

Reporting: A Play About High School Bullying

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ACTOR 1/RYAN enters. As he hits center stage he trips and falls. RYAN lays there embarrassed as NARRATOR enters the stage and speaks.

NARRATOR

Dayton, Ohio. Ryan Boerigter's (BO-RICK-TER's) first day at his new high school after his family moved from Rhode Island. As he walks into the gym for the school's pep rally, Ryan stumbles and falls right in front of the bleachers full of students. The students all turn, stare, and laugh. And that was Ryan Boerigter's best day of school that year.

ACTOR 2 enters portraying Melissa, standing at her locker. She has a cellphone.

NARRATOR

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Melissa Rogers is at her locker between classes when she receives a text from one of her best friends, Kelli Peterson. The text reads: "How could you say those things about me?"

ACTOR 2

What? *(she goes to respond)*

NARRATOR

Before Melissa can respond, Kelli sends another text. This one reads "I guess we're not friends anymore." Confused and not knowing what else to do, Melissa texts to Kelli...

ACTOR 2

I am so sorry for whatever I did!

NARRATOR

Kelli's text just says, "You will be."

San Diego, California. Stewart Jackson returns home from school bloodied after a beating he received from some of his classmates that afternoon. He walks into his house and throws his backpack down. His father hears the commotion from downstairs and calls to his son:

ACTOR 1

(offstage) Everything okay up there Stewart?

ACTOR 3

I'm fine!

ACTOR 1
(*offstage*) Are you sure?

ACTOR 3
I said, I'm fine!

ACTOR 1
(*offstage*) Stewart...

ACTOR 3
Leave me alone!

NARRATOR
In a fit of frustration, Stewart punches a hole in the wall and breaks his hand. Because of this Stewart has to cancel the one event he was looking forward to, his hunting trip with his father.

All of the actors come to the front of the stage and speak directly to the audience.

ACTOR 1
The RESPECT program has been doing plays about bullying and harassment for the past ten years. Over this time we have been to schools all over Nebraska and Iowa in order to try and open up a discussion about the topic and to try to convince students to report bullying incidents as they occur.

ACTOR 3
This topic has brought forth tears and heartache not just for students, but also for the teachers who see this in their schools every day. Bullying is cruel and unkind. Yet there are still those out there who don't think it's a problem worth discussing and there are still students who will not report bullying to their teachers.

ACTOR 2
Today we are going to report to you about the stories of Ryan Boerigter, Melissa Rogers, and Stewart Jackson to inform you of the serious effects and life threatening consequences that the cruelty of bullying can have on the individuals involved. Please know that while these stories are not true in their entirety, they are all based on true stories we have heard or read about.

NARRATOR
The story of Ryan Boerigter continued. Dayton High School. Ryan has never had a *real* conversation with any other student at school. He tries for the first week or so. A girl from the student council, Tara Scott, had given him a tour on his first day, and she was also in his Chemistry class. She was friendly while she was showing him around, so Ryan gets up his courage and tries to talk to her.

ACTOR 1
Hey Tara!

ACTOR 2

Hi, uh...Ryan? Right?

ACTOR 1

Yeah! Yeah, I'm in your chemistry class. Um, and, speaking of, I was hoping you might be able to...

ACTOR 2

Look, Ryan...I've...got to get to class. (*she leaves, quickly, embarrassed for him*)

ACTOR 1

Right...right.

NARRATOR

Ryan's interactions with other students go the same way. They would ignore him completely or walk right by him, as if he were diseased. Ryan has nobody he feels he can talk to. His only confidant is a friend he had in Rhode Island, Trevor Sullivan, whom he texts daily.

ACTOR 1

Trevor, Dayton is terrible. Nobody likes me at school. Nobody. I had so many friends at our school and now...I don't know what to do. Sometimes I just wish somebody would just say they hate me so I would at least know that I'm not invisible. I've tried to talk to people. What's it gonna take for them to be just a little kinder. I know you said it'll get better...it isn't. I'm sick of it.

NARRATOR

A text to Trevor, a week later.

ACTOR 1

Well...I'm no longer invisible at school. I was walking to class and one of the guys from my social studies class came up to me in the most crowded hallway in the school. Everybody stopped what they were doing and turned to watch him say....

ACTOR 3

Hey Ryan! Hi Buddy! Hey, I was just wondering, I know you've been trying to find a new best friend in the whole wide world and I was wondering if maybe I could be your new best friend? We can play baseball and ride ponies together. It'll be so much fun, don't you think, new best friend?!?

ACTOR 1

What a jerk, right? I tried to walk right by him. He stuck out his foot, tripped me, and everybody laughed. I've never been so embarrassed in my life. So now the newest funny thing to do at school is pretend that you are my best friend. Somebody tells me that I am their best friend at least ten times a day. And not one of them means it.

NARRATOR

The story of Melissa Rogers continued. Oklahoma City. Melissa has not talked to Kelli since the previous day and she has a bad feeling. None of her friends were talking to her anymore. They would just stare, whisper, and laugh whenever they saw her. Melissa did her best to ignore it, hoping the incident would blow over. Then one day, Melissa's younger brother Josh approaches her at her locker.

ACTOR 3

Melissa, what happened with you and Kelli?

ACTOR 2

I don't know! I didn't do anything, and I don't know what she thinks I did...

ACTOR 3

Whatever it was, she's really mad. I've heard some really bad stuff she's said about you-

ACTOR 2

Like what?

ACTOR 3

And I know none of it's true, and I try to tell people it's not true, and I probably shouldn't even be telling you this but this...

ACTOR 2

Josh! Just tell me, okay?

ACTOR 3

This was in my locker today. *(He hands her a slip of paper)* They were in everybody's lockers today. It's a website--

ACTOR 2

www.melissatheslut.com...?

ACTOR 3

I'm sorry. *(he exits)*

NARRATOR

When Melissa goes to this web address she was shocked by what she finds: a list of over thirty people who had all supposedly pledged that they slept with Melissa. The list included some of her close friends, some names she didn't recognize, and even some teachers. Also on the website was a link to join the....

ACTOR 2

(As if reading from the screen) "I hate Melissa club." Welcome to the "I hate Melissa club" official website. In order to become a member, simply wear a small star sticker directly next to your right eye.

NARRATOR

The next day, Melissa walked around school and saw little star stickers next to nearly everybody's right eye.

Stewart Jackson's story, continued. San Diego, California. Stewart goes back to school the day after he gets beat up and everybody there is calling him...

ACTOR 1

PISSBOY! Hey pissboy! How's it going? Now don't get pissed off cause ya might get pissed on.

NARRATOR

Later that day Stewart goes to the restroom. When he gets there he looks down into the urinal and sees a picture. It's him. He goes to another urinal.

ACTOR 3

What in the-

NARRATOR

Another picture of him. The bullies had put a picture of him in every urinal in the school.

Stewart took all the wet pictures, crumpled them up into a ball, and stuffed them in the locker of the kid he thought was behind it.

Later that day Stewart had gym class. When he came out of the shower and was putting on his shoes he noticed they were all wet and they smelled. The bullies had urinated in his shoes while he was in the shower.

ACTOR 1

Don't mess with me pissboy, cause I will get you.

NARRATOR

With no other shoes to wear and to prove to the guys who did it that it didn't bother him, Stewart wore the urine-soaked shoes for the rest of the day.

Dayton, Ohio. Ryan Boerigter is feeling more isolated than ever. He still has not made friends at school, and his friend Trevor still hasn't responded to his messages. He is sitting at home when he receives a message from Tara Scott, the girl from his chemistry class.

ACTOR 2

Hi Ryan! It's Tara! I'm just writing because I know that you haven't made many friends and have been looking to hang out with some people. I really liked talking to you that day I gave you the school tour, and I was just wondering if you would want to go out sometime? Maybe Saturday?

NARRATOR

Ryan didn't quite know what to think. Every time he had tried to talk to Tara before she had ignored him. He was hoping that she was being honest, but he was wary. He replied:

ACTOR 1

Tara, I just don't know. You seem really nice and cool and everything, but most of the people who have offered to be my friend have been making fun of me. So I think you understand why I'm not so sure about this. Ryan.

ACTOR 2

What?!? You don't believe me?!?

ACTOR 1

No! It's not that I don't believe you, I just don't know you very well and I haven't been here for that long. I guess I'm just scared.

ACTOR 2

Ryan, please don't be scared, it's just me! How could going out on a date with me be a bad thing?

ACTOR 1

I'm sorry. I just am going a little crazy these days with all that's going on at school. I'd love to go out with you. Saturday did you say?

ACTOR 2

Yes, Saturday night. Let's meet at the game.

NARRATOR

Ryan's message to his friend Trevor, the day before the date.

ACTOR 1

Look Trevor, I don't know why you haven't been emailing me lately, but I have to talk to somebody about this. I am actually really excited to go out with this girl Tara tomorrow night! I was a little worried about it at first, but she's been really nice to me all week in our Chemistry class. I don't know if I want her to be my girlfriend or whatever, but it's just nice to have somebody to hang out with again. I think tomorrow night is going to turn this year around.

NARRATOR

Ryan's message, the night of the date.

ACTOR 1

So I showed up at the game tonight and Tara was there.

RYAN approaches TARA and hugs her.

ACTOR 3

Hey!

ACTOR 1

And there was this guy there and suddenly I realized I was surrounded by a bunch of other kids, and he said to me...

ACTOR 3

That's my girlfriend you're hugging. What do you think you're doing?

ACTOR 1

Uhhh, well I just...

ACTOR 3

Uhhhh, just what?

ACTOR 1

She asked me to go out with her.

ACTOR 3

Why would she ask you to go out with her? She's my girlfriend. I think you must have come onto her. I think you probably said something like, Hey, wanna be my new best friend? We can be best friends forever, take long walks together, and go to the zoo!

ACTOR 3 pushes RYAN.

NARRATOR

The last lines of Ryan's message to Trevor that night are:

ACTOR 1

I can't stop crying. I just can't stop crying.

NARRATOR

He doesn't send the message to Trevor. Ryan doesn't go to school on Monday. When Ryan doesn't show up for Chemistry class, Tara sends him a Facebook message:

ACTOR 2

Ryan, I'm so sorry about yesterday.... My boyfriend made me set you up, he thought it'd be funny, he said it would be harmless... But you seemed really upset. I know it was really unkind..Can you all me?

NARRATOR

Ryan doesn't get Tara's text, and he doesn't get the text from Trevor apologizing for not answering his messages. Instead, Ryan gets out of bed, takes his little sister's jump rope, ties one end to a banister in his home, and ties the other end around his neck, and jumps.

Oklahoma City. Melissa Rogers goes home after school visibly upset. Her brother Josh shows their mother the website that Melissa's classmates had set up and tells her about the "I hate Melissa club." Their mother immediately takes action and calls the school. The school punishes each of the bullies, including Kelli, with suspensions. The star stickers are forbidden at school and the website gets deleted.

ACTOR 2 and 3 enter)

ACTOR 2

Josh, I can't believe you told Mom about that website! You got all my friends suspended! Kelli will never talk to me now...

ACTOR 3

Kelli is *not* a good friend, Melissa! The things she's been doing to you are terrible! Why would you want to be friends with someone like that?

ACTOR 2

I just want things to be the way they were before. I'm calling Kelli (*gets out her phone*)

ACTOR 3

No! Mom said not to talk to her anymore.

ACTOR 2

Mom doesn't know what she's talking about—(She begins to text)

ACTOR 3

...fine. (*Josh leaves, as soon as he does she texts:*)

Kelli, I am so sorry for everything that has happened this past month. I will do anything if we could just be friends again.

NARRATOR

Kelli's response is, "Anything."

ACTOR 2

Yes. Anything!

NARRATOR

Kelli tells Melissa to meet her over on a bridge by the White River at nine o'clock that night. Melissa agrees to do so. Melissa knows her family won't let her go, so she sneaks out. When she gets to the bridge, Kelli and a bunch of other girls are there. Kelli is smoking a cigarette. Melissa tries to apologize, and Kelli puts her cigarette out on Melissa's face. Then, she orders the other girls there to beat Melissa.

Stewart Jackson's story continued. San Diego, California.

Stewart gets home from school. His father asks him why his shoes smell like urine and Stewart tells him.

Stewart's father calls the school to report the problem, but since Stewart refuses to name the bullies, there is little they can do. The problem continues, until one day the bullies think it will be funny just to urinate on all of Stewart's clothes. The gym teacher sees this, and the bullies finally have some repercussions; each of them gets a detention. When Stewart gets home from school

that day, he puts one of his dad's hunting pistols into his backpack. His father catches him before he leaves the house,

ACTOR 1

Stewart, one of my guns is missing, have you seen it?

ACTOR 3

I don't know. *(he tries to leave)*

ACTOR 1

I hate to even ask Stewart, but did you take it?

ACTOR 3

What?

ACTOR 1

Let me see your backpack.

ACTOR 3

No!

ACTOR 1

Stewart!

ACTOR 3

LEAVE ME ALONE!

They face off. They do not act out the narration.

NARRATOR

Stewart forcefully shoves his father away and Mr. Jackson falls down a flight of basement stairs, losing consciousness.

ACTOR 1

Dayton Ohio. Thirty seconds after I jumped my mom came home. She pulled me down and saved my life. After that we went to a therapist, and we decided it would be best to switch schools. I joined the speech team at my new school and took them to the state championships. It took time, but I made friends at my new school and things got better for me.

ACTOR 3

San Diego, California. My father was unconscious after I accidentally pushed him down the stairs. I called an ambulance. He had a broken arm and two broken ribs. The police came and I admitted to taking the gun. I started talking to the school counselor, and they decided to rewrite their student handbook to make sure a bullying situation never get so out of control again.

NARRATOR

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Melissa Rogers is mobbed by a group of her classmates and former friends. She is beaten and thrown off the White River bridge. She drowns. Fifteen girls witnessed the crime but it takes three months for one of them to report exactly what happened to the authorities. At the trial, every girl said they didn't mean to hurt Melissa, that things had just "spiraled out of control." Kelli and four of her accomplices are now in prison.

ACTOR 1

Stories like Ryan's, Melissa's, and Stewart's are all reasons why we think bullying is a serious problem that is worth discussing.

ACTOR 2

These three examples are of some of the worst possible bullying situations. Of course, not every bullying situation ends up in the news. But stories like these happen more often than you may think.

ACTOR 3

And we don't think they should happen at all. And you may think, "Something like that would never happen at my school." But no one ever thinks it could never happen at theirs. Until it does.

ACTOR 1

The first step to solving a problem is talking about it. So please, report bullying to your fellow classmates, parents, and teachers. We can all help prevent these situations from occurring. And one of the best ways to stop bullying is reporting.

ACTOR 2

Take responsibility for yourself and your school and have the courage to report. We would like to leave you today not with a story of sadness, but instead with a story about the power of bystanders.

NARRATOR

Jacksonville, Florida. Freshman Robert Mulligan has been continually bullied by a group of his classmates. He is pushed and harrassed in the hallways, threatened in the locker room, and sent abusive emails and messages on facebook. He feels isolated and depressed, and has considered suicide more than once. And then one day...

Actor 3, as ROBERT, sits.

ACTOR 3

...and then one day, I'm getting shoved up against my locker, and the counselor, Mrs. Williams, sees it. She takes the guy to the principal's office and she makes me come meet with her. She asked me if I was getting bullied, and I said I wasn't...trying to save face, you know? I mean, it was embarrassing! And she tells me that she knows I've been getting bullied, and then she pulls these slips of paper out of her desk...*(Robert pulls slips of paper out of his pocket)*...see, Mrs. Williams had this "anonymous reporting box" outside of her office, and she had all these reports from kids at my school...

ACTOR 1 (*as a student*)

There's this kid, Robert--

ACTOR 2 (*as a student*)

Robert Mulligan--

ACTOR 1

There's a freshman kid--

ACTOR 2

I think his name's Robert? Blond? Skinny?

ACTOR 3

A lot of them didn't know my name. A lot of them just said:

ACTOR 1

Some guy.

ACTOR 2

A kid.

ACTOR 3

They didn't know my name...but they'd seen what was going on with the kids in my class. They wrote these notes, telling Mrs. Williams that I was getting bullied, and how, and where. (*he looks up from the slips of paper*) The thing was, I knew people saw them picking on me, they always did it right in the hallway or the lunchroom in front of everyone...but I had just assumed no one had cared. But these notes, they said:

ACTOR 1

I want to help, but I don't want them to pick on me...

ACTOR 2

I want to help, but I don't know what to do...

ACTOR 3

And a lot...a lot...said

ACTOR 1 & ACTOR 2

I'm worried about him.

ACTOR 3

I told Mrs. Williams about my depression, and that I had been thinking about hurting myself. She called my parents and they took me to see a psychologist. (*holds up the papers*) A lot of these kids didn't know my name, and I don't know any of theirs. But I do know that they were really kind and they saved my life. And whoever they are, I am thankful to them every day for that.

Thanks for listening.