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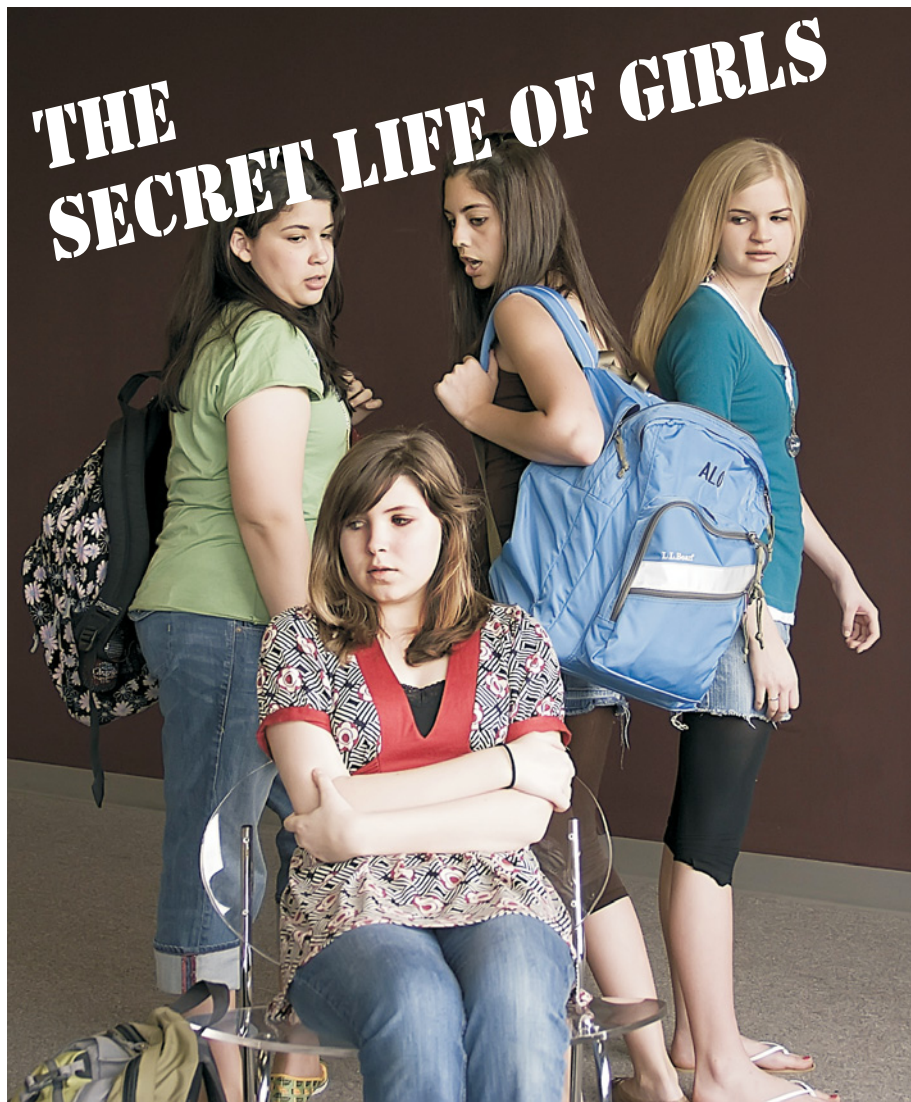
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*Dramatic Publishing*

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**NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS  
GRANT WINNER**

**THE  
SECRET LIFE OF GIRLS**



**DRAMA  
BY**

**LINDA DAUGHERTY**

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"I was amazed by the lines for *The Secret Life of Girls*—which was totally sold out ... Now they've had to extend the run of *The Secret Life* ... to keep up with demand.

So what's the secret to *Secret's* success? The topic—the destructiveness of verbal bullying among middle-school girls—is hot. And playwright Linda Daugherty did a great job with it."  
—overthetop.beloblog.com

## THE SECRET LIFE OF GIRLS

**Drama.** By Linda Daugherty. Cast: 10w. (9w. with doubling). Abby writes an e-mail which is projected for the audience to read: "I'm going to tell you a secret—and I don't want you to tell. The secret is about me—about my life—how it will never be the same again." In this honest and unflinching dramatization of teen-girl angst, a window is opened into the tumultuous and destructive world of girls' bullying. Abby seeks to gain acceptance as the newest member of the school championship volleyball team. As the girls struggle to find a friend, a place in the group and themselves, their jockeying for position is sometimes humorous and often heartbreaking. Invitations are extended or withheld, individual friendships sacrificed to collective judgments, and alliances formed and changed daily as they careen from exclusion to isolation to acceptance and back again. Bullying in the form of gossiping, keeping secrets, using friendship as a weapon, name-calling, spreading rumors, backbiting, clinging to cliques and manipulation become a prelude to dangerous behaviors such as depression, cutting, eating disorders and premature sexuality. The adults in the girls' lives are either unable or unwilling to change their behaviors. Though concerned, Abby's mother is unable to make contact with her, while the volleyball coach and team mom enable rather than work to effect change. When faced with the consequences of their actions, the girls ultimately resolve, one by one, to change their behaviors. Based upon interviews with girls on the giving and receiving end of bullying, the play highlights the impact of "cyberbullying," the facilitation of mean-spirited behaviors through the use of cell phones, instant messaging, e-mail and chat rooms. The sobering reality of these girls' lives can start conversations in homes, schools and communities, providing the opportunity to reveal the secrets and address the complexities which dominate the lives of many young women. *Area staging. Approximate running time: 1 hour. Code: SM7.*

Cover photo: Dallas Children's Theatre production.  
(l-r) Amanda Rojas, Erin Simmons, Alyssa Overbeck and Kelly Brooks  
*Photo: Mark Oristano*

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# The Secret Life of Girls

By  
LINDA DAUGHERTY



**Dramatic Publishing**  
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LINDA DAUGHERTY

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(THE SECRET LIFE OF GIRLS)

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This play is dedicated to  
NANCY SCHAEFFER  
and to  
Linn Helen Daugherty, Maureen Mahoney Martin,  
Colleen Mahoney Martin,  
Lynn Lester Cohen and Kelly Abbott Morris

## IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

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*The Secret Life of Girls* premiered at Dallas Children's Theater (Robyn Flatt, Executive Artistic Director) from April 13, 2007, through May 20, 2007, directed by Nancy Schaeffer.

### **Original Cast**

Abby . . . . . Erin Simmons / Abby Gentsch  
Stephanie . . . . . Alyssa Overbeck / Rachel Rosenstein  
Rebecca . . . . . Lindsay Woodmansee / Amanda Rojas  
Kayla . . . . . Kendall Howen / Stephanie Tomba  
Sutton . . . . . Kelly Brooks / Meg Showalter  
Anna Marie . . . . . Regen Routman / Sarah Zashin  
Chandler . . . . . Jordan Naftalis / Laura Payne  
Sutton's Mom / Coach . . . . . Lisa Fairchild \*  
Abby's Mom . . . . . Lisa Schreiner \*

### **Original Production Staff**

Scenery and Video Design . . . . . Randel Wright  
Lighting Design . . . . . Linda Blase  
Sound Design . . . . . Marco Salinas  
Costume Design . . . . . Aaron Patrick Turner  
Properties Design . . . . . Kim Lyle  
Stage Manager . . . . . Dwight Sandell \*

\* Denotes member of Actors' Equity Association, the union for professional actors and stage managers in the USA.



## NOTES

### Screens/Projections

A large screen is required on which electronic communications between characters, including e-mails, instant messages (IMs), and text messages as well as photographs, a handwritten note and other images, are projected. With a few exceptions, the messages contained in these communications are simultaneously spoken by actors.

The Dallas Children's Theater premier production used three large, onstage screens (center, stage right and stage left) made of black scrim on which images were projected using a three-projector video server control system. A Microsoft Powerpoint software program could also be used. Projected communications were displayed with borders suggesting their source; e.g., computer monitor, PDA or cell phone screen. Generally speaking, e-mails, IMs, text messages, Abby's handwritten note, videos and photographs were projected on the center screen while projections on the two side screens were used for dramatic effect and emphasis. As one example, in the IM scene between Stephanie and Rebecca, selected "charged" words from the IMs were enlarged and projected on the side screens. As the scene ended and the laptops closed the screens stage right, center and stage left were filled with the words, "OUR" "SECRET" "COOL," one large word per screen. When characters were exchanging IMs in real time, messages were projected on the side screen where the recipient was located. Some electronic communications and photographs were projected on all three screens such as the "Subject: R!!!" e-mail and the photograph of Rebecca's behind.

## Costumes

The play requires several, fast costume changes. The girls' costumes consist of typical middle-school clothes, volleyball practice clothing consisting of black shorts or warmup pants (except Abby whose practice shorts are a different color) and white shirts, volleyball game uniforms consisting of red shorts and white shirts with red numerals, and sleepover nightclothes. Red, zippered "Champions" jackets are worn at volleyball practice and from time to time during the play by all girls except Abby. In the Dallas Children's Theater production, for her first entrance, Abby wore a white shirt and a skirt which was underdressed with two pairs of shorts: red game shorts under longer, pink practice shorts. Girls wore white game shirts under "Champions" jackets and red game shorts under black practice shorts or warmup pants for fast changes.

## Music Selections and Movie References

In the play the music progresses from upbeat and innocent to dark, grating and explicit. Music should be currently popular with the 12- to 18-year-old age group. The musical selections contained in the stage directions are subject to restrictions on use and protections afforded by copyright and other laws. Such selections are *suggestions only*. Scary movie titles should be updated.

## Girl's Photographs

If possible, actresses playing girls should provide their own childhood photograph for the ending sequence. The photograph should portray the actress between the ages of about two and seven and be close-ups of a happy, joyful face, looking directly into the camera.

## Miscellaneous Notes Relating to Dallas Children's Theater Production

Girls roles were very successfully played by 13- to 16-year-olds.

The roles of Sutton's Mom and Coach were played by the same actress.

Real volleyballs were used for tryouts and practices. An imaginary volleyball was used for games.

Isolated area lighting helped to establish the play's rapidly changing locations. Lighting cross faded to keep action moving between scenes. Transitions to school settings were highlighted by a school bell and transitions to volleyball practice were highlighted by Coach's whistle.

Immediately after each performance, with the actors present, the actress playing Abby's Mom and a facilitator led a discussion of approximately fifteen minutes with the audience about issues raised in the play. A theater representative could be substituted for the actress playing Abby's Mom. The facilitators were local healthcare professionals or representatives from community-based organizations knowledgeable about adolescent-related issues. The script used in connection with this discussion follows the play. Pamphlets and brochures relating to issues addressed in the play were made available in the theater lobby.

# THE SECRET LIFE OF GIRLS

## CHARACTERS (in order of appearance)

10 roles for actresses

ABBY, an adolescent girl

ABBY'S MOM

REBECCA, an adolescent girl

KAYLA, an adolescent girl

SUTTON, an adolescent girl

ANNA MARIE, an adolescent girl

STEPHANIE, an adolescent girl

COACH, female

SUTTON'S MOM

CHANDLER, the new girl

Possible doubling: COACH / SUTTON'S MOM

Abby, an adolescent girl, has a birthday sleepover for her group of girlfriends, Rebecca, Kayla, Sutton, Anna Marie, and Stephanie. Angry because her best friend Kayla stays late at Abby's after the party, Stephanie manipulates to keep Abby from trying out for the volleyball team. Though she is left out of the group and receives no encouragement from the coach, Abby tries out for the team, saves the first game by winning the final point and wins acceptance back into the group. Nervous about losing the most popular girl STEPHANIE as a best friend, KAYLA tries to explain why she stayed late at ABBY's sleepover without including STEPHANIE.

KAYLA (*desperately*). Look, Stephanie, I didn't want to stay at Abby's after the sleepover! Our mothers did it! My mother had to pick up my aunt at the airport and she called Abby's mother and told her she'd better pick me

up early from the party but Abby's mother said no problem, I should stay! (*Tearfully.*) It wasn't my idea. I had nothing to do with it. Believe me, I didn't want to stay.

STEPHANIE. Oh.

KAYLA. I thought you and I were friends...best friends.

STEPHANIE. Well... (*suddenly bestowing a smile on her*) we are.

KAYLA. Not...Rebecca?

STEPHANIE. Rebecca? *Me?* Best friends with Rebecca?

KAYLA. You've been hanging out with her so much that I thought—

STEPHANIE. Rebecca totally begged me to go to the mall after the game. Like every Saturday. Jeez! She is such a pathetic suck-up. And you cannot trust her.

KAYLA. She was bragging about how you bought shirts alike.

STEPHANIE. No, *I* bought this shirt and then she just had to have it. In *my* size. Believe me, I'll never wear it again.

KAYLA. It's really cute though.

STEPHANIE. I totally hate it. Wait 'til you see Rebecca in it. She looks like a sausage. (*They snicker together.*) Hey, listen, Kayla...how about you call your mom and see if you can come over and study after practice?

KAYLA. Oh, okay, great! Practice? Jeez, come on! We're late! You gotta change. (*They gather their things.*) Hey, Steph, Brad?! Did you really dump him?

STEPHANIE. Ugh, I'm so over him. (*Making a joke.*) Rebecca can have him. (*They laugh together.*) No, wait! Let's fix Abby up with Brad. That would be perfect.

KAYLA. Are you really going with William Stratten?

STEPHANIE. Jealous? He's so sexy. And mature. I'm so sick of the losers in our grade.

KAYLA. He has his own car, right?

STEPHANIE. Duh.

KAYLA. Your mother'll let you car date?

STEPHANIE. Does my mother have to know?

KAYLA (*excited*). Steph! Oh, God! (*Whistle blows.*) Hurry! Coach is gonna yell at us!

STEPHANIE. Who cares?

*(KAYLA and STEPHANIE, laughing together, exit. Lights cross fade as COACH rushes on, blows whistle and addresses audience as if volleyball team.)*

COACH. Okay, girls, listen up! This is really a huge game for us. Our first game, yes, we won but was it luck or do you have what it takes to be champions again? Great game point serve last week, Abby. Remember, Stephanie's your captain. Listen to her. Anna Marie, get the lead out. You've all got to move out there. Okay, let's go out there and *destroy* those Panthers! Go, Fireballs!!!

*(Lights down on COACH. Music underscores as e-mail appears on screen.)*

*From: STEPH<star743@hotmail.com>*

*To: KAYLA<kaylag@aol.com>*

*SUTTON<secretagent21@aol.com>*

*ABBY<chocalot05@aol.com>*

*Subject: LETSPARTY*

*Sleep over my house sat—kayla abby sutton only. keep it a secret*

—Steph

*(Music fades and screen goes black as lights rise on STEPHANIE, KAYLA, ABBY and SUTTON who enter after the game, tired but elated from their win. ALL wear jeans and carry team bags. STEPHANIE and KAYLA have cell phones in their bags. KAYLA, SUTTON and STEPHANIE wear their “Champions” jackets.)*

SUTTON. That was so totally easy. We completely slaughtered them!

ABBY. I can't believe—twenty-one to three!

KAYLA. Weren't the Panthers tough last year?

SUTTON. Yeah, last year they nearly beat us. God, what a bunch of losers.

STEPHANIE. Yeah, well, if Anna Marie doesn't get out of her little dream world we may be losers, too.

KAYLA. Yeah, what's her problem?

ABBY. Really.

*(ANNA MARIE in “Champions” jacket and REBECCA enter, both in jeans. REBECCA proudly wears the new shirt that matches STEPHANIE's and is way too tight.)*

SUTTON. Sssh! *(Trying to act natural.)* Great game, huh guys?

*(STEPHANIE, SUTTON and KAYLA try to stifle their snickers at REBECCA in tight shirt.)*



REBECCA. Totally! Did you see them? The Panthers were like crying.

*(ANNA MARIE sits by herself, mopping her face with a towel.)*

SUTTON. Yeah, well, we'd be crying too if we lost twenty-one to three. Pathetic.

STEPHANIE *(smiling at ABBY)*. I think we have a better team than last year.

*(ABBY reacts happily.)*

STEPHANIE *(cont'd. Glaring at ANNA MARIE)*. But some people need to step up their game.

REBECCA. I know I didn't play my best, Steph! I get nervous!

STEPHANIE *(annoyed)*. Jeez, I wasn't talking about you, Rebecca. You played fine.

REBECCA *(relieved)*. Oh, okay.

KAYLA *(quickly taking cell phone out of her bag)*. Hey, Rebecca, you look so cute in that shirt. Let me get a picture.

REBECCA. Oh, okay, thanks!

*(KAYLA takes a picture as REBECCA poses.)*

REBECCA *(cont'd. Leaning over to check inside her team bag)*. Say, what's everybody doing tonight?

*(STEPHANIE grabs cell phone from KAYLA and sneaks a photograph of REBECCA's behind. GIRLS snicker.)*

REBECCA (*cont'd*). Anybody wanna do something? I could see if I could have everybody over.

(STEPHANIE, holding the cell phone behind her, surreptitiously returns it to KAYLA who stuffs it in her bag. GIRLS avoid looking at REBECCA. ANNA MARIE, unnoticed, exits.)

ABBY. I'd like to...but, uh, I can't. We're having company.

(STEPHANIE's cell phone rings and she digs for it in her bag.)

SUTTON. Me, too. Yeah, we are, too. Family dinner.

STEPHANIE. Shit, it's my mom.

KAYLA. Jeez, I think I'm supposed to baby-sit.

STEPHANIE. Oh, yeah. Listen, I can't tonight.

SUTTON. Me, either.

STEPHANIE. Look, I gotta get this. (*Crossing away she answers phone, annoyed.*) What, Mom?!

KAYLA (*trying not to laugh*). See ya, Becca. Hey, really cute shirt.

SUTTON. Yeah.

(SUTTON and KAYLA exit with their bags, giggling.)

ABBY (*to REBECCA, giggling*). Okay, well, good game. See you Monday, Rebecca.

*(ABBY exits. During STEPHANIE's following phone call, REBECCA crosses away, looks at her shirt, pulls it down self-consciously and sits.)*

STEPHANIE *(apart, on cell phone)*. Jeez, Mom, Dad wanted me to spend Christmas break with him! Why do you always do this? Can't you just lay off him?! You know I wanted to be with Dad. Just stop it, Mom! I gotta go! *(STEPHANIE hangs up.)* Shit!

*(Music underscores as she frantically texts on cell phone. Lights fade as STEPHANIE exits. Following text message appears on screen as REBECCA, in a single light and with her arms wrapped around herself, rocks back and forth.)*

*Fr: Steph*

*Hey luv u dad. c u wed I hope*

*—Steph*

*(Lights and music fade. Screen goes black. Lights rise as ABBY'S MOM enters with several papers, crosses to laptop stage R and signs on. ABBY, in jeans and T-shirt, enters with large pillow, cell phone and TV remote control. She drops pillow on floor, flops on it and turns TV on with remote control. TV program soundtrack plays under scene.)*

ABBY. Mom, can I go to Steph's tonight to sleep over?

We're all going.

ABBY'S MOM. Sure. That'll be fun.

ABBY (*to cell phone*). Hey, Steph. Yeah, I can go. (*ABBY clicks remote and volume increases.*)

ABBY'S MOM. What time did she invite you for?

ABBY (*to cell phone*). I'll call you later, Steph. I know!

Cool! Bye. (*She punches button on cell phone and turns up TV volume with remote.*) Seven.

ABBY'S MOM. It was really a great game, honey. You played really well.

ABBY. Thanks.

ABBY'S MOM. That's nice for Stephanie to have the whole team. You can all really celebrate.

ABBY. She didn't invite the whole team.

ABBY'S MOM. No? I thought you said you were all going.

ABBY. Yeah. All our group. We just don't want everybody on the team.

ABBY'S MOM. That's too bad. I hate to think anyone's left out.

ABBY. Jeez, Mom! Why do you have to turn everything into a lecture?! (*ABBY turns up volume and focuses on TV. Their voices raise over TV noise.*)

ABBY'S MOM. It's not a lecture. I just hate to think of someone's feelings being hurt. You remember how you felt when you told me they didn't want you to play.

ABBY. God, Mom, can't you let it go?

ABBY'S MOM. Abby, you know we don't talk like that in this house.

(*ABBY's cell phone rings.*)

ABBY (*annoyed on phone*). I can't talk now, Rebecca. Not now! (*She puts phone in pocket and addresses her MOM.*) Okay, sorry, so can I go?

ABBY'S MOM. I really do not like you to talk like that, Abby.

ABBY. Okay, I *understand*. Sorry. Can I go? (*ABBY'S MOM doesn't answer.*) Come on, Mom, you said I could! I already told Steph I could go!

ABBY'S MOM. I'd like you to think about what I've said! Okay? And will you turn that TV off!

*(ABBY mutes volume on TV. In the silence they glare at each other.)*

ABBY (*staring daggers*). Okay, Mom, I said I was sorry.

ABBY'S MOM (*annoyed*). Your dad'll be home later. He'll take you.

## Script for After Show Discussion

ACTOR PLAYING ABBY'S MOM OR THEATER REPRESENTATIVE: At this time we invite everyone to stay for a discussion about issues raised in the play. It is my pleasure to introduce our facilitator, \_\_\_\_\_.

FACILITATOR: Hello. My name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am a [physician/psychiatrist/psychologist/other healthcare professional] OR I am with/from \_\_\_\_\_. [A few words may be said about your organization or the work you are currently doing with adolescents.] I am here today to facilitate a discussion with you about issues raised in the play as well as strategies to stop bullying or deal with its effects. We welcome your comments, but we need to set a few quick ground rules. Please use school-appropriate language, even though the characters in the play did not. Also we need to keep comments as brief and to the point as possible. And, finally, please do not mention anyone by name.

Please raise your hand if you recognized any of the behaviors or situations in the play. [Call on those raising hands and receive their response. After responder's answer, repeat the answer so that everyone in the audience hears it.]

How did the girls in the play bully each other? [Ask about cyberbullying if not suggested.]

Why did Abby join in the bullying?

What were some of the consequences of the bullying?

Do you think that boys experience any of these situations?

What do you think the girls could have done to stop the bullying?

THEATER REPRESENTATIVE: Let's talk about one way to stop a bully. This strategy is called "being a defender." Bullying usually starts with one comment. Studies show that if one person in a group says something bad about someone else, the next voice is the most important. If the next voice in the group is kind, there's a chance that the bullying will be stopped before it starts. For example, let's go back to very early in Abby's story—one day at lunch:

SUTTON. Hey, guys, let's all wear our championship jackets tomorrow for tryouts.

ANNA MARIE. We just gotta win again this year.

KAYLA. I have been working on my serve all summer.

REBECCA. Me, too.

STEPHANIE. Hey, guys, I hear Abby wants to be on the team! (*Annoyed.*) Please!

THEATER REPRESENTATIVE: Okay, freeze. Stephanie's comment is the beginning of bullying. As we saw in the play, other girls joined in and escalated the situation. But this is the time when a single voice could make a difference. Chandler, what might you have said if you had been there?

CHANDLER. Guys, let's leave it up to Coach. She'll pick the right players and I really don't feel comfortable talking about someone when they're not here.

THEATER REPRESENTATIVE: Two great comments. So, let's say that you in the audience are all members of this championship team. Can someone else be a defender and give me a suggestion of what you could say after Stephanie's comment?

[Theater Representative will then receive some positive, defender comments from the audience. Examples of comments: "Let's give her a chance." "We've never seen her play. Abby might be really good." "We were all beginners when we started playing, then we got better."]

THEATER REPRESENTATIVE: Now let's try the scene again.

SUTTON. Hey, guys, let's all wear our championship jackets tomorrow for tryouts.

ANNA MARIE. We just gotta win again this year.

KAYLA. I have been working on my serve all summer.

REBECCA. Me, too.

STEPHANIE. Hey, guys, I hear Abby wants to be on the team! (*Annoyed.*) Please!

THEATER REPRESENTATIVE (calling on two or three audience members who have volunteered): Now will you each say your comment to Stephanie?



[Audience members repeat their previous comments.]

THEATER REPRESENTATIVE: And then the scene might have played out like this:

CHANDLER. Guys, let's leave it up to Coach. She'll pick the right players and I really don't feel comfortable talking about someone when they're not here.

SUTTON. I don't care who's on the team. I just want to win.

ANNA MARIE. I think everybody should get to play volleyball if they want to.

KAYLA. I practiced serves with Abby. She is good.

REBECCA. Abby is a good athlete.

ALL. Go, Fireballs!

THEATER REPRESENTATIVE: Thank you.

[Final comment by facilitator and announcement about information and resources in the lobby provided by community organizations or agencies.]

THEATER REPRESENTATIVE: Thank you for being at this performance of *The Secret Life of Girls*. We hope that you will take a hard look at the destructive consequences of bullying and do what you can do to be a force to stop it. And we want you to know, if it's happened to you...

CAST (*together*). You're not alone.