC! I'm back, and I would like to say...

ACE

This is not going to be good.

ERIC

I'm sorry. For interrupting your rehearsal, for bullying you Ace, and J.J., and Annie.

BRITTNEY

And Brittney!

ERIC

And Brittney. I was jealous because you all get to be in this band and I don't. Seriously, I stood outside just now, listening, and you guys are CRAZY talented! Feeling left out of that makes me want to work on myself, so I can be part of the amazing music you are making. I'm going to do better now. I swear. No fingers crossed.

ANNIE

Thanks Eric.

(She looks to ACE.)

ACE

Grab your guitar! And let's create a schedule moving forward to make sure you can do your studying and I can practice too.

(He does.)

ERIC

WHOOOPEEEEE! I'M IN THE BAND!!!!

(ERIC launches into a guitar solo, which melds

seamlessly into the next chorus, as the other kids join him.)

ALL

HELP US DELIGHT IN CELEBRATION
USING OUR TALENT AS A SWORD
WE CAN BE BETTER...
THAN A BULLY!

SHARING OUR SONG ACROSS THE NATION
SEEKING TO STRIKE A COMMON CHORD
WE CAN BE BETTER
THAN A BULLY!

(They jam out in reverse roles now.)

AUD

I AM AN AMAZING PERSON
I DESERVE TO BE RESPECTED
IF I SPEAK UP FOR MYSELF
I KNOW THAT I WILL BE PROTECTED

BAND

THAN A BULLY-Y-Y!
THAN A BULLY-Y-Y!

BEING BULLIED ISN'T NORMAL
THAT IDEA SHOULD BE REJECTED
YOU AND I CAN FIX THIS
NOTHING LESS SHOULD BE EXPECTED!

THAN A BULLY-Y-Y!
THAN A BULLY!

ALL

I CAN BE BETTER!
(YOU CAN BE BETTER!)
(WE CAN BE BETTER!)

THAN A BULLY!

TEACHER

What a performance! You may perform in the concert tomorrow!

(The kids cheer, and TINA exits.)

Oh, and don't forget your uniforms!

ANNIE

(The cheer abruptly stops.)

Our uniforms?

TEACHER

Everyone is in chorus uniforms! Even the additional groups!

(The line goes flat.)

TARA

What's wrong Annie? You don't want to wear your uniform?

ANNIE

No! No no no! It doesn't go with my hair...

ANNIE'S MOM

(Entering wearing sunglasses, led by LUCKY.)

Annie! What's all this beautiful music I hear up here?!

ANNIE

Mom! What are you doing?

ANNIE'S MOM

I wanted to see what all the music was about.

ACE *(Crushing on ANNIE'S MOM?)*

That's cool. Glad you stopped by. Love your shades.

ANNIE'S MOM

Thank you. Annie and I were in a car accident many years ago. Her father passed away in the crash. I lost my vision from the injuries I sustained. Money's been tight ever since.

ACE

(Typical awkward middle-schooler)

Right on.

ANNIE

Anyway it doesn't matter. I'm not doing the concert.

MOM

Not doing the concert?! Why?

TARA

She says it's the choir uniform. It doesn't go with her hair.

NO. 14- LOOK TO WHAT'S INSIDE

<< TRACK 12 >>

ANNIE'S MOM

Annie, why do you always worry about your hair your hair your hair?!

CHILD YOU'RE A WONDER
THERE ISN'T ANY DOUBT
HOW YOU LOOK ON THE OUTSIDE,
THAT'S ALL YOU THINK ABOUT?
LOOK TO WHAT'S INSIDE

CHILD YOU'RE A HELPER
I KNOW THAT TO BE TRUE
NOBODY HELPS ANYONE
AS MUCH AS YOU
LOOK TO WHAT'S INSIDE...

THE WAY THAT YOU LOOK ON THE OUTSIDE
DOES NOT REFLECT WHAT'S DOWN BELOW
THERE IS MORE TO LIFE THAN WHAT YOU SEE
TRUST ME I KNOW...

CHILD YOU'RE A GIVER
YOU MAKE MY SPIRITS LIFT
THE POWER OF YOUR HEART DEAR
THAT'S YOUR GREATEST GIFT

LOOK TO WHAT'S INSIDE...
 LOOK TO WHAT'S INSIDE...

ANNIE
 I'M A HELPER AND A GIVER
 THAT FILLS MY HEART WITH PRIDE
 WHEN I LOOK TO WHAT'S INSIDE...

Okay everyone, I'm going to do the concert! Because when I share my heart, people will see my heart. And they won't care how my hair looks. They'll see me. Annie. And they'll see my talent too.

OTHER KIDS
(Ad lib.)
 That's awesome Annie! YAY! Okay good luck, we'll be there cheering you on!

ANNIE
 I KNOW I CAN DO THIS
 I'M READY FOR THE RIDE
 WHEN I LOOK TO WHAT'S INSIDE...

(She exits on the button.)

TARA
(Turning to her friends and pulling them together.)
 Guys, I have an idea for a way we can help Annie out in the concert tomorrow. Can I tell you??

LEXI/BRITTNEY/ACE/ERIC
 Yeah sure! Let's whisper! Whisper whisper whisper, etc...

BETTER THAN A BULLY
THE MUSICAL

SCENE FIFTEEN: THE CHORUS CONCERT

ANNIE

Ms. Trent, can I talk to you?

TEACHER

Sure Annie, what's going on?

ANNIE

Well, I really want to be in the chorus concert, but I'm having some issues with the uniform...

TEACHER

Is it because it doesn't go with your hair?

ANNIE

No, I'm ready to deal with that. The reason is... we can't afford it. My mom has a disability, and my dad, he... passed away in a bad car crash. We don't really have a lot of money. So, a \$35 uniform isn't something we can afford.

TEACHER

Annie, I had no idea! Why didn't you tell me?

ANNIE

I was afraid if I did, that you would judge me. Just like the other kids do.

TEACHER

I'm so sorry you've been going through all this Annie. But I'm never surprised to learn that my students are different from how they appear. There's always more to us than what meets the eye.

ACTOR 1

(Popping on.)

There! That's it! That's the moral we told you about! Oh isn't it beautiful!

ACTOR 2

(Pulling him off.)

Dude, get offstage!

TEACHER

If I only had known about your situation, I would have *never* insisted. I would be honored to have you in the concert. I have an old uniform you can borrow!

ANNIE

Really?! Can't I get a new one?

TEACHER

Sure! Also, knowing all of what has happened, I'd like to make some changes to our program. How do you feel about a solo?

(She gasps a gasping gasp.)

ANNIE

What?! That's, like, my dream! Woo-hoo!

NO. 15- MY CARROT-TOP

<< TRACK 13 >>

(Lights fade as the school set rolls on. Perhaps a banner is hung, "Middle School Chorus Concert". The BETTER THAN A BULLY BRIGADE BAND is set stage left. They are all ready to play. ANNIE walks on in her uniform, and a hat. She holds a mic.)

ANNIE

Hello, and welcome to our Middle School Chorus Concert. My name is Annie, and I'm going to be sharing an original song with you that I've been working on.

(The band starts to play.)

LOOK AT ME AND YOU WILL SEE
SOMEBODY WHO IS DIFF'RENT FROM YOU
I'VE BEEN TOLD I DON'T FIT THE MOLD
BY FOLKS WHO DO!

STILL I FEEL THAT'S NO BIG DEAL
'CAUSE I GOT PRIDE DEEP DOWN INSIDE

SOME WOULD SAY THAT'S NOT OKAY
BUT I WON'T HIDE!

(She she slowly lifts her hat, revealing her red hair.)

I LOVE MY CARROT-TOP!
BRIGHT AND RED UPON MY HEAD
I LOVE MY CARROT-TOP
I DON'T CARE WHAT PEOPLE SAY
I WOULDN'T WANT IT ANY OTHER WAY
WHAT A CROP

MY CARROT-TOP!

(She shakes her hair around in delight.)

TEACHER

(Entering applauding as music continues.)

Thank you Annie! And thank you to everyone who has come to our performance. I'm super-excited to invite you to our Middle School Choir Concert!

BEING DIFFERENT ISN'T BAD
THAT'S WHAT MAKES US COOL!
SO LET YOUR HEART OPEN UP YOUR MIND
YOU JUST MIGHT CHANGE YOUR SCHOOL...

Now, I have a very special announcement to make. There is about

to be a *big* change in the culture of our school. We're done with conforming to the traditional uniform look of the past. From this evening on, our concerts will have a new dress code! You ready kids?

(A thumbs up reaches on from offstage.)

And now presenting... the Middle School Chorus!

(The Middle School Chorus enters, led by TARA. They are all wearing choir uniforms, and on top of them, bright red wigs.)

ENSEMBLE

WE LOVE OUR CARROT-TOP!
SHE'S OUR FRIEND UNTIL THE END
WE LOVE OUR CARROT-TOP

WE DON'T CARE WHAT PEOPLE SAY!
WE WOULDN'T HAVE IT ANY OTHER WAY!

WHAT A CROP!

ANNIE

MY CARROT-TOP!

ENSEMBLE

WATCH IT POP!

ANNIE

MY CARROT-TOP!

ENSEMBLE

DIG THAT MOP!

ENSEMBLE

WE LOVE OUR CARROT TOP!

ANNIE!

ANNIE

THAT'S ME!

(CURTAIN. END OF PLAY.)

NO. 16- CURTAIN CALL: ADAPTATION REPRISE

ALL

THAT WAS OUR MUSICAL ADAPTATION!
HOW IS IT OVER? THAT WAS QUICK!
WE HOPE IT BROUGHT SOME ELUCIDATION
AND WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED HERE WILL STICK

'CAUSE WE'RE NOT DOING IT FOR THE GLORY
WE'RE DOING IT BECAUSE
WE WANNA SEE OURSELVES IN SOMEONE ELSE'S STORY...
WE WANNA HEAR YOUR STORY
GO OUT AND TELL YOUR STORY!

LEAVE THE PAST IN THE PAST
LIVE EACH MOMENT AS EACH MOMENT 'CAUSE LIFE GOES FAST
LET YOUR HEART REARRANGE
AND AS THE WORLD CONTINUES TO CHANGE (x3)
LET'S ADAPT!

END PLAY