

# Empathize It

*By Michelle S. Uyemura*

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### **DEDICATION**

*To my Mom and Dad*

*for all those years having to put up with their drama queen.*

*And to Monte, Sam and Joey for everything.*

### **STORY OF THE PLAY**

Alden and Sidney find themselves developing an unlikely friendship having been marked as outcasts by the “in crowd” at school. We see through their eyes what it is like to be ridiculed and picked on, what it feels like to have your “friends” turn on you because of one simple misstep. But just when life seems most bleak, enter a hero -- a quirky, awkward, fun-loving, larger-than-life, sure-to-make-you-laugh superhero for the new millennium: Empathy Girl! Though unable to fly, lacking superstrength or speed, and a little hypoglycemic, Empathy Girl isn’t without a few tricks up her sleeve. She helps Alden and Sidney learn that understanding the enemy is the first step toward taking back control of their lives. They help show us that living in fear is worse than facing those fears. If united we stand, the bully will fall! Performance time about an hour.

### **PREMIERE PERFORMANCE**

This play opened on April 30, 2009, at Wray (CO) High School under the direction of the playwright, Michelle S. Uyemura, and was performed nine additional times for the community and schools. The cast was as follows:

<i>Sidney - Jordan Brophy</i>	<i>Alden - Jacy Monasmith</i>
<i>Chad - Stephen Jackson</i>	<i>Jackie - Tara Odell</i>
<i>Rhonda - Kaci Oestman</i>	<i>Lisa - Deann Sullivan</i>
<i>Stephanie - Brizay Gomez</i>	<i>Laney - Julia Cure</i>
<i>Empathy Girl - Cindy Tena</i>	<i>Ms. Adams - Sierra Blanchard</i>
<i>Mrs. Jenkins - Brook Zuege</i>	<i>Mrs. McConnally - Julia Cure</i>
<i>Amanda - Kendra Schaffner</i>	<i>Lindsay - Brook Zuege</i>
<i>Kristine - Kelyn Brueggeman</i>	<i>Stacy - Alice-Marie Brady</i>
<i>Phoebe - Mary Swanson</i>	

#### **Production Staff:**

*Stage Manager - Kaci Brandner*  
*Lighting & Sound Supervisor - Mary Swanson*  
*Assistant Stage Manager - Jelitza Reynoso*  
*Sword Fight Choreography - Jacy Monasmith & Stephen Jackson*  
*Set painter - Edwin Reynoso*

## **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*(Flexible casting: 2 - 6 M, 8 - 17 W)*

**ALDEN HANSEN:** Artistic, loves fantasy in comic books and sci-fi. Spends most of his time in his own world drawing. He is a wonderful artist but doesn't get much recognition for it because it is all comic book stuff. As far as teachers and parents are concerned it just gets in the way of his school work. His peers just think he is weird. He has been bullied in some form most of his life. He has become resigned to it and doesn't try to change it, only to survive it.

**SIDNEY TAYOR:** Moved to town over the summer and was befriended by Jackie and her group. She is headstrong and very intelligent and had been teased about that before. At her other school she was considered a "goodie two-shoes" and didn't have many friends, but she hadn't been a target of bullying. She is insecure about her looks and other small things about herself, like anyone. Mostly she was tired of not having friends and thought that if she could fit in with Jackie and her friends she would be popular for a change.

**EMPATHY GIRL:** Enthusiastic, awkward and energetic, she is somewhat of a klutz. She is zany and a crack-up but what makes her that way is she isn't trying to be funny. She is the ultimate outsider and geek and yet she assumes the world loves her -- after all, she is a superhero.

**JACKIE:** Ringleader of the girls, popular, comes from money, parents give her what she wants, she is pretty and smart but doesn't do all that well in class because that wouldn't be cool. She can be a lot of fun and very generous to her followers, but if her rules are broken she can be very mean.

**RHONDA:** Second in command, she often does Jackie's dirty work; she gets all her self-confidence from being Jackie's best friend.

**STEPHANIE:** Goes along with whatever, laughs at everything, the "yes" girl, always puts herself down and thinks what everyone else is wearing or doing is so cool. She bends over backwards to fit in and have everyone like her.

**LISA:** Intelligent, she gets away with her academic success by dismissing it as trivial. *(She doesn't work at it so it is no big deal.)* She helps others cheat on their homework and such. She is the comic of the group but her humor often is at the expense of someone else and is sarcastic and caustic.

**LANEY:** Quiet and shy, she is most uncomfortable with the mean things Jackie and the girls do to others. She is too frightened to stand up to Jackie and worries that if she does, she will become the next target.

**CHAD JENKINS:** Popular, charismatic, a charmer, good-looking, athletic. He puts on a good show for adults and most think he is a nice guy. His father, however, is a bully and Chad has learned from the best. He thrives of the fear and attention he gets from bullying Alden.

**MRS. MCCONNALLY:** The math teacher, in her late 60s she is seen by the students as ancient. She is a bit of a caricature and is meant to bring in some comic relief. *(Can be doubled.)*

**PRINCIPAL ADAMS:** Young, energetic, trying to make a difference. Perhaps a bit idealistic and naive. Could be male or female.

**MRS. JENKINS:** Chad's mother, pleasant, quiet, but fiercely protective of her son. *(Can be doubled.)*

**GIRL 1** *(Can be doubled.)*

**GIRL 2** *(Can be doubled.)*

**GIRL 3** *(Can be doubled.)*

### **The Monologues**

Lindsay

Kristine *(Or Kevin)*

Stacy *(Or Steve)*

Phoebe *(Or Peter)*

Round Girl in Alden's Sword Fight fantasy

Back up singers in Sidney's Karaoke fantasy

Announcer's Voice

Extras for "crowd" scenes

### **TIME and PLACE**

The present. A junior/senior high school.

*PLEASE NOTE: In Scene 4 music is suggested. Performing organizations must obtain the rights to use this or any other music protected under copyright.*

## **STAGING**

The original production was staged in the round. Ideally the performance area is an intimate space where the audience should be small in numbers and sitting close to the stage. The goal is to make them feel as if they are a part of what is happening around them and not just voyeurs. The set is minimalist. Boxes, stools, benches, etc., all painted black, that can be used in any configuration to create the different settings. In Scene 2, put two of the larger black boxes up on their ends to represent the sinks.

## **SYNOPSIS OF SCENES**

Scene 1: The school commons area during lunch time.  
Scene 2: The girls' bathroom a couple of days later.  
Scene 3: The commons area a couple of days later.  
Scene 4: The commons area the next day.  
Scene 5: Principal Adams' office.  
Scene 6: The commons area, a couple of days later.  
Scene 7: Spotlights to represent the phone that evening.  
Scene 8: A few days later in the commons area.

## **PROPS**

Notebook, art papers, backpack for Alden  
Assorted books and backpacks for students  
Backpack for Stephanie  
Cell phones for Rhonda, Sidney, Jackie and Laney  
Purse with comb, makeup for Sidney  
Necklace for Sidney  
Sign that says "The Only Round Needed"  
Two play swords  
Chips, soda, apple, bag of M&M's candy  
Karaoke machine (optional)  
Bag of chips for Empathy Girl  
Pen and notebook for Jackie  
Fingernail polish for Laney

## Scene 1

*(AT RISE: The school commons area during lunch time. ALDEN is sitting alone. Tucked away in a corner, he is almost hidden from the audience and the action on the stage. He is drawing in his notebook with his backpack open next to him. SFX: Offstage we hear noises of other students. JACKIE, LISA, RHONDA, STEPHANIE and LANEY enter talking, laughing.)*

**LISA:** Did you see what she was wearing? That pink top with the puffy sleeves and those pants -- ! I swear they were purple. Oh my god, it was like Barney meets Strawberry Shortcake!

**JACKIE:** *(Laughing along with everyone else.)* Lisa, don't be so mean! She can't help it. Her mom obviously still dresses her.

**STEPHANIE:** *(Trying to find something in her backpack.)* Wait up you guys, I think I lost my chap stick. I'm dying here! Wait just a second. *(She puts the backpack down and begins rummaging through it.)*

**LISA:** Oh yeah, we wouldn't want dry scratchy lips, now would we? We want to keep them wet and wonderful for Nick Bowen.

**STEPHANIE:** *(Annoyed but grinning in spite of herself.)* Cut it out.

**LISA:** *(Grabbing LANEY and hamming it up.)* Nick, I've been moisturizing my lips for days just for you! Kiss me like I've never been kissed!

**RHONDA:** *(She has been texting this whole time on her cell phone.)* You guys are so weird. Dang. It is so unfair that we can't text during class. How are we supposed to get anything done.

**STEPHANIE:** *(Joking back at LISA.)* You're just jealous because he is hot and he wants me.

**LISA:** In your dreams. He's not my type. I like my buns perkier.

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