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*Dramatic Publishing*

# THE BULLY PLAYS

## 24 Short Plays by

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Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

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(THE BULLY PLAYS)

ISBN: 978-1-58342-723-1

# A Bunch of Clowns

By Sandra Fenichel Asher

CHARACTERS (m or w)

RINGMASTER

CLOWNS ..... (at least 3, 6 would be better,  
and a bunch more is better still)

NEW KID

SETTING AND TIME: A school...a circus...no, a school...  
no, a circus. Take your pick. Any time.

WORDS TO PONDER: *There is a foggy borderland between clowning around and cruelty, good-natured teasing and bullying. The action of this play begins on the benign side of that borderland, enters it, and ventures across to the other side. Director and actors are encouraged to explore the subtle differences of intent and action and how best to dramatize them.*

*(Circus MUSIC. RINGMASTER enters, strutting pompously. He is in full clown costume, with fright wig and red nose but is differentiated from the others by a top hat, whip and domineering personality. RINGMASTER is followed on by a bunch of CLOWNS who shuffle along in an awkward huddle, grinning foolishly. Some carry clown assault paraphernalia: slapsticks, foam bats or sawed-off Pool Noodles, seltzer bottles or other spritzers. ALL circle the stage, RINGMASTER in the lead. With each*

*crack of RINGMASTER's whip, CLOWNS interrupt their shuffle to execute a small, hiccup-like jump of surprise, after which they immediately resume their huddle and grinning. As RINGMASTER and CLOWNS approach UC an unremarkable NEW KID enters downstage, in street clothes, with backpack. NEW KID crosses stage, looking first-day disoriented. Upon seeing NEW KID, RINGMASTER brings CLOWN huddle to an abrupt stop.)*

RINGMASTER (*cracking whip*). HALT!

*(MUSIC, CLOWNS and NEW KID stop short. ALL except RINGMASTER react to whip with a small jump of surprise. Then—)*

RINGMASTER (*cont'd*). Hey! New Kid!

NEW KID. Who, me?

RINGMASTER. You're new, aren't you?

NEW KID. Yes.

RINGMASTER. Right! You're a kid, aren't you?

NEW KID. Yes.

RINGMASTER. Right! So that's why I'm calling you New Kid.

NEW KID. Oh. But—

RINGMASTER. You've run away to join the circus, haven't you?

NEW KID. No, I'm here for the first day of school—

RINGMASTER. School. Circus. Circus. School. Take your pick. What's in a name?

NEW KID. Well, actually—

RINGMASTER. Nothing! So step right up! Let's have a look at you, New Kid. We've got to figure out where you fit into the act.

NEW KID. Oh...okay...I guess.

*(NEW KID hesitantly moves a bit closer to RINGMASTER and grinning, huddled CLOWNS.)*

RINGMASTER. Here's how it goes, New Kid. You want to be in the act, you have three choices. Allow us to demonstrate.

*(RINGMASTER cracks whip. OTHERS jump as before, then three CLOWNS quickly line up to demonstrate.)*

RINGMASTER (*cont'd*). You can play the Bully...

*(RINGMASTER cracks whip. ALL jump. CLOWN #1 strikes a tough pose.)*

RINGMASTER (*cont'd*). You can play the Bullied...

*(Same business. CLOWN #2 strikes an intimidated pose.)*

RINGMASTER (*cont'd*). Or you can play the Bystander...

*(Same business. CLOWN #3 strikes a nonchalant pose.)*

RINGMASTER (*cont'd*). Do it!

*(RINGMASTER cracks whip. OTHERS jump. Then CLOWN #1 whacks CLOWN #2 on the back and strikes a gloating pose. CLOWN #2 falls flat on the floor and stays there, cowered and whimpering. CLOWN #3 turns away and assumes a nonchalant pose.)*

CLOWN #3. I din't see nothin'.

*(CLOWNS #1, #2 and #3 freeze.)*