Only 13

By Tom Quinn

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DEDICATION

To Sammi and to every 13-year-old that thinks they are alone

STORY OF THE PLAY

Phoebe finds herself struggling through her first day of middle school. She is labeled by her dad, her teacher, and other students in the school. She finds herself accepting all the labels put on her, including IMPOSSIBLE, CHILD, SCARED, ALONE, SHAME, PANIC, FAT, I DON'T MATTER, TOO SMART, DISAPPOINTED, WORTHLESS, UGLY, and SLUT. In a moment of crisis, she picks up a bottle of pills, only to be interrupted by Clarice, a friend or ghost who helps Phoebe discover the unexpected value of her life. Highlighting the impact of cyberbullying, this play illustrates how real-life situations can impact middle school students, and how small changes can make big differences.

PREMIERE PERFORMANCE

Walnut Street Theatre, Philadelphia, PA
March 1, 2012

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(4-11 flexible)

PHOEBE: Stressed 13-year-old student.

DAD: Phoebe's father.

JASON: A cool kid, friend to Amber.

AMBER: A cool kid, girlfriend to Ben, friend to Jason.

CHRISTOPHER: Timid, musical student. Sings plays guitar.

BEN: Football player, kind. Boyfriend to Amber.

MR.CLEARY: Caring science teacher.

CLARICE: A ghost and friend who helps Phoebe.

NERD: A 1950s nerd.

BULLY: A 1950s bully.

PARENT: A 1950s parent.

Doubling for 4 actors:
Actor 1: *Phoebe*
Actor 2: *Amber, Clarice, Parent*
Actor 3: *Dad, Christopher, Ben, Nerd*
Actor 4: *Jason, Mr. Cleary, Bully*

SET

The set is suggested with a few props. An outline of Phoebe is in the background during all scenes. On this outline, the word labels Phoebe collects are placed or projected until she removes them near the end of the play. Locations include Phoebe's bedroom that has a shelf with a stuffed animal, a beauty magazine, and a nearby medicine cabinet, a middle school hallway, a 1950's playground, and Phoebe's living room.

ONLY 13

(AT RISE: Phoebe's home, a morning before school. There is an outline of Phoebe against the backdrop.)

PHOEBE: *(OS.)* No! No! No!

(PHOEBE enters. She is dressed in all-black clothing that is too large for her.)

PHOEBE: No way! I am not going to wear that sweater.

(DAD enters. He wears a tie and an exasperated expression on his face. He is holding a brightly colored sweater.)

DAD: Don't tell me the next thing you are going to say is no? You are being impossible!

(DAD puts the first of what will be many labels on the outline of Phoebe against the backdrop. The first label reads "IMPOSSIBLE.")

PHOEBE: Yes! I am saying no to that stupid sweater!
DAD: What's wrong with the sweater?
PHOEBE: It's stupid!
DAD: How can a sweater be stupid? It's just an article of clothing.
PHOEBE: Okay, how about lame? How about it's an epic fail?
DAD: How about the fact that it is cold outside and you might get cold?
PHOEBE: I will not get cold!
DAD: How do you know?
PHOEBE: Because I know stuff. I am not a child anymore.
DAD: I didn't say you were a child.

(While talking, PHOEBE puts another label on her image. This one says "CHILD.")

DAD: I was just thinking you might be cold.
PHOEBE: That is not what you are thinking!
DAD: Now you can read my mind?
PHOEBE: You want me to wear that stupid, lame sweater so I won't be wearing nothing but black clothes!
DAD: Would you look at that? This does have some color in it! Would that be so bad?
PHOEBE: Stupid and lame!
DAD: Okay. I give up. You don't have to wear it. It's the first day of school and you do not want to be late. Just get your backpack so I can take you to school.
PHOEBE: I told you when the summer started that I wasn't going back there.

(PHOEBE puts another label on her image. This one says "SCARED.")

DAD: I know how you feel and I get it. I was 13 once too, and I know how horrible middle school can be. But not going to school anymore is not an option.
PHOEBE: I hate it there.
DAD: So you have told me. I hear you, but you need to go.
PHOEBE: I miss Mom.

(PHOEBE puts up another label. This one says "ALONE.")

DAD: I know you do.
PHOEBE: Where is she?
DAD: I don't know.
PHOEBE: Why did she leave?
DAD: I don't know.
PHOEBE: Was it me?
DAD: No.
PHOEBE: Because I have been thinking maybe it was me.

(PHOEBE puts up another label. This one says "SHAME.")

DAD: Don't say that and don't even think that.

End of Freeview

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