

# SOS

## Save Our Schools from Bullying!

*Written & illustrated by Gaye Dell*





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# SOS

For all of us...

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sos



Scene A  
Chapter 1  
...the news



*“Did you see the news this morning, Mr. Butler?”*

Mr. Butler looked from the blade of the butcher’s knife he was clenching over to Mrs. Murray. He shook his head, and then looked back at the shiny blade suspended over the lamb hindquarter.

*“There was an announcement from the Education Minister, the Right Honourable Mr. Edwards. It was about closing some of the smaller schools in Victoria!”*

Thunk!

The blade came down and severed the lamb into two clean pieces. Mr. Butler glanced at her again. Startled, but not deterred by the noise, she saw his glance as a sign to continue speaking.

*“They even mentioned this district Mr. Butler...the Foot-hills area, they said. I really hope they don’t close our school, Riversdale Road Primary; it is the smallest one in the district and you know my Molly goes there. She loves it. I love it. The whole community loves it. Oh dear, oh dear.”*

He reached for the half kilo of sausages he had wrapped very neatly in a white package and slapped them noisily onto the counter before he turned his attention back to the lamb again.

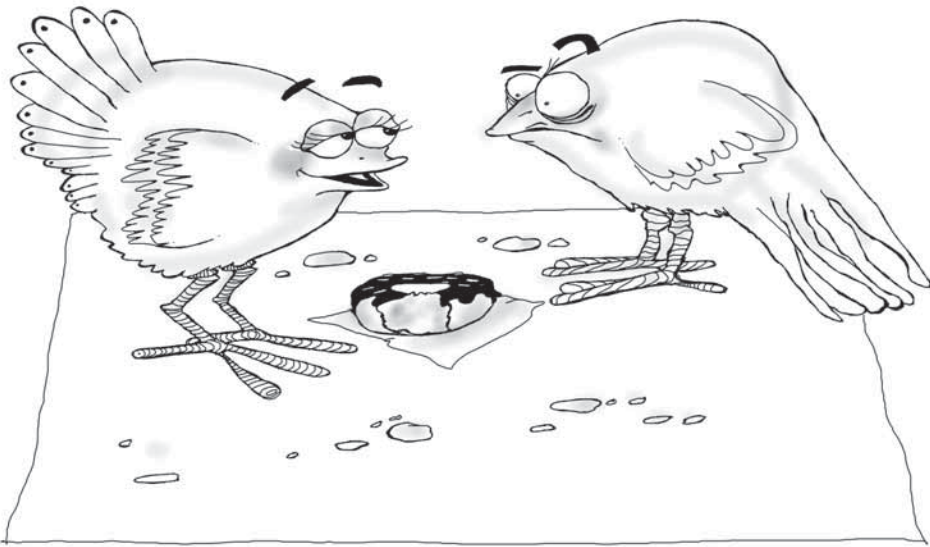
Thunk!

The blade came down loudly on the meat block again.

The little school was only a hop, step and a jump from the local shops, so she strode down there in a minute or two.

She marched so vigorously she arrived a little out of breath and stood for a second at the front gates to calm herself.

It was 9:30 in the morning and there was not a soul in the yard apart from some sparrows picking through scraps of food that were probably left over from someone's 'have-a-bite-on-the-way' breakfast.



## Chapter 2

### Off to the Principal

It was such a handsome school.

The main building had been built on some land where the original people had lived and it was said to have always been an area of learning, with many stories of the Dream-time being told for generations...in that very spot.

When the little township needed a school building back in the 1930's, the Elders of the Wagiri offered a part of their 'yarning' ground for it.

There was even a plaque on the building to commemorate the important event and a part of the 'welcome to country' speech was inscribed on it as well. The community was very proud of the school and the history it kept safely within its walls.

The building was made from red brick and stood proudly wearing a heavy grey stone trim on all the windows and doors. It had originally been a one-teacher school for children ranging from 5 to 12 years.



## Chapter 3

...a plan unfolds



The next day the whole town was a-buzz; the upsetting rumours had been turned around by the excitement of Project SOS!

In the school yard, children chattered about the play and what acting parts might be on offer. Some were even singing and dancing with each other.

Some 3rd Graders were gathered together singing *SOS*, the 'Abba' tune; they were using words that someone had made up to go with it. *"Can't you hear me Riversdaaaale, SOS, can't you hear me Riversdaaaaaaaaale..."*

*"Yeah, we can hear ya loud and clear, ya sound like a cat chorus with tummy aches,"* came a snarl that jarred through the group of little girls.

It was some 6th Grade boys yelling. They pretended to go after a tennis ball they had deliberately thrown into the middle of the happy singers. They barged into the circle of girls, pushing as many of them as they could to disrupt their singing.

*"It's stupid, the whole idea. They're going to close down the school whatever you do. Singing like that is only going to run people off."*

*Nobody wants to listen to that screeching!"*

The little girls rounded on the big boys, then seeing there were four of them, they grumbled under their breath as they walked away to another part of the yard to continue far away from the bullies.

The students contained their excitement and applause because at that very moment, a young woman, who they had not seen at the school before, walked into view to stand beside Mr. Phillips.

He smiled at her and continued, *"I have someone for you to meet. She has some very exciting news for us."*

A quiet murmur came from the crowd. The young woman, small and probably aged somewhere between themselves and their parents, smiled shyly at the excited faces before her.

*"I would like to introduce you to Miss Cameron. Miss Cameron has agreed to make a documentary of our school team preparing for and performing Project SOS. She is here on behalf of the ABC and anticipates that if our team works as hard as I have assured her it will, the final documentary will be aired on prime time TV ...to Save Our School!"*

SOS

Scene B

## Chapter 4

...the first roadblock



It took the next few days for the teachers to get fully organised. They had team meetings before school, at lunch time and after school until everyone was happy with the proposed plan.

The plan was then discussed in all classes so every single student knew what was expected of them.



Mrs. Murray's mind was buzzing with ways to organise this new situation. Soon, she spoke.

*"How about we put the lists into groups, so the children can choose one from Group A, which would be acting, singing, dancing or playing music, and the other Group B can be made of all the other things?"*

*"You are such a clear thinker, Mrs. Murray. This is brilliant,"* said Mr Poole.

They all agreed and smiled at each other heartily.

The next day the lists were re-posted and all of the children had the task of adding their name to another category. This decision was a lot harder, as it was their second choice and not necessarily something they even wanted to do.

Eventually, by the end of the day the lists were complete again...almost.

Four names were still missing.

Mr. Poole volunteered to take care of that situation, however.



## Chapter 5

### Four bad apples

*"Jack, may I have a word with you? You too, Tom, Joe and Bill."* Mr. Poole called out to the boys from across the other side of the school yard.

*“How would you know Four-eyes...you can’t see past your ugly nose,”* he snarled in a particularly nasty way. There was a gasp from the crowd. Everyone understood what a really horrible thing it was to say; especially in front of everyone.

Molly shrugged her shoulders, looked Jack straight in the eyes and with an old-lady voice, whispered loudly, *“Four-eyes? All the better to see you with, my dear.”*

The crowd laughed. Even Mr. Poole chuckled as he sent the four boys on their way to check in with the Project SOS teacher that was in charge of “their” choices.



# SOS

Scene C  
Chapter 6  
...try, try, try outs

The play was written.

A date was set.

It was time for auditions!

There were six weeks before Show Time, so it was agreed that any child who was able to come early to school would do so, and anyone who could stay for an hour after the final bell would be picked up by their parents or driven home by Mrs. Murray.

Much to the surprise of the SOS Committee, almost every child in the school elected to come early or stay late ...and some wanted to do both.

The first round of auditions was held in the classrooms. There were lines to be learned by heart by any actor hopefuls, and a selection of songs for both musicians and singers. There was a simple set of dance moves for dancers. The other jobs would come as the Project came together a little later.



## Chapter 7

### Moz, twinkle toes

Mr. Poole had expected Jack to be upset about the choice he was given, and so he had a surprise waiting for him when he arrived at practice.

*“Jack, it’s not that bad, mate. Hey, I want you to see something. I bet you didn’t know our senior comp. highest scorer was a dancer did you?”*

Jack couldn’t believe his ears.

Moz, as they called him, was the biggest, strongest man in the comp. They called him Moz because all he had to do was to look at his opponents and they’d get ‘mozzed’ and put off their game.

*“Yeah, Moz is a dancer. Good one, Mr. Poole,”* said Jack in a flat voice. Moz heard him, and laughing at Jack’s reaction, lumbered towards them both.

*“So, you don’t believe I have ‘twinkle toes’ eh, son?”*

*“Yeah Moz a dancer, good one, Mr. Poole,”* thought Jack for the second time. It was so unbelievable. Moz was more blokey than any of the blokes in the Foothills.

*“Watch this mate,”* said Moz as he threw his right foot over his left shoulder, then dropped both feet to leap from the ground so all of his weight was on his left hand and shoulder. He spun around onto his right knee and popped straight up to his feet, then dropped again to spin like a top on the other hand.

Jack watched in shock.

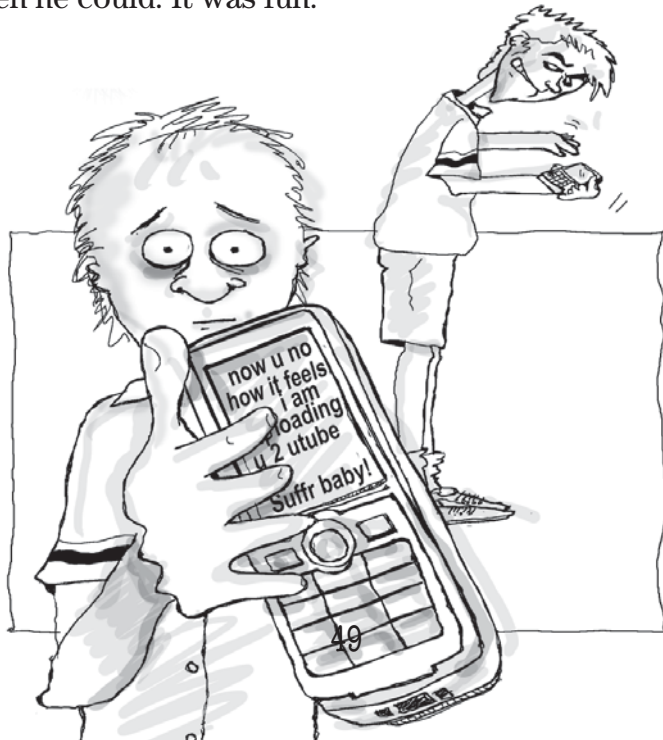
He had heard of Break Dancing, had even seen it a time or two on TV, but never imagined what it would be like watching a man the size of Moz throw his body around like he was a little grasshopper.

It was rough at first, feeling like he was being bullied by all those he'd bullied at one time or another.

He had to be quite creative to figure out ways to show he was sorry for being so mean to them in the past. He tried, but most of the kids continued to be angry with him.

He only got 4 votes.  
He was crushed.

Why did he have to learn the lesson now when he had just figured out that dancing was so much fun? Oh well, he'd still pick up some more moves from Moz after soccer when he could. It was fun.



Scene D

## Chapter 8

...another roadblock—3 of 'em

The performance was only a couple of weeks away and although Jack felt as though he had shown he was sorry a thousand times, he could tell that most of the kids were upset with him and still didn't trust him.

*"Maybe they'll always be angry," he thought to himself more than once, "I can only do what I can do and show 'em I am not like that anymore. That's all I can do."*

The time came for tickets to be delivered in the community. Mrs. Murray had pre-sold a lot and said more could be sold if the kids allocated to 'Advertising' could hand-deliver them. She said it might encourage more sales. Mrs. Murray had a knack for advertising because it was certainly working.

When the shopkeepers saw the children working so hard, they sometimes offered to take a pile of them to sell in their shops. It seemed the whole community wanted to make sure Project SOS was a great success.



Kids who would not talk to him before, actually came up to him and told him they'd heard about him running off the most notorious bully in Yarrabend.

Jack was happy. It felt good.  
He was ready for the show.

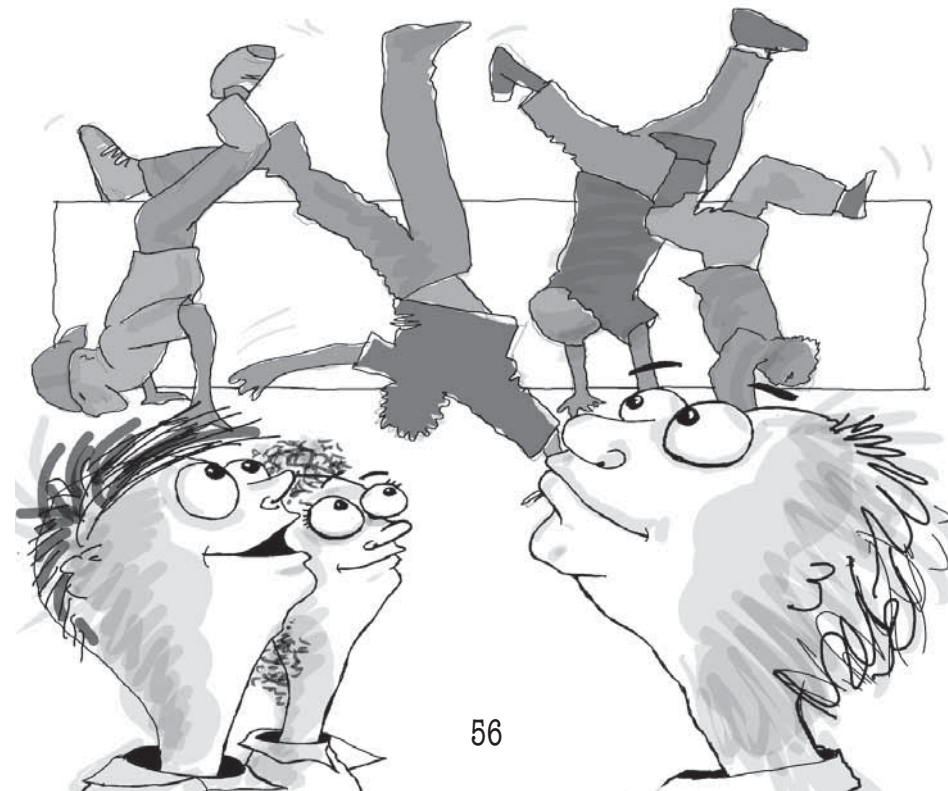
He was going to dance. Everyone who tried out would go on stage as Mr. Webb had promised, but Jack would be in the back with the younger kids. Other kids got the votes to krump at the front of the stage.

*"The Vietnamese kids blew all the others away. I wonder why they are so great at this. Must ask 'em,"* Jack thought to himself.

*"Maybe they could even teach me a few of their moves. They rock."*

He also thought a lot about how to get on better with other kids and wished he had learned the lesson much, much earlier. At least he was part of the show even if he was all the way in the back.

Maybe they'd have another one sometime, someday?



Scene E

## Chapter 9

...places—lights—action!

It was a huge show.  
It was the biggest thing  
that ever happened in Riversdale.

Mr. Phillips was beaming on the Monday morning after the performance. He had never looked so happy and proud in all his life. He thanked, complimented and praised everyone and laughed more than any of his students had ever heard before.

*"I have one more announcement,"* he said.

With that Miss Cameron walked up to stand beside him. He had a word with her; she smiled, and then stood beside him while he shared her news with the school as she was a little shy about making public announcements.

*"Miss Cameron has been like Myrtle the ghost, these last couple of months. She has filmed every one of you at one time or another, and has come here today to share some very exciting news.*

*She has shown her videos to her boss at the ABC and he has given her the OK to make a short film for the evening program, 'Australian Story'."*

The school crowd erupted with an enormous cheer.

*"When will it go to air, Miss Cameron?"* Mr. Phillips asked, handing Miss Cameron the microphone.

*"In about a month from now...in the middle of November,"* she smiled, then quickly handed him back the microphone.

Scene F

## Chapter 10

...after the applause

A month can be a very long time in the life of a child, so some had even forgotten when the documentary was due to go to air.





Then a united gasp as that faded and was replaced with black, bold lettering that read:

**As of this screening,  
the Minister for Education,  
the Right Honourable Mr. Edwards,  
has reversed his decision to close any of Victoria's  
smaller schools and alternative action  
is currently under consideration.**

The end

## ...from the author



*You may not believe this, but everyone has been bullied at some time or another in their lives...even the biggest and the smartest person you can think of. After all, nobody is good at every single thing they do and that opens the door to someone if they feel like being mean.*

*Bullying is mean and comes in a lot of different behaviours. Understanding that you are being bullied is the very first step in dealing with it and flying right on past it.*

*Just keep in mind that when someone is a bully to you, what they say or do, says nothing at all about you...but it says a huge amount about what kind of a person they are! It's sometimes obvious to everyone else but the person being bullied.*

*Be strong, and remember, they are making themselves look really bad ...not you!*

*All schools have teachers like Mr Poole...if you are being bullied, you have trusted adults to talk to right there at school. They will help because they don't like bullying behaviour either!*

*All the best out there, just keep in mind that bullies can act that way because they have something to prove...to themselves.*

*Tell 'em to leave you out of it, eh?*

—Gaye Dell

## Project SOS

is an initiative of Interrelate Family Centres to bring Bullying Awareness to Primary School students and their parents throughout Australia.

Ten of these 'easy-reader' books were sent to all primary schools in Australia, along with a How-To DVD for a student musical, complete with designs for sets, costumes, script, songs and dance moves. The following pages contain the lyrics and score from one of the original songs by Gabrielle Murphy from the musical.

*Play it on your recorder, a piano or just have fun singing.*

**To learn about this and other projects from Interrelate:**

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# Every Child

Gabrielle Murphy

Recorder 1 (Melody) 7 CHORUS G

Recorder 2 (Harmony) 7

Recorder 3 (Harmony) 7

Ev ery child ev-ery

10 C D

boy\_ and girl has the right to be free\_ from harm Let each

13 G C D

child live with love\_ and hope let them grow and they'll know their

© Gabrielle Murphy 2011

2 16 G VERSE G

voice is heard When some-one is real - ly down lost and feel-ing sad  
If some-one is hurt-ing you and you're feel-ing sad

19 C D

you can turn their world a - round by of - fer - ing your hand  
if you don't know what to do there's al-ways help at hand

21 G Em G

let them know there's light a - head on this dark, dark road and  
ne-ver feel you're on your own a friend is al - ways near to

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*To learn more about the author/illustrator:*  
[www.gayedell.com](http://www.gayedell.com)



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