

# BULLYBOY by JOE MAINGOT

## CHARACTERS

SID, a cleaner in his sixties [ This part might be interesting played by a girl - it would work, if desired.]

BOB a policeman in his fifties

ROGER a boy of fifteen who has run away from school

MR RICHARDSON, a lawyer in his late sixties

TIM, Roger's friend

MR HARDY Roger's father, in his forties

Scene: a waiting-room in a rural train station. The present day. There are seats around the room and two doors.

Lasting about twenty-five minutes, this is an ideal GCSE examination piece with good contrasting characters, fairly evenly balanced, and nice contrasts between comedy and potential tragedy. Staging is of the simplest too, with no fancy lighting needed and few sound effects.

The play sets out to expose the effect of bullying on those who are the victims. Though we never meet Freddie, who attempts suicide, Roger's description of what he had to go through, the time span, the courage with which he tried to laugh it off, all serve to underline the horror. A secondary theme is the effect on the actual bully of what he has done. Roger is not a typical bully; it is clear he is just one of the 'in-crowd', but he knows he's as much to blame as anyone. His life has been changed by what he has done. The writer is keen to show that despite the near-tragedy of Freddie's suicide attempt, bullying will not stop. In boarding schools like this, as in ordinary schools, 'boys will be boys.' And boys are a pretty heartless lot on the whole, especially if they're anxious to be seen to be on the 'right' side - that is the 'cool' side. Tim, representing the more normal reaction, is concerned by Freddie's plight, but not overly. He is more concerned by how it has affected his friend Roger. One senses that Tim, like most of the bullies, will not have learned anything.

The writer uses the comedy of Sid and Bob as a balance. They are a classic comic double-act and should be played as such, though not to such an extent that it undermines the serious effect of the play.

## EXTRACT ONE

**Lights up to reveal Sid with a mop and bucket and cleaning materials. He stands stage centre and sighs. He puts down his stuff and takes out a small bottle of whisky. He swigs some after a shifty look around. He puts back the whisky and scratches his bum. He stretches and then lies down on one of the benches.**

**Pause.**

**Enter Bob, a policeman in his fifties. He is a timid man. He sits down next to Sid without either man taking notice of the other.**

**Pause.**

**In one motion, Sid slowly raises the whisky bottle with a straight arm towards Bob, who pauses, then takes the bottle and swigs some whisky before returning the bottle to Sid's waiting arm. Sid pockets the bottle.**

**Pause.**

**BOB** Busy then.

**SID** I am studying the ceiling for areas that may be encrusted with dust. Before commencing any job, a methodical quantification of the work is essential.

**BOB** Is that so you can decide whether or not to do it?

**SID** Precisely.

**BOB** And in this particular case?

**SID** *sitting up* Bollocks to it.

**BOB** Very wise. You'd break your neck up there. It must be twenty feet.

**SID** At least. [*Pause.*] You rushed off your feet as well, I take it?

**BOB** No, thank goodness. I'm still recovering from last week.

**SID** Yes, well, that doesn't surprise me at all. Nasty, very nasty.

**BOB** A bald tyre and an improperly displayed tax disc. [*He sighs.*] Oh, I hate crime.

**SID** I know.

**BOB** It really frightens me.

**SID** I know.

**BOB** It's not the criminals.

**SID** No.

**BOB** It's the actual crime. I find it so exhausting, you know, being horrified and so on.

**SID** Oh, I know. [*Pause.*] Still, you know what your trouble is, don't you?

**BOB** What?

**SID** You're too conscientious.

**BOB** You're quite right.

**SID** You don't know when to turn a blind eye - when to let things slip.

**BOB** I can't help it. It's the way I'm made.

**SID** *getting up and tidying a few things, or dusting a little* Whereas I - I know where to draw the line. Now, imagine if I tried to keep this place spotless... there'd be no end to it. And of course there's a world of difference between perceived dirt, dirt, and imperceptible dirt. Whereas, in your case, a crime's a crime and once detected...

**BOB** Quite so, quite so,

**Enter Roger in a hurry. A sports bag is in his hand. He stops dead when he sees the policeman. Bob and Sid both stare at him, Bob with complete horror.**

**Pause.**

**BOB** Young man, why are you not in school? I hope you are not truanting?...

## EXTRACT TWO

**MR R** Bugger!

**SID** What is it now, Mr Richardson?

**MR R.** I've left my broolly behind. Is there anything more infuriating than reaching the station, only to find oneself broollyless?

**SID** Most agitating.

**Sid passes the bottle of whisky over and Mr Richardson takes a dignified sip, wipes his mouth with his handkerchief and returns the bottle.**

**MR R.** And who is our esteemed young friend?

**SID** He's a runaway. Done a bunk from boarding school.

**MR R.** Excellent! Quite right, young man, quite right. If it were up to me, the whole lot of them would be pulled down tomorrow.

**SID** I never knew you was anti boarding school.

**MR R.** I still have the scars in a rather intimate place from a birching I received when I was fourteen. I have, since then, been prejudiced against boarding schools.

**SID** On your arse, was it?

**MR R. ignoring Sid** Don't look so glum, young man. You're quite within your rights. It is, after all, a free country and there is nothing whatsoever binding you legally to your school. I myself am absconding also. I should, in fact, be hard at it in my office, drawing up tenancy contracts and such like, but I have decided to buzz off to Masterbridge for

the afternoon to watch a movie. Now, which of us is the most reprehensible? I, for neglecting the work for which clients pay me, or you, for freeing yourself from a place of violence, bullying and bigotry?

**SID** Oh, come off it, Mr Richardson, things have changed, you know. They're not allowed to hit 'em any more. And I've heard that they're very hot on bullying now. The trouble with you is that you can't forget. Schools today...

### EXTRACT THREE

**Enter Tim, Roger's friend from school.**

**TIM** Roger! There you are! What the hell are you doing?

**ROGER** How did you find me?

**TIM** The station's the obvious place to look really, isn't it?

**ROGER** I suppose so.

**TIM** You're lucky the teachers didn't catch you. They were up here this morning, looking for you.

**SID** A big fat bloke and a tall chap with a huge bald patch? I saw them this morning.

**TIM** That's them... Carstairs and Reuterman. Oh, Carstairs is going bonkers. [**To Sid.**]

That's his house master. But that's not the worst of it. Your Dad's shown up at school.

[**Pause.**] Roger? What are you doing? You're three months away from your GCSEs.

It's the end of term in a week. It's not worth all this hassle.

**ROGER** You may be happy to carry on as if nothing has happened, as if everything's absolutely fine - but I can't. I just can't. I can't face another day of it.

**TIM** Look, Roger, you've got to get it together. If you go back now, it might be all right. Not that many people know. I'm sure everyone will understand. But you can't push your luck. [**Pause.**]

Your Dad's frantic.

**ROGER** Yes, I suppose he would be. [**Pause.**] I just need to be alone at the moment. Surely you can understand that? It doesn't seem to affect you as much as it does me, but surely you can understand how awful it is? [**Pause.**] I feel like I never want to see another human being again.

**Enter Bob, the policeman. He looks rather frightened and sheepish. Everyone turns and looks at him. A pause.**

**BOB to Sid** I had to come back.

**SID** I know.

**BOB** I'm awfully sorry, but I had to. My conscience wouldn't let me alone. Much as I find it exhausting, I can't ignore crime. [**Pause.**] Well.... are you truanting, young man? It's my duty to ask you.

**Pause.**

**ROGER** Well, to be absolutely honest...

**SID** It's a half day and he's got leave to go into Masterbridge - ain't ya?

**ROGER** That's right. I'm getting the next train. It's quite all right. My friend, Tim here, is coming with me, aren't you, Tim?

**TIM** What? Oh, yes. Of course. We have to be back by six p.m., though...

### EXTRACT FOUR

**MR HARDY** Roger, what is this all about? They didn't seem to want to say anything at school - but there must be something. What the hell has happened to you? You were fine two weeks ago. We had a great weekend together, didn't we? [**Pause.**] Well, I thought it was good. [**Pause.**] Roger, we've always talked about things, haven't we? We've always been open with one another.

**Pause.**

**ROGER** In a way. Not really, dad. We pretend. That's all.

**MR HARDY** We pretend!? What the hell does that mean?

**ROGER** We pretend that I'm a nice guy, don't we? We pretend that I'm a model student, good at sport too and, most importantly, one of the lads.

**TIM** It's not like that, Roger. You've got it all screwed up.

**ROGER *ignoring Tim*** We pretend that I'm not the sort of person who drives other people to commit suicide!

***Pause.***

**MR HARDY** Suicide? What are you talking about?

**ROGER *calmly*** There was this boy called Freddy - in the third form. Everyone pushed him around. He had huge ears. We thought it was a joke - pulling his ears every time we saw him. Everyone did it, you see, so it was all right. Can you imagine that? Every time you walk down a corridor, every time you go into a classroom, or a dorm, or anywhere? Then one night we decided to be a little inventive, you see. Me and my nice friends, all of us good chaps. The cool guys - you know, Dad? All of my friends that you love having over in the holidays. Well, we decided it would be hilarious to hang Freddie upside down out of the second floor window by his feet. And it was hilarious. Everyone was there. And d'you know what? D'you know what was the really funny bit? ... When you let go with one hand so that he was dangling by just one ankle, he pissed himself. Oh, that was the best, that was the really funny part. It was so funny, we decided to do it rather frequently - almost every night. 'Hello, piss pants,' we used to say. And the funny thing was, he seemed to like it. He could take a joke - he would laugh it off half the time. And of course he brought it on himself. That's what a lot of people said. He brought it on himself. He was cheeky - he liked being pushed around - it was a way of getting attention. He brought it on himself. [***Pause.***] Well, the fun came to an end last Sunday night, Dad. I guess he'd had enough. He didn't tell anyone or write a note or anything, he just ... drank a bottle of bleach. [***Pause.***] Oh, he's not dead. Amazingly, someone found him in time. He's still in hospital. [***Pause.***] So you see, we have been pretending, Dad. I'm not the sort of person you think I am: I drive little boys to suicide and pretend, and pretend, pretend... [***He breaks down.***]

**TIM** Roger, I don't know why you're doing this to yourself. You didn't hang him out of the window...

**ROGER** I was there! I was part of the gang! I cheered and I shouted and I watched! And so did you.... I just want to disappear, I just ...

***Long pause.***

**MR HARDY** Come on, Rog, let's go home. I'm not surprised you ran away feeling like this. Let's go home and you can hide in your room, or talk about it or ... do whatever you want...