

1985

PAULY

A one act play, written for and to be played by pre-teens. Intense one-to-one interaction and the use of spotlighting which fades to black between scenes are the techniques used to unify the whole and link each scene.

This play does not try to "create" unique individuals through its presentation of characters. Rather it portrays the various characters as "types" of people. This technique is utilized for the benefit of the juvenile audiences. The generalized behaviors are easily related to.

The play's aim is to inform, address an existent problem with which children are in contact yet rarely know how to deal with. This is not a literary tour de force but rather a play to stimulate discussion & further understanding.

The mother represents "everybody's mother" — Jeff: every child — Pauly: the children who suffer the sins of the adult world.

List of characters

Pauly

Jeff (Pauly's best friend)

Father (Jeff's)

Mother (Jeff's)

Mrs. Chalmers (School Principal)

Scene 1: (Spotlighting stage left)

(Pauly and Jeff are having a discussion during their walk home from school.)

Jeff: You're lying, Pauly!

Pauly: No I'm not... I'm your best friend; I wouldn't lie...

Jeff: Pauly, last week it was the tub, this week it's the stairs. I don't believe you anymore... You're not that clumsy... If you don't tell me the truth, I'm going to walk away and never be your friend...

(Jeff leaves Pauly standing alone)

(Light fades)

Scene 2: (Spotlighting stage right)

(Sitting on a park bench, Jeff talks to himself)

Jeff: Darn him... he's lying to me... ME, his best friend. He won't even tell ME the truth...

Nope, that's it... I'm not hanging around him anymore; he's crazy if he thinks I am...

(Light fades)

Scene 3: (Spotlighting stage left)

(After school, at Jeff's house)

Mother: Hi, there, Jeff... How was school?

Jeff: OK

Mother: You're a bit late aren't you?

Jeff: Yeh...

Mother: You and Pauly run off and forget the time again?

Jeff: Naw...

(Mother stops what she is doing and looks intently at Jeff.)

Mother: Listen... You who is probably the champion talker in the world, I'm a little worried...

Jeff: Why?

Mother: Well... for a person who usually talks a thousand words a minute, you certainly aren't trying to beat a world record, today...

Jeff: Just haven't got anything to say...

Mother: Well... I guess a six word sentence is better than "OK" and "Yeh"... Are you sure you're feeling all right?

Jeff: I'm OK...
(Jeff gets up to leave the kitchen)

Mother: Don't you want to talk a bit?

Jeff: No, ~~now~~; not now, OK? I've got homework to do.

Mother: OK... but if you have something on your mind... I'm here...
(Jeff leaves the kitchen)

Mother: (Speaking to herself) Something is bothering that boy...
(Light fades)

Scene 4: (Spotlighting center stage)
(It is the following day. Pauly meets Jeff who is walking to school.)

Pauly: G'morning... You still mad at me?...

Jeff: Naw...

Pauly: I'm sorry if I made you mad...

Jeff: You didn't make me mad...

Pauly: Yes I did... and I'm sorry.

Jeff: Forget it... Wanna play ball when we get to school?

Pauly: Sure... I'm getting pretty good at catching with my left hand...

Jeff: (Sarcastically) Yeh, I know...It's the second time you bust the same arm...

Pauly: I'm sorry...

Jeff: (Discouraged) Why do you keep saying you're sorry, Pauly?... Did you bust it on purpose?...

Pauly: NO!... How can you say that?

Jeff: Pauly!... Geez... Sometimes I could punch you right out... Never mind... I'll ask Larry to play ball... See ya later.

(Jeff walks away)
repeatedly
Pauly angrily hits his cast, then says sadly:

Pauly: (Alone and sad) I'm sorry, Jeff...

(Light fades)

Scene 5: (Spotlighting stage left)

(Jeff enters house after school)

Father: Hi, fella...

Jeff: Hi, Dad...

Father: Home early, today, aren't you?

Jeff: Yeh...

Father: Don't you and Pauly fool around after school anymore?

Jeff: Naw...

Father: You mean to say that I'm going to have to stop bugging you about always coming home late... Gee whiz... and I was getting good at being the bully around here... I'm going to have to start being a nice guy... I don't know if I can be that type of father...

Jeff: Aw, Dad, I'm not in the mood for jokes, OK?

Father: What's up, Jeffrey?

Jeff: Nuthin...

Father: You!... ~~The all around jack rabbit and gung he,~~
~~go-getter,~~ not in the mood?... Something's got to
be wrong...

Jeff: Nuthin's wrong... I'm just not in the mood...

Father: Well... If you were in the mood, would you laugh at
my dumb jokes, like you used to?

Jeff: (laughing) Yes!...

Father: That's more like it. I was starting to wonder.

Jeff: I've got to get my homework done, OK Dad?

Father: OK, son, see you later.
(Unseen by father and son, mother walks into the
living room)

Jeff: OK... Thanks, Dad.

Father: For what?

Jeff: Nuthin,... just thanks...
(Jeff exits)

Mother: What was all that about?

Father: To tell you the truth, hon, I don't know... It's
all a bit strange. I'm not sure what to make of it...

Mother: Last night it was the same thing. He came home from
school; late as usual, but he didn't seem to be the
same boy... I tried to find out what was wrong, but
he wouldn't talk...

Father: Were his pupils dilated?

Mother: WHAT???

Father: Were his pupils dilated?

Mother: (Upset and surprised) Charles... What are you talking about?

Father: Sarah,... I may be an old foagy to our kids, but I'm not dumb... Jeff is in grade seven, isn't he?

Mother: (Defensively) Yes...

Father: Well, the school he goes to is no more immune to drugs and pushers than other schools...

Mother: (Getting more upset) For God's sake, Charles. You don't think that Jeff is...

Father: Calm down, Sarah. I didn't say that Jeff was taking drugs... I'm just trying to discover why he's moping around the house when he's usually the first to open his mouth, in the morning, and the last to shut it at night. According to you he is different than he usually is... That means there's something wrong.

Mother: (Indignantly) Well, I wouldn't go so far as to say he's taking drugs, Charles.

Father: I'm sorry to upset you, Sarah. I was just mulling over in my mind things that could be bugging him; and being a parent, well... my imagination tends to think the worst when one of the kids is upset.

Mother: Let's not jump the gun... I'll try and get something out of him in the morning, at breakfast.

Father: OK, then we can talk about it when I get home tomorrow night.

Mother: (Relieved) I'm sure it will be good news and all will be well again...

Father: I sure hope so... I've just realised that I like him better when he's a pain in the ...

Mother: CHARLES!!

Father: (Defensively) I didn't say it!
(Light fades)

Scene 6: (Spotlighting stage left)
(Next morning at breakfast)

Mother: Good morning, sunshine.

Jeff: Hi.

Mother: Got everything you need?

Jeff: Yeh...

Mother: Brush your teeth?

Jeff: Yes...

Mother: Change your socks and...

Jeff: Mom, don't you ever get tired of asking the same questions EVERY morning?

Mother: I'm a nag aren't I?

Jeff: Well,... not really...

Mother: Jeffrey, either I am a nag or I am not... now, which is it?

Jeff: OK, Mom... you're a nag, OK?

Mother: I knew it... the men in this house don't appreciate me... I'm just a rag!

Jeff: You've been looking at too many soap operas, Mom.

Mother: And when do you think I have time for that stuff?

Jeff: I heard you talking to aunt Jane, last week;
(mimicking): "Do you really believe that Kirk murdered her?...Oh, and isn't Judd just a gorgeous hunka man???"

Mother: OK, OK,... I confess... So eat your breakfast, already!

Jeff: Got you there, Mom...

Mother: You're as bad as your father; do you know that?

Jeff: (Smirks teasingly)

Mother: You seem to be feeling a lot better than you have in the past two days...

Jeff: What do you mean?

Mother: Come on, Jeffy-boy, your mother is not a dunce.

Jeff: Well, maybe.

Mother: Well maybe, nothing. You seemed so preoccupied. Is there anything wrong at school?

Jeff: No...

Mother: Are you sure?

Jeff: Sure, I'm sure.

Mother: Well, I don't like to pry but I do hope that you'll talk to me or your father, if there is something wrong. We're not in the habit of slapping you silly when we discover you've done something wrong, you know...

Jeff: I haven't done anything wrong since I busted Mrs. Warren's window.

Mother: That was only three weeks ago, chum...

Jeff: Well... Haven't I been a little angel, since?

Mother: Good; yes... Angel?... Forget it.

Jeff: (Reflecting, then speaking) Have I ever broken any bones, Mom?

Mother: Yours or somebody elses?

Jeff: MOM!... I'm serious!

Mother: Seriously, yes... You broke your finger once... Let's
s see... You were eight years old; remember?

Jeff: Oh yeh... Did I break any other bones?

Mother: Why this great interest in broken bones?

Jeff: Nuthin... Did I break any other bones?

Mother: No... but you've skinned your knees a million times
and you've had more cuts and bruises than I care to
remember.

Jeff: (Gets up to leave for school) Thanks, Mom... See ya
tonight.

Mother: (To herself) What was all that about?
(Light fades)

Scene 7: (Spotlighting center stage)
(Pauly and Jeff meet each other on their way to
school)

Jeff: Hi, Pauly...

Pauly: (Silent).....

Jeff: (teasing): Hi, Pauly...

Pauly: (sad): Hi, Jeff.

Jeff: Sorry about yesterday... I didn't mean what I said.

Pauly: Now, you're the one who's always saying he's sorry...

Jeff: First off, I'm not always saying I'm sorry; and
second off, I say it when I've done something wrong...
You're always saying it even when you haven't done
anything.

Pauly: That's not true...

Jeff: Oh, yes it is...

Pauly: No it's not...

Jeff: Wanna bet?

Pauly: Yeh...

Jeff: In class, yesterday, you said that you were sorry SEVENTEEN times; I counted them... You're the sorryest guy I ever met in my whole life...

Pauly: Seventeen?

Jeff: Yep...

Pauly: Really?

Jeff: Really.

Pauly: Geez... I'm sorry.

Jeff: SEE?... There you go again... You have to stop that Pauly. The guys are starting to think you're weird.

Pauly: (Angry) I'm no weirdo... And I don't care what they say... They can all die for all I care; they don't know nuthin... They couldn't know... Even you... You're always mad at me and I never do anything to you... Some kind of friend you are...

Jeff: (Surprised at Pauly's anger) Pauly????!!

Pauly: To hell with you, Jeff... I don't need you, (crying), I don't need anybody. (Pauly stomps away).

Jeff: Pauly!! We have to get to school. Come on, man. We're going to be late... Pauly? Pauly... get back here.

(To himself): Holy geez, man, he's gone crazy on me..)

(Light fades)

Scene 8: (Spotlighting stage right)

(Jeff meets the Principal in the schoolyard)

Principal: Hi Jeff.

Jeff: Hi Mrs. Chalmers.

Principal: I saw you with Pauly... Isn't he coming to school?

Jeff: I don't know Mrs. Chalmers... He was coming to school... I don't know anymore...

Principal: OK, Jeff; thanks anyway... You had better get... Morning classes are starting.

(Principal looks off in distance, and shakes her head sadly.)

(Light fades) ** turns on to show large clock: clock slowly moves to show: 5:PM.*

Scene 9: (Spotlighting center stage)

(Jeff slowly walks home from school, alone. Pauly walks up to him from the opposite direction)

Pauly: (Very angry and crying): So... You told the Principal I wasn't coming to school, today; didn't you??!

Jeff: No!... I...

Pauly: Sure you didn't... I saw you with her...

Jeff: But... Pauly...

Pauly: She phoned my Mom, you fink...

Jeff: I didn't know...

Pauly: Didn't know; nuthin... you fink nerd.

Jeff: I'm sorry, Pauly...

Pauly: So you're sorry again, are you?... You wanna be sorry for sumthin, you rat; here... I'll show you sumthin to be sorry about... FRIEND! Take a look and be sorry; damn you...(Pauly, extremely angry, rips open his shirt and shows Jeff his chest. Jeff stares in shock as he backs up slowly and finally runs off)(Pauly yells after him):

I hate you Jeff... I hate you, you bastard!!

(Light fades)

Scene 10: (Spotlighting stage left)

(Jeff runs into his house, very upset)

Father: Hi guy.

Jeff: (silent)

Father: Hey you... Nobody walks into this house without saying hello! What's with you?

Jeff: (Frightened and almost crying)... Dad?

Father: Never mind the "Dad"... Say hello!

Jeff: (crying)... Dad?

Father: Jeff?... What's the matter?

Jeff: It's Pauly...

Father: What about Pauly?

Jeff: He's all burned!!.

Father: He's what?...

Jeff: Oh God...

Father: (Comforting his son): Jeff... it's OK... come on boy... get it together... Start from the beginning.

Jeff: You know how Pauly always has something broken...

Father: Yes... he's the clumsiest kid I know.

Jeff: (Upset): But he's not!..

Father: What do you mean he's not... I...

Jeff: I play soccer with him and he never trips. He uses our electric saw and he never gets cut. He can jump farther than any of the guys and he never falls down stairs or trips any more than any of us kids at school;... but he always has bruises... ugly ones and he's busted his arm twice and broke three fingers and his ear got ripped on a coat hook at home... Dad,

I've been over there... That coat hook is too high... He couldn't have hurt himself that way... I know he's lying but he swears he isn't... I'm scared Dad...

Father: It's OK, son.

Jeff: No... It's not. He just says it was my fault... He said I told Mrs Chalmers he wasn't coming to school and his Mom found out... He's all burned, Dad... It's real ugly... Aw, geez!!!

Father: It's OK, son... Everything will be OK.

Jeff: He was wild, Dad... He wasn't like he should be. He's my friend, Dad... He was bleeding and...

Father: Where did he go?

Jeff: I don't know... He just ran off... I ran off... I didn't know what to do...

(Phone rings)

Father: Hello... Yes, he's here... It's for you, son...

Jeff: Hello?...

Pauly: Jeff?

Jeff: Is that you Pauly?... Where are you, man?

Pauly: (silence)

Jeff: Pauly!... Where are you?

Pauly: I'm scared, Jeff... I don't know what to do... It really burns...

Jeff: Get over here, Pauly... Move your a..., move your butt... NOW!

Pauly: I'm sorry I yelled at you...

Jeff: Never mind, Pauly... We're always yelling at each other... It doesn't mean anything... Get over here. Where are you?

Pauly: She doesn't mean it, Jeff...and it's not your fault; and she can't really help it... It's just that she's tired and she gets scared and cries, and things get rough when the money doesn't come in... and...

Jeff: Never mind, Pauly... Please come over to my place... Pauly?...

Pauly: I'm so sorry, Jeff...

Jeff: (angry) If you're as sorry as you say, Pauly, you'll get yourself over here, right now. (calmly): So what do you say?

Pauly: ...What about my Mom?...She's all alone... I should go home... I'm late already...

Jeff: I'll go with you, Pauly...Don't go home without me... Come and get me... I'll go with you... Your Mom never hurt you when I was there, Pauly...(hesitant): She's nice when I'm there...

Pauly:OK... I'm coming... I'll be right over.

Jeff: I'm waiting, Pauly... Don't make me wait... Bye....
(Jeff puts the receiver back on the phone)

Jeff: (Turning excitedly to his father): He's coming over, Dad... He's coming over...

Father: He couldn't have a better friend than you... You're quite a man...

Jeff: What about Pauly's Mom... Pauly says she's scared and can't help it... what about her?...

Father: There are organizations in town to help people like Pauly's Mom... She'll get all the help she needs. Right now, we have to help Pauly. He needs to see a doctor.

Maybe he can stay with us for a while... I don't know... We'll see what can be done... Whatever happens it will all be for the best... Pauly's going to be OK. With a friend who loves him as much as you do, he's going to be just fine.

(Father hugs his son)

Pauly: (Pauly walks in, eyes red, hurting and looks over at Jeff and his father, saying): ... I'm sorry...

THE END