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Dramatic Publishing

The Cycle



Drama
By
Tiffany Kontoyiannis

“Serves as a springboard for discussion about the serious impact bullying can have on the psychological well-being of young people and provides an excellent framework for planning bullying prevention efforts.”

—Dr. April Vogel, PhD.

The Cycle

Drama. By *Tiffany Kontoyiannis*. Cast: 4 to 5m., 5 to 8w., 2 to 3 either gender. By bringing the bully, the bystander and the victim to the stage, *The Cycle* dramatizes the negative effects and harms of bullying. We meet several relatable characters: a bystander who hasn't found the courage to stand up to bullies, a crazy mother who believes that she knows everything about her son by friending him on Facebook, and even an insecure grown woman who hasn't been able to forget the hurtful words she was called in high school. We also meet a victim who has chosen to overcome her painful experience with bullying by focusing on her schoolwork; however, we also see how she could have negatively chosen to deal with it. This award-winning play sparks discussion by creating relatable characters in whom anyone can see themselves. *Flexible set. Approximate running time: 30 minutes. Code: CQ5.*

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The Cycle

By

TIFFANY KONTOYIANNIS



Dramatic Publishing Company

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(THE CYCLE)

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*To Pamela Locker
for believing in the power of the stage
and its ability to change the world*

The Cycle received its premier production at Smurfit Hall at Miami Country Day School, Miami, on Sept.16, 2010, with the following cast:

1st Girl	Tiffany Kontoyiannis
2nd Girl	Amy Bernard
Girl Bully	Alexa Halvorsen
Coach	Mandy Louis-Jacques
Insecure Girl.....	Sasha Brigante
Insecure Grown Woman.....	Luiselena Leon Nuñez
Bystander	Khadijah Stephen
Bully.....	Facundo Garcia-Flores
Insecure Victim	Livio Zanardo
Oblivious Mother	Erica Liverman
Son	Joshua Rivas
Mother.....	Alessandra Settineri
Ghost.....	Alexa Randolph
Teacher	Amy Bernard

Thank you in particular to the following cast members: Joshua Rivas, Luiselena Leon Nuñez, Khadijah Stephen, Evan Iaslovits, Facundo Garcia Flores, Alejandra Settineri, Alexa Randolph, Amy Bernard, Madison Gallup and Marnie Weiss. It was such an amazing experience to be able to work with all of you, and I appreciate the love you put into making these characters come to life.

The Cycle

CHARACTERS

1ST GIRL: Makes negative choices in an unfortunate situation.

2ND GIRL: Makes positive choices in an unfortunate situation.

GIRL BULLY: Very snobby, rude, weight-conscious and demanding teenager.

COACH: Extremely tough, strict and mean.

INSECURE GIRL: Insecure, self-conscious girl. Younger version of Insecure Grown Woman.

INSECURE GROWN WOMAN: Insecure, self-conscious and unable to let go of her past.

BYSTANDER: Insecure, caring and struggles to find the courage she needs.

BULLY: Inconsiderate, mean, conceited and careless about his actions.

INSECURE VICTIM: Extremely insecure and hopeless.

OBLIVIOUS MOTHER: Snobby and refuses to believe her child is being bullied.

SON: Mean, cocky teenager who finds it amusing to bully others.

MOTHER: Proud and oblivious to who her son really is.

GHOST: Insecure, chubby and has completely given up hope.

TEACHER: Concerned, caring and feeling guilty.

BOY: Gay and uncertain how to deal with bullies.

JOCK: Insecure, mean and indicates that he may be gay.

Please see the back of the book for post-show processing questions and facts on bullying.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would first and foremost like to thank Dr. April Vogel for her unbelievable support and dedication to this project. From the first moment I brought this idea to you, you have been *The Cycle's* number one supporter. The countless hours you spent helping edit and helping improve this project has made all the difference. You saw its potential before anyone else, and I will always think of you when I look back at this wonderful journey.

I am truly thankful as well for Christopher D'angelo for believing in my writing and for spending countless hours helping edit the script. You gave me the confidence I needed in my writing and helped me believe that I could do so much with it. You perfected this play and have truly been an amazing coach. Thank you for believing in my writing, my acting and my passion for theatre.

I am eternally grateful to Miami Country Day School, the place where this all began. You have given me the tools and strength I needed to discover myself. Thank you to all the faculty, teachers and administrators that always encouraged me to keep going and gave me the courage to stand up for what I believe in. Thank you for always welcoming me back and for being my second home in Miami. Thank you for every parent-coffee, student hall and assembly time you let me use to present *The Cycle*. MCDS will always have a place in my heart.

I would also like to thank Glen Turf and Carolyn Dorn for always having been tremendous supporters in the play. In addition, I would like to thank Antonio Semprún for believing in this play and its message. You have truly gone above and beyond to help me make a difference.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents for having been my number one support system in this process. From the moment I was bullied, you have always believed in my voice and my right to speak out when I needed to. You were my best friends in a time I felt I didn't have any and have always continued to support my dreams. Thank you for always sitting front row for every aspect of my life.

The Cycle

(1ST GIRL and 2ND GIRL walk onstage from opposite sides. One is wearing all black while the other is wearing all white. Both symbolize the same person. However, each person represents a different ending to their story.)

1ST GIRL. Everybody faces moments of decision,

2ND GIRL. Moments when they can choose to improve their lives

1ST GIRL. Or surrender.

2ND GIRL. This is the moment where I had to choose.

1ST GIRL. It could have gone either way.

BOTH. My name is Amanda, and this is my story.

2ND GIRL. People told me that high school wouldn't be easy.

But in reality, neither is life.

1ST GIRL. My freshman year was amazing,

2ND GIRL. I had all the same classes as my best friend and got along with almost all the girls in my class.

1ST GIRL. I was also friends with this girl named Lindsey.

2ND GIRL. She was the friend that loved to boss everyone around,

1ST GIRL. Made everyone lie to cover up her mistakes

2ND GIRL. And humiliated anyone who made her look bad.

1ST GIRL. She had the most amazing parties and sleepovers,

2ND GIRL. And her house was ENORMOUS.

1ST GIRL. She made it seem that being friends with her was a privilege,

2ND GIRL. And maybe that was true, but

1ST GIRL. My sophomore year,

2ND GIRL. She made it very clear that being her enemy was a nightmare.

1ST GIRL. It all started when my best friend's boyfriend had broken up with her.

2ND GIRL. I told her the truth ... (*Takes a deep breath.*) That Lindsey was responsible for it.

1ST GIRL. Lindsey would call him and tell him that my best friend was cheating on him!

2ND GIRL. Of course it was a lie, and I didn't want to watch that happen again.

1ST GIRL. As soon as I told my friend the truth, she confronted Lindsey. Lindsey denied everything, and I stood up for my friend and said I was done watching Lindsey control everything and everyone

2ND GIRL. This all happened the day before winter break, and I got a phone call from Lindsey that night

1ST GIRL. She sounded very quiet, yet very stern.

2ND GIRL (*looks down*). She said I would regret telling the truth, 'cause now,

1ST GIRL. She was going to make my life a living hell ...

2ND GIRL. The minute we came back from winter break, Lindsey began to spread awful rumors about me.

1ST GIRL. She drew pictures and posted them on Facebook.

2ND GIRL. She put inappropriate pictures in my locker,

1ST GIRL. Turned my best friend against me ...

2ND GIRL. And didn't allow me to sit at the table with my friends, leaving me no choice but to eat alone.

1ST GIRL. I was miserable.

2ND GIRL. They would throw things at me, and turned almost the whole school against me.

1ST GIRL. I was resolved to keep quiet and not tell my parents about what was going on, I would fake sick so I didn't have to go to school.

2ND GIRL. I was humiliated.

1ST GIRL. She knew the rumor she had spread was a lie.

2ND GIRL. Even though I tried to hide what was going on at school from my parents, my mom soon caught on and took it to the school.

1ST GIRL. My problem soon became a “case” and became my worst nightmare. Lindsey of course denied everything.

2ND GIRL. And when she saw that I had proof, she began to make stories up, saying that *I* had harassed her and that *I* was the one bullying her.

1ST GIRL. She made fake insulting letters, mimicking my handwriting.

2ND GIRL. In the end, we both got in trouble; my mom fought hard with the school. Things didn’t really get better. People continued to bother me. Lindsey continued to make life impossible. I realized I had to do something to make school better.

(Lights steadily up on 2ND GIRL and steadily down on 1ST GIRL.)

1ST GIRL. I knew it’d never get better ...

2ND GIRL. So I began studying harder.

1ST GIRL. So ... I decided to kill myself ...

2ND GIRL. Although life seemed impossible, I put all my energy into my school work and went from a B, C student to a straight A student!

1ST GIRL *(almost in tears)*. I just couldn’t take it anymore! As much as I tried, nothing was going right ...

2ND GIRL *(smiles)*. I started to make friends, who didn’t cause drama or didn’t order me around. I just chose the right way to go.

1ST GIRL. I just chose the easier way to go ...

(Lights out on 1ST GIRL. 2ND GIRL exits in light. 1ST GIRL exits in the dark. COACH and GIRL BULLY stand DR, INSECURE GROWN WOMAN stands UL and INSECURE GIRL stands C watching this dialogue.)

COACH. Hey! *(Waves at GIRL BULLY to come over.)* Come over here!

GIRL BULLY *(approaches COACH)*. Yeah, Coach?

COACH. You were outstanding today! You really are doing an amazing job. I knew I wasn't wrong for picking you as captain.

GIRL BULLY. Thanks, Coach. *(Starts to leave.)*

COACH *(clears throat)*. I'm not done.

(GIRL BULLY moves closer to COACH.)

COACH *(cont'd)*. You need to get the other people on the team to get it together. I mean ... did you see them? Ugh, especially her.

(COACH points at INSECURE GIRL, who notices they are talking about her. INSECURE GROWN WOMAN is upset by this.)

COACH *(cont'd)*. I swear I don't know why this school has a no-cut policy. It's driving me crazy!

GIRL BULLY *(giggles)*. Yeah! I don't know, Coach

COACH. As captain it's your job to take care of people like that. Don't let them hold your team down. I don't care what you need to do but you need to show them who's boss. Got it?

GIRL BULLY. What do you mean?

COACH. Well take her for example ... *(Points at INSECURE GIRL again.)* Tell her what she needs to do to make herself better. I mean she clearly needs help. Heh—I mean she's just a walking imper—Never mind. You get it. You're a smart girl.

GIRL BULLY. Yeah ... heh. I get it.

(Light dims on COACH, who walks UL. INSECURE GIRL moves closer to GIRL BULLY. INSECURE GROWN WOMAN watches from upstage.)

GIRL BULLY *(cont'd)*. Hey! You need to get it together if you want to stay on this team. Just because there's a no-cut rule doesn't mean you shouldn't do it right. But, of course since I'm such a good person, I'm going to give you some advice. Survival in high school is simple. Follow the rules and no one will bother you. OK? It's easy. Rule number one, don't be fat. Just exercise more than you eat and you won't have to worry about gaining weight. Being overweight is unacceptable. So don't think that I won't let you know when you break this rule, and trust me, I won't be subtle about it. Rule number two, get invited to parties. The more you socialize, the more people know your name. Heh, but if you're out, you're off the list and don't expect things to change. Once you're off, you're off forever. Rule number three, don't spend more time studying your books than fixing your looks. Don't expect to come to school in an awful wardrobe and not get a few rude comments. Studying late is NOT an excuse for looking bad. *(Pause.)* Those are just a few of my helpful tips. I follow them, so should you. It's too bad you didn't follow them in the beginning. I mean, look at you! Well, it looks like it's too late now. You'll never be a "somebody." Heh, let's face it, you're a walking imperfection.

(Lights dim on GIRL BULLY at R. INSECURE GROWN WOMAN walks to DC. INSECURE GIRL stands slightly behind.)

INSECURE GROWN WOMAN. So my high-school reunion is next week, and I have to say, I can't wait! *(Preens.)* I plan on wearing this tight dress, my \$2,000 Chanel bag and of course my Christian Louboutin shoes. You see, in high school, *(Moves close to INSECURE GIRL.)* I wasn't the woman I am now. I mean, I was chubby and short and had this HUGE nose. But I

fixed that. I got a nose job, got lipo, implants, fixed my chin and got some other stuff too. I mean, I never wanted to be that girl that they tortured. I made it my life's goal to prove them wrong, to show them that I could be somebody. I mean, I look better, right? I mean, I know I need a little bit more work. But I-I don't think they'd notice. I mean, right? They'd think I look perfect! *(Beat.)* But what if they don't? *(Accelerating.)* I mean, I know I'm a grown woman, but you don't just *get over* high school that easy! *(Looks at INSECURE GIRL.)* I know the zits are gone and the braces are off, but the words they said to me still float around in my mind! Maybe I just shouldn't go. I'll just wait until the 20-year reunion comes by, and that way I can work on my imperfections.

(Lights dim and COACH, GIRL BULLY, INSECURE GIRL and INSECURE GROWN WOMAN all exit. Lights up on BYSTANDER, BULLY and INSECURE VICTIM.)

BYSTANDER. OK! You're not going to let this happen again. You're going to step up and say, "Hey! Leave her alone!" You can do this! You can. You can't be scared of them. I mean sure, heh, my social reputation can be ruined ... but ... I need to do this. *(Gasps.)* Oh my gosh! Here she comes!! They're going to say something to her! I know it! OK, I'm going to say something. What are they doing to her?! I-I better do something ... b-before she gets hurt. "Uh, uh, guys, maybe you should leave her alone." *(Takes a few steps back as if instructed to do so.)* OK, I'm going to have to go in there myself. OK! One foot in. Wait ... I can't. OK! Here I go again! *(Takes a breath and then takes a step forward, opening her mouth to say something, but nothing comes out.)* I can't! I can't. Not today. M-m-maybe t-tomorrow I'll say something.

(Light dim on BYSTANDER.)

BULLY. What do you want me to say? I didn't do it? No, I'll be honest, I did do it. I "bullied" the freak. Well I wouldn't call it bullying; I would call it discipline. The kid needed to be taught a lesson. I mean I think the little guy, or should I say "girl," had a little crush on me. (*Models.*) I mean, look at me! Well anyway, he was weird. No one cared about him. I don't see why anyone should. He didn't belong here. And why should I be punished because he didn't know how to fight back? He was the one who never defended himself. Hey! Not my fault. He was a loser, that's it, nothing else to it. So why are we here for a loser? He's gone. Problem solved.

(Lights dim on BULLY.)

INSECURE VICTIM. You tell me, do you think I'm weird? I've never been cool, (*Pauses.*) well maybe in like, elementary school. But the moment I hit middle school, everything changed. It's as if everyone grew up and I didn't. I still wanted to be the little boy I was. I didn't hit puberty until late so that made school a lot worse. I hated school, and I still do. The hardest part of every day is waking up. I sometimes go to sleep hoping that I will never wake up again. Of course, my parents don't know about this. If they did, THEY WOULD FREAK OUT! They'd make a big deal and before I knew it, life would get worse. People tell me that I should just leave school; they tell me that I don't belong and that I'm dumb and slow and too short. Maybe I deserve that ... I mean, I could study a little more. And maybe I could join like the basketball team, that way I could be more in shape. Maybe if I wasn't so quiet they'd respect me. I mean, what more can I do? I had to change schools. TWICE! No matter what I did to change, people still gave me a hard time. I had to delete my Facebook 'cause I'd get hate mail and people would tag me in obnoxious pictures. I just wish life was as easy as Facebook. In a click of a button, I deleted one of my problems. (*Long pause.*) Maybe I should just please the world ... and delete ... me.

(Lights dim and then BYSTANDER, BULLY and INSECURE VICTIM exit. Enter OBLIVIOUS MOTHER, who is sitting in a chair in a principal's office.)

OBLIVIOUS MOTHER. My child? My child is being bullied? IMPOSSIBLE! I'm sorry, Mr. ... wait, what's your name? Oh, of course, Mr. Walker! *(Clears throat.)* Well, as I was saying, that's impossible, my son is happy here at school. He's popular! From what I see, he has many, many friends. He's always out, he tells me he has to "study," but I think you and I both know he has a date. I mean, why would he be bullied? What's not to like about my son. He's smart, handsome and charming. With all due respect, sir, I think there's been some sort of mistake. I mean, this is a big school, are you sure you've got the right boy? *(Pauses to listen to the principal.)* OK, so you are trying to tell me that MY son was beaten up today? And if this has been going on for a long time, why hasn't the school done anything to stop it? My son would have told me if it's been going on for this long. He has to be lying to you! I mean, this just isn't possible. Let me see him! Where is he? OK, thank you, Mr. um ... OK, just thank you. Please bring him out fast.

(Enter INSECURE VICTIM. OBLIVIOUS MOTHER looks up.)

OBLIVIOUS MOTHER *(cont'd)*. Oh my God! What did they do to you?!

(Lights dim on INSECURE VICTIM and OBLIVIOUS MOTHER. Both exit. Lights up on MOTHER, SON, GHOST and TEACHER. MOTHER and SON are at C.)

MOTHER. I have to say, I don't understand when parents complain about finding out that their kid has created a mess with their Facebook accounts. *Some* parents don't even

know that they have one! But not me, I know everything about my child. I'm even his friend on Facebook. And every time he sends or receives something, I know about it!

SON. Heh—My mom is crazy! She actually thinks that she has control over me. She thinks that she knows everything about me, when all she really knows is the person I'm pretending to be. I am a good student, that's not a lie. But she thinks that I'm this perfect person, but hey! (*Laughs.*) Nobody's perfect. She added me as a friend on Facebook and thinks she knows everything that's going on. But what she doesn't know: I made that account for her. She doesn't know about the real one!

MOTHER. My son and I are so close. Sometimes I'll even comment on his status and he'll write back "LOL" or comment about some inside joke between us. I'm just so lucky! I know everything about him.

SON. My mom is such a loser. (*Laughs.*) She comments on my status too. What is she thinking?! You know, Facebook's a funny thing. It's actually the best thing. You can meet girls, talk to them. And you can even make fun of them! There's this loser at my school. She's the *ugliest* girl I've ever seen! I know she has a crush on me, so my friends and me decided to play a little joke on her.

MOTHER. And you know the best thing about him? He's so nice. He's obviously the nicest kid in his class. On his Facebook everyone says things like, "I love you," or, "You're the best," and he'll say things like, "It's all thanks to my mom, she raised me." (*Smiles and puts her hands over her heart.*) Isn't he so sweet?

SON. So this girl! I pretend to like her back. And she BUYS it! Ha! Ha! I tell her she's pretty and sweet. And eventually I get her to believe I'm in love with her. Soon enough, I get her to send me some *pictures*. But here's the BEST part: I post them online!

MOTHER. I'm just so proud of him! How did I get so lucky?

SON. This loser starts freaking out! People at school think I'm a hero at this point. I mean *no one* liked her. I gave people something to laugh at!

MOTHER. Adding my son on Facebook has honestly brought us so much closer, and he doesn't even know how much I keep track of things.

SON. I tricked this girl and *my mom*. And my mom doesn't even know!

MOTHER & SON. How'd I get so smart?

(Lights dim on MOTHER and SON. Lights up on GHOST.)

GHOST *(awkward start, stutters)*. I-I never really thought about death. I always thought that I had a long way ahead of me. But it didn't work out that way. I had a great family and awesome friends, but that was in New York. When I moved to California, it pretty much changed. The people there were perfect. The guys looked like they all came out of an Abercrombie catalog. All the girls were tall, blonde and beautiful. They had amazing hair and they always looked good. And me? I had curly brown hair. I was chubby and short. I was the only flaw in this perfect world. I was the girl that would get thrown into lockers by girls who were *younger* than me. *(Starts raising her voice.)* I was the girl that everyone "accidentally" threw food at during lunch. I was the girl they filmed being pushed down to the ground. *(Quiets down.)* I was the girl that didn't belong on earth. I wasn't pretty. I-I wasn't smart either. They were right: I *didn't* belong on the planet. *(Takes a breath.)* I thought things started to change when this guy I really liked started to flirt with me. He told me I was beautiful, he made me feel special; he made me feel as if I was a somebody. Anyway, I decided to go online to talk to this guy to make me feel better, and then I saw what I was too blind to see before. He tricked me!

(Pause. SON laughs in the background.)

GHOST *(cont'd, frustrated)*. I'M JUST SO STUPID!! I sent him these "pictures" of me, and they ended up on Facebook! I just couldn't take it anymore! So I did what I had to do. I did everyone a favor. Now they don't have to see a useless nobody walking around their territory. And now my parents don't have to deal with such an embarrassment of a daughter. *(Starts to cry.)* I *am* a freak. I *am* a nobody. And now ... I'm dead.

TEACHER. It was a year ago that she came into my classroom crying. Another girl had just destroyed this project that she had worked on all night for my class. She was crying so hard, I had to ask her several times to repeat herself. I asked her if that was the first time something like this had happened. She said, "No." She told me that they had dedicated an entire Facebook page purely to making fun of her. *(Defensively.)* I was going to talk to the principal. I told the student this had to be taken care of, that this was getting out of hand. But, she begged and she begged. And she made me promise to let her deal with it. And I did. *(Pause.)* But I wish I hadn't. Soon enough, she logged on to Facebook to find out that a boy she liked had posted some inappropriate pictures of her. She didn't show up at school the next day or for the rest of the week for that matter. By the end of the week, she couldn't take the humiliation any longer. I should've done something sooner! I should've taken control. She felt like a freak, she felt like a nobody. And now, she's dead.