

TOP OF THE TOTEM POLE

By Deanna Ableser

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TOP OF THE TOTEM POLE

A Dramatic Ten Minute Skit

By Deanna Ableser

SYNOPSIS: Bullying is a terrifying phenomenon that causes terrifying consequences. *Top of the Totem Pole* explores physical and psychological bullying in an abstract and detached manner, allowing the audience to delve into the subject in an appropriate and non-threatening manner. Let this play help your school and community be part of the solution to this increasing crisis.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 female, 2 males, 1 either, 4-20 extras; gender flexible)

YOUNG GIRL (f).....	Age 11-15. Demeanor is very professional. Very adult like. <i>(45 lines)</i>
BOY (m)	Age 11-14. Definitely a top of the totem pole kid. Popular and well liked. <i>(39 lines)</i>
JUDGE (m/f).....	Adult or Teen. Watches action throughout, but says very little. Takes notes throughout 'trial' process. <i>(2 lines)</i>
SMALL BOY (m).....	Age 11-14. He is small in stature. He is the weak child at school, the one who is always picked on. <i>(3 lines)</i>
STAGE MANAGER/CREW (m/f).....	Teens. <i>(Non-Speaking)</i>
JURY/AUDIENCE (m/f).....	Teens. <i>(Non-Speaking)</i>

SET: Bare stage. Podium, tall stool, and ten chairs are brought out in play.

LIGHTING EFFECTS

- ☐ Flashing Lights
- ☐ Spotlight

COSTUMES

YOUNG GIRL – Professionally dressed and groomed. Wears a dark suit and carries a brief case.

BOY – Plain looking. Dressed in cool clothes.

JUDGE – Professionally dressed in judge's attire.

SMALL BOY – His clothes are torn and he looks markedly disheveled.

STAGE MANAGER/CREW – Dressed all in black.

JURY/ AUDIENCE – Dressed in nondescript clothing that will not detract from boy, small boy, or young girl.

PROPS

- ☐ Whistle
- ☐ Gavel
- ☐ Broom
- ☐ Smart Phone/Calculator
- ☐ Paperwork
- ☐ Paper
- ☐ Pens/Pencil

DIRECTOR NOTES

This is an abstract piece that deals with the aftermath of youth/teen bullying. It can be interpreted directly as a trial or more indirectly. It depends on your cast, your community and how the issue can and needs to be portrayed.

AT RISE: *A single chair is brought out on stage. It is placed center stage. BOY is walked out to chair by STAGE MANAGER, who gestures for BOY to sit down. BOY sits and STAGE MANAGER exits. A spotlight is turned on and aimed at BOY'S face. He tries to block his face. YOUNG GIRL enters and stands next to him.*

YOUNG GIRL: You can't block your face fully. You're sitting center stage.

BOY: I don't understand why I was brought here.

YOUNG GIRL: Of course you understand. You're sitting here. You wouldn't be sitting here if you didn't understand.

BOY: My parents said I needed to sit here. That I'd understand as soon as I sat here.

YOUNG GIRL: You have very smart parents. *(Pause as spotlight is turned off.)* You don't recognize the surroundings then?

BOY: *(Looking out towards audience.)* It looks pretty barren. I'm not seeing much.

YOUNG GIRL: Maybe a few more set pieces would help bring it more clearly into focus.

BOY: I'm doing what I was told to do. I don't know how much more you can expect from me.

YOUNG GIRL: There's a lot more we can expect from you.

YOUNG GIRL takes out a whistle and blows it. STAGE MANAGER and STAGE CREW start bringing out more chairs, a podium, and a tall stool. They set things up like a courtroom. Six chairs are for the JURY, angled facing the BOY horizontally. The podium is placed directly behind the boy with a tall stool. The other four chairs are split (two on each side) angled towards the BOY close to edge of stage. They are all angled so we can see faces of people sitting there, but not fully. YOUNG GIRL blows whistle again and the following people come out to take positions. JUDGE goes behind podium. JURY takes the jury seats. AUDIENCE take courtroom audience seats.

YOUNG GIRL: Spark any memories yet?

BOY: Nothing that comes immediately to mind.

YOUNG GIRL: That's a choice you're making then.

JUDGE: (*Banging gavel.*) I'd like to call this trial to order. Everyone, please rise.

Everyone rises except for BOY.

YOUNG GIRL: The judge told you to rise. I'd suggest you do what he says. (*Whispering.*) He can be quite cranky if you don't do what he says.

BOY: I'm not so sure I need to do anything.

YOUNG GIRL: The judge has started your trial. I think you need to do a lot of things. Maybe if you hadn't been so apathetic in the first place, you wouldn't be sitting here. You'd be sitting at home, playing video games, having a nice relaxing time with the family pet...

BOY: I don't have a dog.

YOUNG GIRL: I didn't say dog. I said family pet.

BOY: Whatever.

YOUNG GIRL: I'd say that attitude is part of what got you into things in the first place.

BOY: I don't have an attitude.

YOUNG GIRL: Perhaps we will see what the Judge has to say about that. He's a very good Judge. He's not wrong often.

JUDGE bangs gavel again.

YOUNG GIRL: I think he's upset. (*Whispering louder.*) I told you I'd suggest you do what he says.

BOY looks around and sees everyone else standing. He slowly gets out of his seat and looks at the JUDGE. JUDGE then gestures for everyone to sit down, which everyone does, except for YOUNG GIRL and BOY. There is a short pause.

YOUNG GIRL: He's waiting.

BOY: For what?

YOUNG GIRL: For you to enter your plea. Don't you think that's pretty self-explanatory?

BOY: I don't have a plea.

YOUNG GIRL: I'm certain you do. You've been accused of being a bully. Given your current behavior, I can easily see why. You should have a written plea ready to go. If your attorney has not advised you of that, perhaps you selected the wrong attorney.

BOY: I don't have an attorney.

JURY and AUDIENCE start whispering. JUDGE bangs gavel and they are all silent.

YOUNG GIRL: If you've reached the stage of the trial, you must have an attorney. It's extremely unusual, to say the least.

JURY and AUDIENCE start whispering again. JUDGE raises gavel and all are silent.

YOUNG GIRL: No one's ever heard of getting to this point without an attorney.

JUDGE bangs gavel again and SMALL BOY comes out.

YOUNG GIRL: I'm going to go ahead and assume you don't know this young man. You do seem relatively clueless so far.

SMALL BOY bends over quickly as if he has just been sucker punched in the stomach.

YOUNG GIRL: Any memories sparked now?

BOY: I know who he is.

There is chattering again amongst JURY and AUDIENCE.

YOUNG GIRL: An interesting change of events. Your memories are coming back now then, I assume.

BOY: I know who the boy is.

YOUNG GIRL: He's not the only one of course. There were others who didn't come.

BOY: *(In a biting manner.)* I said I know who the boy is. I don't understand your pushing the situation.

YOUNG GIRL: I'm not pushing the situation. You're the one on trial.
You're the one that's going to have to justify your actions.
BOY: I'm not sure I need to justify anything. I did what I needed to do.

There is more chattering amongst the JURY and AUDIENCE. JUDGE bangs gavel and they all quiet down.

YOUNG GIRL: I don't think you scored a lot of points with that response. We did the best we could to get a non-biased jury, but it was a challenge to say the least. I wouldn't suggest turning them against you so early in the game. *(Pause.)* It's kinda a no brainer.

BOY: Some people just get in the way.

YOUNG GIRL: And that's supposed to mean what?

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