

FAT. SLAG. BITCH.
LESBIAN. TELL-TALE.
NO MATES. THICK.
LANKY. FOUR EYES.
LIAR. PIZZA FACE.
EVERY BODY
HATES **THE** POOF.
CRY **BULLY** GEEK.
SLAP **PLAYS** DIV.
MUBY **ET.**
DIC **NELL** AT.
YOU **DUNN** UM.
TOSSER. SPAC.
SUCKER. TWAT.
SHITHEAD. FLID.
SPAS. SPANNA.
DOUCHEBAG.
KNOB FACE.

The Bully Plays
Nell Dunn

Thank You to Everybody who
gave me their stories.

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JOANNA 06

JOHNNY 15

ALISON 19

JOCASTA 26

ELIZABETH 36

KEVIN 41

RAY 48

KEZIA 57

WHAT IF? 66

JOANNA

JOANNA:

I'm Jo. One of the Gossiping Girls.
Nicknamed so by our form teacher.

'How will you ever learn anything when
you are all so busy chatting to one
another? What a waste of time!'

'But we love chatting Miss!'

One girl was best friends with one of
our gang and she thought she could
be friends with all of us because
Holly was friends with us and she had
listened to the gossip.

BESS:

So yesterday she tries to move in on
us and we don't want her because we
got close and we were six so we could
sit at the six table and if she joined
us we had to sit at the eight table
and then we were seven and someone
else will sit too.

JOANNA:

And then we don't have just us so
we couldn't really relax and chat
so we tried to get rid of her.

HOLLY:

Ignored her!

JOANNA:

She wants to hang out with us because
her best friend has left but we don't
want her.

JASMIN:

In my inner circle there are only two of us. Me and Iris.

HOLLY:

We don't have any personal issues with her but then she said to Bess 'I feel a bit funny about Ella's relationship with Joanna, and we were wondering if Jo was a lesbian?'

BESS:

She hadn't meant it to come across that way but when I asked her she was evasive, she didn't address it.

HOLLY:

Did she make it up?

BESS:

Or did she see something? Jo was upset. Holly told her it's been spreading through the school for weeks.

JASMIN:

Our head of year should have been told.

MOLLY:

Joanna wouldn't want to discuss it with Miss Prospect.

IRIS:

I've seen someone break down... for less.

JOANNA:

I thought it was a joke at first.

MOLLY:

You can't talk about that with a teacher.

JOANNA:

But now I see people whispering in the corridor and looking at me and laughing.

IRIS:

My mother says you should tell a teacher or a grown-up if something serious happens.

JASMIN:

Iris comes in early every morning and so do I and we talk before school... every morning she complained about Molly... Molly bosses her on the bus and it was her birthday and she wrote in the card.

I am mad with you! Stop bossing me! Happy Birthday. Big Fat Boss.

Molly got very upset at what Iris had said in her card and put it on Facebook with a photo. We were all called down into the hall and Mrs Benson said 'I am not going to name anyone but this is not right to use Social Networking to put up pictures of other people...'

BESS:

With my friendship group the reason we became friends was we're all into dance and we all hate sport.

JOANNA: (*Interrupting*)

When all this started going on me and Bess had just begun hanging out and Molly joined in and she told Lily that I was a lesbian and that I fancied her, and in Assembly I was sitting between Jilly and Bess, and Jilly told me Bess thought I was a lesbian!

JASMIN:

She's been telling everyone that you're a lesbian. Even some girls in the class below.

JOANNA:

And that really freaked me out because they don't even know me and I thought Bess was my friend, and we walked to the bus arm in arm but that doesn't make you a lesbian.

And I keep hearing rumours all week I've tried to ignore it but then I saw them all whispering and looking at me. Kind of sneering?

JASMIN:

Bess stopped being friends with Jo and now she wants to hang with us. She's nice but we're not friends with her. We like being just the two of us. Me and Iris walk home together now and we

chat and we share chocolate.

MOLLY:

I tried to get Bess and Jasmin to be friends.

JASMIN:

I was in the locker room and Joanna was crying. She said someone had been saying things about her – telling lies about her.

And when I found her in the locker room crying... she said she had no friends.

JOANNA:

I don't know why but two of my best friends turned against me. That day I had lunch with Bess and Molly, and Holly said those things being said about me being a lesbian... well it had spread to people in the other classes...

I tried to laugh it off but I was upset that ALL my friends might just go away because they thought I was a lesbian, which I'm not! Though I know there is nothing wrong with being a lesbian, and I know my parents wouldn't think anything of it. Nor would my granny but I'm not! I'm not!

JASMIN:

We got friends at the beginning of our first term and I'm still best friends with Iris.

JOANNA:

And then it's Natasha's birthday party and she invited all my friends and she didn't invite me.

HOLLY:

I felt funny going without Jo.

MOLLY:

Why didn't you invite Jo?

NATASHA:

I didn't want a lesbian in my house. My mother wouldn't like it.

JOANNA:

And everyone is talking about Natasha's party and I'm the only one not invited.

MOLLY:

She's not our close friend but she's OK.

NATASHA:

If you get rid of Joanna then I'll be friends with you.

JOANNA:

We were all in the I.T. room and it was time to go to lunch. I heard it and I heard it again... it seemed to be everywhere.

HOLLY:

If you get rid of Joanna then I'll be friends with you.

JOANNA:

Everywhere around me! Horrible!

MOLLY:

Well we were in the queue and Mattie started whispering to Holly and they whispered and whispered and I heard Joanna's name, and they've lined up behind us and they had a choice to sit at the six person table and then we could have sat at the eight person table... and then they chose the six person so there wasn't room for Joanna.

JOANNA:

They chose the six person table and they all sat down very quickly and there wasn't room for me.

I'm standing there not quite sure where to go. And then there's Jill this girl who nobody likes. She comes across aggressive, she says in a loud voice... she shouts

JILL:

Why aren't you on Facebook Joanna?

Is it because you're a lesbian?

JOANNA:

And everybody laughed.

JOHNNY

JOHNNY:

My name is Johnny and I am 12 years old.

It was like this. We were in the changing rooms after P.E. and two kids got in an argument. We have three sets in P.E. The first set for the best kids and then the second set that I'm in and then the bottom set.

This kid said to another kid 'You shouldn't be in the second set.'

'Why not?'

'Because you're fat.'

And that started it and the fat kid ran at the other kid and grabbed his bag and jumped on it and went on jumping, and you could hear his pencils snapping, and then when the fat kid walked off and Josh opened his bag his mobile phone was broken, and he had all the ingredients for the next lesson which was food tech and they had all squashed and gone all over his sports kit and his shoes, and it was one big mess.

He was trying not to cry.

But Adrian the fat kid didn't leave it there, every day he pulled Josh about and chucked his things around and knocked him down till someone reported

it to the P.E. teacher and Mr Moat our P.E. teacher – he's nice – said everyone in our year had to write down exactly what we had seen.

It was like being a detective. Mr Moat said 'Don't make anything up. Just report exactly what you saw and heard. Write it down clearly.'

I put I was changing into my P.E. kit and I heard Josh say to Adrian

'You're fat!'

And I saw Adrian run at him and knock him down and grab his bag and jump on it, and then every morning he went for him. Bang! Crash! Bang! Josh would be on the floor.

Nobody liked to say anything because it was between them.

Anyway, when we had all done that then both kids got suspended for a day and they had to apologise to each other.

Josh said 'Sorry for calling you names' and Adrian said 'Sorry for fighting you and damaging your stuff.'

Mr Moat said 'This isn't a case of bullying. It is two kids falling out and not knowing how to resolve a quarrel. OK, kids it's over now. Let it be. You've all done well.'

It all got sorted and you feel kind of safe there because Mr Moat keeps an eye on things.

And he helps you work things out.

I think I might be a detective when I get a career. I find it kind of interesting.

To understand how one thing leads to another and someone ends up getting stabbed.

It's serious.

ALISON

ALISON:

I am Alison and I am ten years old.

I am at Primary School and they keep me down a year. I've changed schools quite a bit.

I try to make friends with this girl called Debbie, and the other girls start shouting.

CHORUS:

Friend Stealer! Friend Stealer!

ALISON:

They chase me into the toilets and there are ten girls banging on the door and I am really scared. Scared!

CHORUS:

(Bangs On Drums And Tambourines And Shouts)

Friend Stealer! Beanpole! Lanky! Bucky Big Tooth!

ALISON:

I get a plate.

CHORUS:

Metal jaw!
Piggy! piggy! piggy!

ALISON:

Because of my turned-up nose. And I have a little tuft of hair under my chin. Not really a tuft, more just two or three hairs, and my mum says not to

pull them out 'cause it will make them grow more.

CHORUS:

Tufty! Tufty! Creepy hands!

ALISON:

I like my hands. They are very thin and the fingers are long and bendy and bony.

CHORUS:

Creepy hands! Creepy hands! Witchy fingers! Ugh!

ALISON:

But I really like my hands and I know I must hold on to liking them whatever happens.

My dad said 'Alison you have unusual hands. Maybe you will be an artist.' And then he goes back to his sudoku.

And when I want to tell him what has happened at school.
'Shush Ali. I'm concentrating. Get on with your homework!'

Really quite fierce.

'Daddy why are you fierce with me?' But he doesn't hear.

Now I'm 11 and I go to my Secondary School.

CHORUS:

Ugh! Witchy fingers! Ugh! Eeek! Creepy.

ALISON:

And then it is my birthday and my brother – he's eighteen – walks me to school and hugs me. Happy Birthday Sissy!

And he goes and this gang of older kids turn on me.

CHORUS:

That's your brother isn't it? What's incest like? Slag! Slut-face! Ugly!

ALISON: .

And laughing, they went on and on and on in a hysterical way as if they couldn't stop saying horrible disgusting things, and no one ever stopped them.

Then one of them spat in my face and they all walked away.

I am full of shame. Why shame? I don't know.

My mum went up the school and said I was having a hard time but nothing changed and now I can't tell her because she is stressed out in her work.

'Baby please don't give me any more problems.'

And Dad says 'Talk to your mother baby. Ali sweetie go and find your mum there's a good girl.'

And my brother says 'Just ignore them. Walk away! Don't give way to them', and he goes off to work.

And then I'm in the changing room and three girls start playing catch with my bag...

'Please give me my bag. My mobile's in there!'

CHORUS:

(Mocking)

Please give me my bag. My mobile's in there and you might break it.

ALISON

And she swung it at me and hit me in the face and all the time they are laughing.

I can't tell the teacher. It would get worse. Who can I tell?

Who can I tell? Who? Who?

CHORUS:

Dirty little sneak.

ALISON:

How can I die?

I try and put it out of my head...

It comes back...
How can I die?

And on the way home in the tube
station I want to stand so near the
edge.

Right on the edge of the platform.

What if I fell and a train ran right
over me and I was dead? No more bother
to anyone.

CHORUS:

Do you really want to die?
NO!

Stand behind the yellow line!
Stand behind the yellow line!
The train is approaching – Stand Back.

ALISON:

No! I might fall over – the platform
is so crowded – and I move back and
press myself against the wall.

CHORUS:

Stay there! Stay there!

ALISON:

Very scared. Very scared. Very scared.

CHORUS:

Stay there! Stay there!

ALISON:

Very scared! Very scared! Very scared!

Heart beating beating beating. Thud!
Thud! Thud!

Ran out of the station and caught
the bus and got home late and got in
trouble.

MOTHER:

'Where were you? Where were you? Where
were you? You had me worried sick. And
don't give me any hard luck stories
because I don't want to hear.
I'm fed up with you Alison!'

ALISON:

And I wonder. Why does nobody care
about me?

And then it got worse.

My shoes are stolen.

My pencil case is filled up with dog
pooh. An elbow tips up my dinner tray
all down my skirt.

Hot dinner on my legs.

I am crying.

Then I get a text saying

EVERYBODY HATES YOU.

JOCASTA

JOCASTA:

I am Jocasta. When I was 12 I went to a new school.

The headmistress didn't understand me. She said I was never where I was meant to be which was unfair because I never knew where I was meant to be.

I was always the weird one. I was horrible to be around because I couldn't sit still.

CHORUS:

You can't play with us!
You can't play with us!
Go away!

JOCASTA:

My grandmother spoils me. When a girl spits in my pencil case.

CHORUS:

UGH! Look at that!

GRANDMOTHER:

Don't worry dear. I'll buy you a new one.

JOCASTA:

She buys me a new one!

CHORUS:

We don't like you.

JOCASTA:

I racked my mind for reasons they

didn't like me.
I was mixed race and I had my hair in
cornrows.

GRANDMOTHER:

They thought she had nits because she
scratched her head.

JOCASTA:

It itched because it was pulled so
tight and the girls said..

CHORUS:

Ugh! You've got nits don't touch me
don't come near me!

JOCASTA:

I had cornrows because my mum didn't
have time to do my hair in the
mornings. She was always late.
We're a very late family. We always
arrive everywhere late. So she didn't
have time to do my hair, she said.

MUM:

Do you know what? We'll do it in
cornrows and then you can go to school
and it will be sorted. You will be
tidy.

JOCASTA:

I was OK with that. I didn't like it
but I didn't protest because I knew my
mum didn't have time to do my hair.
Ow! Ow!

MUM:

It is painful but after two days the
pain will go.

JOCASTA:

I'd conquer it and I liked it.

CHORUS:

You smell!

JOCASTA:

I thought I smelt. But I was always
washing!

CHORUS:

You smell!

JOCASTA:

I wanted to be in a classroom on my
own.
I tried to get sick so I wouldn't have
to go to school.

MUM:

I went to work. I didn't have time to
go up the school.

JOCASTA:

I knew she didn't have time and so I
had to have cornrows – those little
plaits – but it is pulled very tight
and it is painful and it itches and
sometimes I would scratch.

And we always get everywhere late.

MUM:

I work full time... no time for her to be sick.

JOCASTA:

And Grandma is late getting up so I'm always late getting to school.

If I touched someone they'd shout

CHORUS:

I'm infected! I'm infected!
I'm infected!

JOCASTA:

I never had easy access to my hair. I wanted to feel it soft and falling on the back of my neck and flick it like the others did and put it in my mouth. And suck it.

MUM:

But she got used to cornrows. It took a long time and was pulled so tight it was painful.

JOCASTA:

Ow! Ow!
I'm a pale black person so colour was not an issue.

If I had a tantrum WAAAA! my grandma would treat me.

MUM:

She was spoilt. She was selfish.

JOCASTA:

No it's mine you can't touch it.

I knew I was horrible but I thought, why does no one want to talk to me?

I asked to play with this group and this girl said...

CHORUS:

No you can't play with us.

JOCASTA:

Why?

CHORUS:

I don't like you.

JOCASTA:

The whole of my class were there looking at me.

CHORUS:

No you can't play with us!
You can't play.
You can't play.
You can't play with us. Go away!

JOCASTA:

I walked around the playground collecting ladybirds because no one would play with me.
That's fine! OK! I like ladybirds.

CHORUS:

Go away! Go away!

JOCASTA:

Then this new black girl came to the school. She is the Queen. She likes high status.
She blows in from America.
She is cool.
Speaks with an American accent.

JUSTINE:

Get you!

JOCASTA:

She is King of the Roost. The popular one. She is so cool.
Keeps her sports kit in a gold handbag. Wow!

JUSTINE:

I'm so into gold and silver.

JOCASTA:

If you aren't in her group you are invisible and no one wants to be seen talking to you.

(In a Whisper) On the inside she was a bitch.

JUSTINE:

I am in the top set for everything and I am very good at sport.

JOCASTA:

But she doesn't like me.
She turns everyone against me.

Justine, that's her name, had cornrows

hair too and I said 'Why don't you think Justine has nits?'

CHORUS:

Because Justine is cool and you're not.

Because Justine is so cool and you're not.

JUSTINE:

I am so cool. I have silver sneakers with red laces and my underwear comes from New York.

JOCASTA:

Then a girl squirted perfume in my face and it went in my eyes. I thought I would go blind.

I'll go blind! I'll go blind!

JUSTINE:

Serves you right!

JOCASTA:

We had these monkey bars and I got stuck in the middle of them. I got frightened and I couldn't go up or down.

And Justine started throwing wood chips at me because she wanted a turn and I was in the way and I was shouting

'I'm stuck! I'm stuck!'

JUSTINE:

Get out of there! You're in my way.

JOCASTA:

And she was throwing more and more and
I fell down onto the wood chips and
she was kicking them at me and they
got in my hair and my eyes and I was
shouting

'Stop! Stop! Please Stop!'

CHORUS:

Serves you right!

JOCASTA:

'Stop!' And she goes on and on and on.

'I can't see!'

And she didn't stop till I was
crying really hard and they were all
imitating me, laughing at me and
making fun.

JUSTINE:

Get a grip loser.

CHORUS:

You smell!

JUSTINE:

Fat Arse!

JOCASTA:

I'm fifteen now and for my birthday I
got a tattoo on my back. Grandma paid.

GRANDMOTHER:

I paid. It's a swallow.

JOCASTA:

I only heard afterwards that a swallow
meant you had been in prison.

I go to a school now for children who
can't handle school. I like it.

I've never quite been able to settle.

MUM:

She's an unsettled person.

JOCASTA:

I don't know why.

The teachers at my new school like me.
They are teaching me to be a settled
person.

And the kids like me.

I like them too.

ELIZABETH

ELIZABETH:

I am Elizabeth. I'm fifteen.

There are a lot of pressures... I'm not sure I'd call them bullying but they are pressures.

One is... never to change but always stay the same...

'But you don't like *Romeo and Juliet*.'

'I do now. I wasn't ready for it before.'

'But you said you didn't like it.'

'I've changed.'

'Get you baby!'

'Maybe you want to change because you haven't yet worked out who you are?'

Then you can't discuss anything important... everything is turned into a joke...

If you get serious someone will say

CHORUS:

Oh god you're so deep... and so boring.
So so boring... Oh god you are so deep
and so very very boring.

ELIZABETH:

I was friends with this boy, we were affectionate and talked about

everything and then I told him
something private and intimate and he
said

CHORUS:

I don't really care! So deep and so
boring boring boring... Lighten up!

ELIZABETH:

But I'm not a light person.

Later I said 'You were really cold to
me.' But he didn't answer just turned
away. As if I wasn't worth talking to.

There are pressures to smoke.
One guy tried to put a lighted
cigarette in my mouth.

CHORUS:

Come on Lizzie just have a puff.

ELIZABETH:

I don't want it!

CHORUS:

Oh come on just try it once. You don't
know what you're missing.

ELIZABETH:

They want everyone to be in the same
boat... It's the same with sex.
I don't want it like that.
I'd like it so I can look back on it.

With someone who cared... who
appreciated me.

CHORUS:

Come on! Get drunk! You aren't much
fun. You can't let go can you?

ELIZABETH:

Quite aggressive really!

CHORUS:

Come on! Come on! Come on!

ELIZABETH:

I used to try so hard to be funny so
I'd be liked.

If someone made a cutting remark it
killed me.

CHORUS:

You're a bore Lizzie. Loosen up. Have
fun!

ELIZABETH

I tried to laugh and say something
jokey back.

That's the problem – people do say
nasty things under the guise of "it's
just a joke."

But it's not a joke when it's said to
hurt – and personal remarks do hurt
when they go on day after day. You
begin to feel nobody likes you much.

Guys can humiliate you. You'd be
surprised. Why should they want to?

Nobody wants to be humiliated.

Well you know what? They'll get
nowhere with me.

I don't care. In the end it's down to
me to do what I choose.

I'm in charge.

I belong to me.

KEVIN

KEVIN:

My name's Kevin and last month I celebrated my fiftieth birthday.

This is painful to talk about even 35 years or more later.

I was 13 before I experienced bullying.

I always wanted to fit in. I knew I was gay by the time I was a teenager and I always tried to hide it.

Well it's not acceptable to kids. Even now. Is it?

I was desperate to fit in.

CHORUS:

That's all I wanted – to fit in. All I wanted. All I wanted.

KEVIN:

This boy was supposed to be my friend and I just allowed it to carry on – maybe if I'd stopped it – but because I wanted to be accepted I let it go – I mean the name calling...

But I felt vulnerable... scared almost...

It started because I developed much earlier than anybody else that way so going to the changing rooms to shower or go swimming was embarrassing, and also being gay you are extra aware of

yourself so I was very sensitive to that, and young people pick up on that very quickly, and someone as a joke called me the Hairy Fairy.

CHORUS:

Hairy Hairy Hairy Fairy!

KEVIN:

And I reacted very badly because it was too close to what I didn't want people to think I was – which was what I was – and this one guy who was meant to be my friend just kept on at it, although we had been good friends.

I was desperate to be liked and it went on and on.

CHORUS:

Hairy Fairy! Hairy Fairy!
Hairy Fairy!

KEVIN:

It was gym and the master always insisted you take a shower, and then they would start to make fun of me because I was more developed.

CHORUS:

Coeee! Look at him!

KEVIN:

I just want to get out of here!

CHORUS:

PHEW! Get a load of that. Wow man!

KEVIN:

It was verbal not physical.

There is an element of verbal bullying which you are meant to put up with... but psychologically it has the same effect as being punched...

I'd rather I had been punched and I could have fought back...

I was frightened and shut out - I was being attacked for something I could do nothing about - pushed out.

Alone.

I had to fight the tears.

CHORUS:

You're the Hairy Fairy!

KEVIN:

And every time in the shower

CHORUS:

You're the Hairy Fairy! Get you babe!

KEVIN:

And my friend - at least the guy who I thought had been my best buddy - had a kind of subtle glee on his face - low key - he'd whistle before he said it (*Whistles and the Chorus echoes the*

whistle) and sometimes very quickly as we passed in the corridor... under his breath... so nobody could hear...

CHORUS:

Hairy Fairy!

KEVIN:

I tried to sit on it and I'd say 'Oh fuck off!'
I was upset and they could see I was upset.

If someone says something enough times... That's all I was and it ripped out my confidence and I knew I was gay.

I had been part of this circle of friends but now it changed this boy who had been my close friend - he was the main persecutor - and it felt like a magnified betrayal. A betrayal beyond betrayal.

A magnificent betrayal.

An exposure so huge and vile.

CHORUS:

He was my friend... my close friend...
I was so desperate to fit in - So desperate to fit in.

KEVIN:

Rather than be an individual and embrace the side of me that I was trying to hide.

I didn't know how to.
I had nobody to turn to.

I was so so miserable... even now... when
I look back.

CHORUS:

So so miserable and it is quite a
horrible thing to remember.

KEVIN:

Certain things will remind me of what
happened and I can go into a deep
panic, although it is way in the past
it is still present somewhere in me
- maybe these things are never really
dealt with - pure nastiness.

You want to fit in so if there is
something wrong it's you... it's your
fault.

CHORUS:

There is something wrong with you.

KEVIN:

I have spent a lot of my life keeping
people at bay. Frightened to trust
anybody or be too friendly or to say
what was on my mind in case I got
attacked.

Mocked.

Made a fool of.

Sometimes before I fall asleep at
night I can hear an echo

CHORUS:

Hairy Fairy! Hairy fairy!

KEVIN:

And then I have to get up and go to
the toilet and vomit.

RAY

RAY:

I'm Ray.

When I went to my first school I was five. The Head Teacher took me up onto the platform at Assembly. She held my hand and said

HEAD TEACHER:

This is Ray and he has eczema. It isn't catching and he will grow out of it and you can all just ignore it.

He doesn't want teasing about it and I know all about that because when I was a little girl at school we had to walk in pairs holding hands when we went to the swimming pool. Nobody would hold my hand because I had eczema and so I always had to walk alone.

RAY: *(Interrupting)*

We have Anti-bullying Week. We make badges. I made two

BE A FRIEND. DON'T BE A BULLY.
And my other one said
STOP IT! I DON'T LIKE IT!

I practice in the playground.
I hold up my hand like a policeman.
STOP IT I DON'T LIKE IT!

HEAD TEACHER:

Only use it when you are being bullied. Don't mess about! It is serious when you shout.

RAY:

STOP IT! I DON'T LIKE IT!

HEAD TEACHER:

As loud as you can.

We have special needs children in our school and we learn that everybody is different and we can look after each other, and that will help make us happy.

RAY:

I was never teased at my Primary School.

Now I am 12 and I am at the Academy.

Sometimes they call me Crack Head because the skin is all cracked around my eyes and mouth. My mum says

MOTHER:

Just tell them. Just say 'This is eczema there is nothing I can do. I put my creams on twice a day sometimes three times... there is nothing I can do!'

Just tell them that!'

RAY:

But I can't. They pull my tie and lean on me in the lunch queue and shout

CHORUS:

Crack Head. Ugly Face.

RAY:

I want to take up kick-boxing so I can fight back!

MOTHER:

When I am very low I say to new friends 'My son's got eczema' and straight away someone will say 'Oh my nephew's got it too have you tried this new cream' and 'don't give him nuts', and people are so kind and they know you are having a difficult time. And they are kind.

RAY:

They strangle me with my tie. Knock my lunch out of my hands.
Spit at me.
Benny hates me. Lucy hates me.
They punch me in the jaw.
They sit on me.
They pour sticky drinks on my head.
They knock off my glasses.
They call me ugly and a geek.

MOTHER:

His skin is so cracked and bleeding it became infected. Then a boy picked him up from behind and dropped him and broke his arm in two places.

RAY:

He didn't mean to break it Mum! He was mucking about.

MOTHER:

I don't think the boy meant to. But

it was a bad break and he had to have metal pins in it and they got infected.

At one moment we feared for his arm.

(Shouting)

You've got to go to school!

RAY:

I don't want to. I don't want to lose my arm.

MOTHER:

You've got to go.

You may have this for the rest of your life. You've got to learn to live with it.

RAY:

I hate it!

MOTHER:

If I could take it from you I would.

RAY:

No! I wouldn't want you to have it Mum!

MOTHER:

I am heartbroken.

RAY:

Why me Mum?

MOTHER:

Some days I cry all the way to work.

I feel helpless. I am his mother. I am meant to protect him.

CHORUS:

Have you got cancer? It's disgusting.

RAY:

No! I've got eczema!

TEACHER:

I know all about it Ray. My twin sister had eczema just like you. She grew out of it and I hope you will too.

CHORUS:

I don't mind talking to you today because your skin looks better. Hello Ray! Hello Ray!

RAY:

Yesterday someone tipped my dinner tray all down my front. It was hot and it burnt my chest.

CHORUS:

Crack Head!

RAY:

The skin is all cracked around my eyes and mouth again. It is very sore. But I say 'It's not contagious! I promise! It's not catching!'

MOTHER:

When he gets home from school – if
I am still at work – he goes to see
his grandparents who live in the flat
below.

GRANDPARENTS:

Hello darling. How did you get on
today?

RAY:

It was O.K. Nan. It was fine Grandpa.
'Can I watch telly?'
I didn't tell them because I didn't
want to upset them. A good day for me
is a day when no one hits me or takes
things from me or strangles me with my
tie or spits at me or sits on me or
pours drinks over my head or knocks off
my glasses or says

CHORUS:

You're ugly! Ugly! Ugly!

MOTHER:

We went to see the skin nurse and she
made me feel a fool.

NURSE:

You are the mother. You should be in
control.

MOTHER:

I know she's right really but how can
you make a screaming boy get in the
bath if he doesn't want to?

NURSE:

You are the parent and you need to
take charge of his skin. He may have
it for the rest of his life and he is
going to have to deal with it.

RAY:

Why has God given this to me?

MOTHER:

I think: he's given it to you so you
can be a doctor when you grow up and
find a cure so other children won't
have to go through what you've been
through.

But perhaps when you grow up you'd
rather be a bus driver and that's fine
too.

RAY:

Yes I'd rather be a bus driver or
better still a racing car driver.
Brooom broom!

MOTHER:

We'll get there. I'm not going to let
a thing like eczema ruin my boy's
life.
It's going to have a hell of a fight on
its hands.
But it's not going to win!

RAY:

Today was O.K. Mum.

MOTHER:

I count my blessings. I'm a very lucky
lady.

KEZIA

KEZIA:

I'm Kezia.

When I was fifteen I went to a Summer Camp with a friend. My friend formed a clique with a gang of girls and I don't know why but she really turned against me.

They poured orange juice in my hair.

CHORUS:

(Laughter)

KEZIA:

They stole my clothes and then wore them.

Heh! My grandmother bought me that T-shirt to come away with! It's new give it back.

CHORUS:

No way! *(Laughter)*

KEZIA:

They covered my bed with shaving foam and twiglets and then put the duvet over so I wouldn't see till I got in.

I asked my friend to help me.

'Help me! Please help me!'

FRIEND:

What can I do?
They've picked on you.

KEZIA:

I was pretending to sleep - to escape - and they put a spider in my hair. They lined up and spat on me when I was sitting on a bench outside alone. They made up a song about me which they would sing in a whisper every time I was near.

CHORUS:

Skumbag! Slag! Slapper!

KEZIA:

And when they got to Slapper they'd clap their hands and turn in a circle. If anyone was watching they could sing it under their breath and just do the clap and spin around and nobody would guess what was really happening.

CHORUS:

Skumbag! Slag! Slapper!
(Clap and turn)

KEZIA:

It hurt me almost worst of all that my friend turned against me so totally and made no effort to help me or defend me.

'Help me! Please!'

FRIEND:

You deal with it! It's not my fault.

KEZIA:

But then I have something to admit -

something that makes me feel bad every time I think about it.

This is it.

The first day I arrived there was another girl in our room called Tina. She had self-harm scars on her arms. Her bed was next to mine and she spoke to me as if to make friends but I could see everyone hated her. They stood in a cluster with their backs to us giggling and excluding.

GIRL:

Would you like a chocolate?

KEZIA:

No thanks.
I answered without looking at her.

And yes I turned away and pretended I had to call my mother. And as I walked away they began to make fun of her mercilessly.

They made fun of her mercilessly – and yes – I turned away and I walked out of that room.

I can even remember feeling relieved that it was someone else and not me.

I left her alone with all the menacing girls and as I left the room I heard them start on her. She shrieked.

The next day her parents came and fetched her.

And then it was me.

My turn!

CHORUS:

Skumbag! Slag! Slapper!
(Clap and turn)

KEZIA:

I've thought long and hard about if it was my fault. Did I do something to upset someone without realising it? Am I really a skumbag slag slapper? So no one wants to be friends with me?

And most of all why did my friend turn against me? I really liked her.

CHORUS:

Skumbag! Slag! Slapper!

KEZIA:

I think it is my fault but I don't really know why and I don't want to tell my mum because it will upset her.

I know she doesn't think I'm a skumbag.

But she's my mum isn't she?
I could tell my grandmother. But what could she do? She's old.

CHORUS:

Skumbag! Slag! Slapper!
(Clap and turn)

KEZIA:

Sometimes I think WHAT IF?
WHAT IF...

What if I'd been brave?

What if I'd done it differently?

GIRL:

Would you like some chocolate?

KEZIA:

Yeah great thanks. I've got some
chewing gum somewhere in my rucksack.

Heh you lot would you like some
chewing gum... when I can find it in
here!

My name's Kezia. It's Turkish and
someone in my family had a Turkish
girlfriend and I ended up with her
name.

What about you?

GIRL:

I'm Sue.

KEZIA:

Hi Sue.

And turning to the other girls... And

what are your names? I'm a bit lost
here because I haven't been on a
Summer Camp before.

Can you tell me what happens?
Does anyone else feel homesick?

I don't even know where the toilet is.

Ah at last I've found the chewing gum.
Here help yourselves. Do you mind if I
play some music?

Do you mind if I repeat your names so
I don't forget them?

You're Isla. And you're Savannah.
That's a great name. And Beata. That's
Polish isn't it? And Phillipa and
Jayne.

Did I get them right?

I hope we don't have to swim. I look
terrible in a costume.

Oh does that bell mean tea? I'm
starving. May I sit at your table?

And would someone mind showing me
where the toilet is?

Keep me a place please.

I'd die if I had to sit on my own!

Notes:

WHAT IF?

HERE THE STUDENTS CAN WORK ON THEIR OWN SOLUTIONS.

PERHAPS BREAK INTO SMALL GROUPS AND CREATE A SHORT 'WHAT IF' DRAMA TO ACT OUT FOR THE REST OF THE GROUP.

KEVIN:

And now I'm fifty but What if?

We're in the showers. We've been playing rugby. It's been fun. Real good hot sweaty running-in-the-mud fun. I am exhilarated.

Heh guys can you give me a moment?

Gather round. It's about this hairy fairy business.

Well I hate it...

It's painful. It's humiliating. It's undermining. It really gets to me and I want it to stop.

CHORUS:

OK Kev! Got it. I hear you! Hairy Fairy!

KEVIN:

No I mean it. It's horrible. Don't go on with it please.

CHORUS:

Ha! Bloody ha! It's only a tease.

KEVIN:

No it's not. It's malicious. It's nasty. It's done to hurt. To bring me down and stamp on me. I haven't talked about it but I've felt pretty miserable this term. Has no one noticed?

Well?

CHORUS:

It's only a joke Kev.

KEVIN:

It's really brought me down. Made me low. And I mean low. I'm stuck with you guys day in, day out. I've no family here to turn to. We don't go home in the evenings. You may have noticed.

CHORUS:

Oh grow up Kev!

KEVIN:

That's just what I am doing. Talking about the consequences of your 'teasing'.

CHORUS:

I'm listening.

KEVIN:

I've felt so bad some days. So scared of what is going to happen to me. I need support not vilifying.

CHORUS:

So what do you want from us?

KEVIN:

Discussion. Conversation. Sharing of thoughts. Friendship.

CHORUS:

Heh guys let's give it a whirl. No more targeting Kevin. Instead – serious discussion?

KEVIN:

So is that a deal guys? Can we give it a whirl? Or is this just a dream?

CHORUS:

Not a dream. It's a deal.

KEVIN:

Louder please.

CHORUS:

It's a deal. No more name-calling. No more humiliation.

KEVIN:

Thanks guys. I appreciate it.

And just to put you in the picture I don't know if I'm gay or not. I guess I'm too young to know but if I am..

(THIS MAY BE UNACCEPTABLE)

If it turns out to be so then I believe I shall find men capable of

being every bit as warm as fun as
exciting and supportive as any woman
could be.

CHORUS:

Heh! Well done Kev! Good on you!
Listen to that guys!

KEVIN:

So there won't be a problem.

But no more taunting. Cool? Thank you.

CHORUS:

No more taunting. It isn't cool. It's
ugly.

KEVIN:

Thank you very much.

Any one fancy a run after tea?

Good one!

ELIZABETH:

What if?

Listen guys.

Just back off for the time being guys.
I shall choose one of you (or maybe
not one of you)

CHORUS:

Laughter

ELIZABETH:

but someone... all in good time.

Good time being when I feel like it!
When I'm ready. When I know what I
want.

Till then give me space.

I like being a virgin. I think it's
cool.

Got it? I'm serious.

CHORUS:

O.K. Elizabeth! We've got it.

ELIZABETH:

So will you just piss off and leave me
alone?

CHORUS:

Yeah! Yeah! Yeah! We heard you!

ELIZABETH:

Thank you.

ALISON:

What if?

I asked for help.

What if I'd just stood there and said
'please somebody help me. I'm very
upset and I don't know who to turn to.'

CHORUS:

Please help me. Very upset. Very
frightened. Very frightened. Don't
know who to turn to. Don't want to
upset mum. Don't want to upset dad.
Brother always out.

ALISON:

Then I told my teacher.

They gave me a councillor. She helped
me explore strategies for coping.

She gave me confidence and helped me to
talk about what interested me.

CHORUS:

What interests you Alison?

ALISON:

She encouraged me to ask my father to
take me to art shows and we started
going to galleries together. Me and
Dad.

CHORUS:

Days out! Lucky Alison.

ALISON:

Talked to Mum. Talked to Dad.
Talked to my teacher. Talked to the
councillor.
Told her all the hateful feelings.

Wanted the bullies' houses to catch on
fire and for them to be burnt alive or
squashed under a lorry so all their
insides oozed out and couldn't be put
back.

Wanted to kill. Wanted them dead.

Everything changed.

CHORUS:

Never used to talk very much. Now I
talk and talk and it feels better.
And I know the bullies need help not
killing. Just like me.

I want to be an artist.

JOHNNY:

What if? If every school was like my
school and kept an eye – then all the
kids would be safe all the time.

That would be really good.

JOANNA:

What if?
Heh gossiping girls!

Stop making stuff up about me. I don't
like it. So stop!

We've got more interesting things to talk about – like what are we going to make of our lives?

I've no idea what I want to do when I grow up. Something with people. Perhaps run a restaurant. I make wonderful cakes.

I've taught my little sister to bake.

So guys is that a deal? No more made up stuff about Joanna.

CHORUS:

No more stuff about Joanna. Joanna's cool.

JOANNA:

Yes? Oh thank goodness. Thanks so much.

(THIS NEXT PARAGRAPH MAY BE UNACCEPTABLE)

Good luck everyone and by the way what if we stopped talking about lesbians and began to understand that it's normal for girls to fancy girls.

It is normal for girls to fancy boys and normal for girls to fancy girls and even absolutely fine and normal to fancy both girls and boys!

At least I think so.
O.K. every one?

CHORUS:

We'll have to talk about it. OK?

JOANNA:

Cool and thanks again guys. And yes... let's talk and keep on talking. Let's keep a conversation going about how to live our lives. About how we feel and what we want.

And how to respect people who are different and include them in our lives.

JOCASTA:

At my new school for kids who didn't like school – what if?

Well here they listened to me and found out what I was interested in.

Nobody seemed to be in so much hurry. So I wasn't late.

I told them I liked ladybirds and I had made a study of a bush that had lots of ladybirds.

So a teacher took three of us to the Natural History Museum and I met a entomologist and she showed us a whole collection of insects.

They were so beautiful.

They are a threatened species and I am going to help save them.

Now I am a volunteer under her wing. Wing! Get it! She's like a great big dragonfly and she's got me under her wing.

Once a week on a Monday afternoon I go and help clean up slides and polish the glass cases.

I'm an official volunteer. I have a badge.

I like it.

I'm good.

RAY:

What if?

What if the Head Teacher Mr Willis took bullying on ... all kinds of bullying - took everybody on... Making bullying unacceptable in our school.

What if?

HEAD TEACHER:

After talking to Ray here I have taken the serious decision to eradicate bullying from this school. It may take a while. We will have to work at it

but if we all get involved I know we will get there.

Every morning at every Assembly throughout the term we will spend five or even ten minutes talking about bullying.

I shall want two of you each day to come up and stand beside me and tell me what you've seen or heard or think about bullying. No names mentioned. This isn't about culprits. It's about ideas.

We'll look at what cruelty is and we'll decipher power issues in the bully.

And we'll get a conversation going that won't stop with Assembly but will continue with Form teachers and your fellow students.

We'll explore ideas till we understand we have choices and the first might be not to despise other people because they are different.

It's going to be hard work and I hope you are up for it but I know it will be interesting and challenging because making friends and being honest and learning to trust one another is one of the most important things we learn to do in our lives.

I'll kick off by talking about ignoring other people.

To ignore – to shut out – Not to include. Not worth noticing...

Now early every morning I have my newspaper delivered. I make myself a cup of real coffee and watch out of the window to see the boy on his bike coming through the garden gate.

Then I hurry to the front door and pick up my paper from the mat and sit with my coffee and the paper for half an hour.

I've never spoken to the boy but I've seen him skidding on the ice and pushing the bike through the snow. So to ignore someone who is part of your everyday life – who does you a service – that is a form of bullying – showing you don't feel that person is worthy of your attention... I didn't speak to him ...
Because it seemed a waste of time.

RAY:

I'm a paper boy and I deliver to Mr Willis here. I see him through the window with his coffee in his hand waiting for me – or shall I say not waiting for me – but waiting for his paper.

This morning he opened the door and

took the paper from me and said

HEAD TEACHER:

Thank you for bringing my paper through all that ice and snow. We've had a dreadful winter but you never let me down.

RAY:

And as I headed off I turned and waved and he waved back.

THEY WAVE TO ONE ANOTHER

THE END

Written by Nell Dunn
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Nell Dunn is a playwright and novelist. Her first book was *Up The Junction*, published in 1963, and she worked with Ken Loach to turn it into a 'Wednesday Play' for the BBC. She collaborated with him again on the film version of her second novel, *Poor Cow*, which he directed in 1967. In 1981 she wrote her first play, *Steaming*, which ran in the West End for two years.

These plays are based on real people telling real stories. They are written for students aged between 10 and 16 to perform in their drama class and thereby to understand the deeper implications of bullying and the choices we all have.

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