

BULLYING 101

By Ananda Deacon

Cast of Characters

PROFESSOR: 30s; white male; feigns ignorance towards the impact he's causing

ANGELA: 18; Latinx or black female; speaks her mind

KENDRICK: 18; black male; *really* speaks his mind

AMINAH: 18; black female; very studious

THOMAS: 18; white male; becomes redfaced easily

Setting

A college classroom. A blackboard reads "Astronomy 101" and "Prof. Wagner" under it.

Time

10:00am, Tuesday

At rise a professor in a classroom with students.

PROFESSOR:
Angela?

ANGELA:
Here.

PROFESSOR:
Kendrick?

KENDRICK:
Here.

PROFESSOR:
Thomas?

(Beat)

PROFESSOR:
No Thomas. Aminah?

AMINAH:
Here!

(Professor turns away from the students while Thomas quietly sneaks in and sits down)

PROFESSOR:
Great! Welcome class. My name is Professor Wagner. Today we will- Oh? What have we here?

(Professor waltzes up to Thomas' desk)

PROFESSOR:
Now, you must be Thomas, correct?

(Thomas nods)

PROFESSOR:
Well now, Thomas, ole Tommy Boy, ole pal, old sport- What makes you think it's okay for you to pop in at any old time you'd like?

THOMAS:

(blushing) Oh, uh-um truly I'm s-sorry I didn't mean to be-

PROFESSOR & THOMAS:

Late.

PROFESSOR:

But late is what you are, I'm afraid, and your lateness has volunteered you to be my helper for today! Come, come! Together we'll show the class how it's done!

ANGELA:

(whispers) How *what's* done?

PROFESSOR:

Now class, what do we have here?

AMINAH:

(tentatively raises hand) You have... Thomas?

PROFESSOR:

Close! But wrong. Think more generally.

ANGELA:

A boy?

PROFESSOR:

Even closer! Raise your hand next time though. But think a bit less general; think about the context we're in right at this moment.

KENDRICK:

(doesn't raise hand) You have a student?

PROFESSOR:

Yes! God I was starting to think I was in a class full of idiots. Precisely, we have a *student* but even more specifically we have a student who came in *late*. And a student who doesn't follow the rules *stinks*.

(Beat)

PROFESSOR:

But that's not all class! Not only does a late student metaphorically stink, this one happens to *physically* stink! P. U. Tommy Boy! *(Dramatically fans away the smell)* You'd think with how late you came in this morning you'd make time to have a quick rinse!

THOMAS:

I *just* took a shower! I do *not* stink!

PROFESSOR:

Please, do us all a favor and cover your mouth a little if you're going to speak to us (*dramatically coughs*) I see tooth brushing wasn't an option either this morning (*continues to cough*)

THOMAS:

I do *not* stink, I *did* brush my teeth, and- and- I'm dropping this class!

PROFESSOR:

Whoa there, partner! What's the issue? I was just joking with ya! (*Playfully hits Thomas in the arm*) Right class? Don't we think Thomas is being a little *sensitive*?

KENDRICK:

Yeah Thomas, grow a pair.

PROFESSOR:

(*points to Kendrick*) Now that's what I'm talkin about! Now go on and sit back down (*shoves Thomas*) So class, can anyone walk me through the steps that I took to completely break down Thomas' self esteem in a matter of 15 seconds?

(*Beat*)

PROFESSOR:

Ughhhh... I almost forgot the antisocial lot I've volunteered to be stuck with. Let's see...
Aminah!

(*Aminah's head snaps up. She had been doing homework for a different class and feels caught*)

AMINAH:

Yes?

PROFESSOR:

Can you tell me the first step when it comes to making any given person feel bad about themselves, drawing off the example I made of Thomas?

AMINAH:

Oh. Well, I suppose-

PROFESSOR:

Stand up.

(Aminah looks at him in fear before slowly standing up)

PROFESSOR:

Now, answer.

AMINAH:

Well, you started off by publicly humiliating him by calling unnecessary attention to his lateness-

PROFESSOR:

Before you continue, please, have a seat. *(Innocent smile)*

(Aminah slowly sits back down)

(They stare at each other)

PROFESSOR:

Well!?

AMINAH:

Oh! Um, well after you made him feel self conscious, you furthered that feeling by pushing the narrative that he was unclean. Now, whether or not that was true is besides the point-

PROFESSOR:

Aminah do you want to know something?

AMINAH:

...sure?

PROFESSOR:

You talk a *lot*.

(Kendrick snickers at this. The professor smiles at him)

AMINAH:

I- I was just answering your question-

PROFESSOR:

Hey, Aminah, do me a favor will ya? Go face that wall back there.

AMINAH:

...what?

PROFESSOR:
(suddenly angry) Did I fucking stutter?

(Aminah quickly gets up and goes to face the back wall)

PROFESSOR:
Now class, (begins to erase "Astronomy 101") given that we have two examples to work with now, who wants to take a stab at this fine art? (Has written "Bullying 101" in its place)

ANGELA:
What the hell type of class is this?

PROFESSOR:
(condescending) Aww... isn't that cute, class? We have a child amongst us who has yet to learn to read! How *brave* of you to come out here today!

ANGELA:
I can read, dumbass.

PROFESSOR:
(recoils, but looks impressed) Ooo we've got a fiery one over here! Angela has just volunteered herself to go first class, round of applause for Angela!

(Professor claps vigorously)

PROFESSOR:
Angela, please. Grace us with your presence at the front of the class.

ANGELA:
That's gonna have to be a hard pass for me.

PROFESSOR:
(shrugs) Ok. Suit yourself. I would suggest, however, if you don't want an immediate fail in this class....

(Pregnant pause)

ANGELA:
Fine! What- what do you want me to do?

PROFESSOR:
(smiles) I see something in you. A spark. It's not quite there yet but... What I want you to do, Angela, is bring me to tears, like I did with good ole Tommy boy and Aminah-

AMINAH:
I am *not* crying!
(*Her voice contradicts this*)

PROFESSOR:
And I want you to follow a similar structure I did. You seem somewhat smart, despite not being able to read, so, show us what you got.

ANGELA:
I think-

PROFESSOR:
Don't think, know.

ANGELA:
I *know*... your hair is.... stupid.

PROFESSOR:
I don't believe you. What's stupid about it?

ANGELA:
It's stupid cause... cause it's a weird, color?

PROFESSOR:
Is that a question?

ANGELA:
... No?

PROFESSOR:
Ugh, this is pitiful, I thought I *saw* something in you, Angela! Weren't you teased as a child?
Made fun of?

ANGELA:
Yeah a little, but-

PROFESSOR:
Made out to feel like a reject simply because you liked the taste of your own boogers more than the cafeteria food?

ANGELA:
What?

PROFESSOR:

Shunned because you liked to sniff the scented markers *so much* and made out to feel like you were *wrong* simply because you liked to suck on them, almost as much as you liked the taste of the contents of your nose?

(Angela is stunned silent and slowly sits back down)

PROFESSOR:

I cannot *believe* the lack of creativity in this room! My god, don't you children see that I'm doing this for you? Each and every one of you is a nerd in some capacity. I mean, who else would sign up for an "Astronomy 101" class I mean *come on*.

ANGELA:

(whispers) You're insane.

PROFESSOR:

Shut up! You shut- shut up *right now!* Can't you see? Can't any of you *see?* *(desperate)* I'm doing this for you! And I do this for you! And you! And especially you Mr. No Shower over here...

(Thomas sinks lower in his seat)

PROFESSOR:

(growing hysterical) I am so sick and, and tired... rejecting the *wisdom*, the, the *skills* that- that I am trying to gift you all with! Why if I had had a mentor who cared about me half as much... who gave me the skills I needed to stand up to, to those *Neanderthals* who made my life a living hell...!

(Professor places his head in his hands. He is not crying but trying to stabilize his breathing)

KENDRICK:

Stop crying like a little bitch.

(Professor's head snaps back up)

PROFESSOR:

(sniffs) What?

KENDRICK:

(raises voice) I said, stop crying like a little-

PROFESSOR:

I heard you.

KENDRICK:
Bitch.

PROFESSOR:
(a slow smile spreads across his face) My oh my, it seems I do have a diamond in the rough-

KENDRICK:
And by the way, your shirt, tie, and pants are tacky. I've seen better color schemes on a randomized sim.

PROFESSOR:
(points enthusiastically) See! That, that right there-

KENDRICK:
And another thing, your life doesn't suck cause you're stuck teaching this class, your life sucks cause no one would fuck you even if you paid them. Not with that haircut, anyway.

PROFESSOR:
(smiles hugely) Yes! Yes yes yes! This is exactly-

KENDRICK:
And those bullies didn't pick on you cause you were weird, they picked on you cause they knew that you were a waste of space that would never amount to anything, and they were right.

PROFESSOR:
Very, very good Kendrick. Now class-

KENDRICK:
And your wife didn't leave you because of her affair, she left your sorry ass cause you're a spineless, pathetic failure who's never been able to hold down a job for more than a month.

PROFESSOR:
H-How did you-

KENDRICK:
And it's no coincidence that none of your family or friends told you happy birthday this year. They honestly just can't stand to be around you.

PROFESSOR:
(nervous laughter) I don't know who's telling you this, but I-

KENDRICK:

And it's fine, I get it. We all know that teaching this class, being disrespectful to people half your age - or maybe one third your age with those wrinkles - is the only thing you have to look forward to in life now with the divorce and everything-

PROFESSOR:

Ok! I get it-

KENDRICK:

But it's not our fault that no one loves you.

(Pregnant pause)

PROFESSOR:

(sniffs) Well. I think that's enough learning for one day. Class dismissed. *(exits)*

(Class in stunned silence. Aminah leaves the corner and rejoins the group)

AMINAH:

That. Was. Incredible!! How did you do that? How did you know all those personal things about him?

KENDRICK:

(turns his laptop to reveal Professor Wagner's Facebook page) Apparently, dude's one true calling is oversharing. Look! He made another post just now.

(The class crowds around to read)

THOMAS:

"I'm never having kids" *(snickers)*

ANGELA:

So I suppose we're all gonna have to look out for the Alpha over here, huh? If Kendrick can make a grown manchild cry, there's no telling what he could do to the rest of us.

KENDRICK:

Naw I'm not about that life. I was just sick of his punk ass not talking about astronomy. I love learning about stars and shit.

THOMAS:

Welp, this campus has always needed a hero.

ANGELA:

I suppose we were lucky and got a villain.

KENDRICK:

(annoyed) I ain't a villain and I damn sure ain't no hero either. I'm just not gonna sit and take some crap if I can do somethin about it.

ANGELA:

So you're saying you're going to use your powers for good? Gonna run around campus with some underwear outside your tights and a cape and stick up for every student standing toe to toe with a power hungry professor?

AMINAH:

Oh! Or are you going to join the dark side and harass unsuspecting students so that they grow a thick skin? I guess the ends would justify the means...

KENDRICK:

Naw- that's exactly what toxic bitches like him would want. What I'm *not* gonna do is project my shit onto others like that. Now if y'all excuse me, I'm gonna find a *real* Astronomy class, get this bachelor's degree, and then get this check. *(exits)*

(Beat)

ANGELA:

Welp, I'm gonna go take a well deserved nap.

THOMAS:

I'll walk with you back to the dorms. He was right, I didn't have time for a shower today. *(they exit)*

AMINAH:

Ok guys! Well I guess I'll see you around! This is a perfect opportunity to get some work done, I suppose.

(She sits and pulls out a notebook filled with notes and a pack of scented markers. She begins to highlight a line or two. Slowly, she brings one to her nose and inhales deeply. She makes a satisfied sound as the lights fade)

END