

Hurtful Purple

Cast of Characters:

JULIA: A young therapist, fresh off her certifications. Idealistic and optimistic. Her happiness is her calling card, and she's never met someone who wasn't charmed by it... until...

BLUFFY: A larger-than-life, very recognizable purple dragon who has never known a life without the spotlight. Programmed to be child friendly, but overwhelmed by the negative impact of being a public figure.

Set Requirements: furniture that suggests a therapist's office, at least one desk/table and couch. A few other random decorations, reminiscent of a kindergarten classroom. The room is decorated sparsely but chaotically.

Costuming: Julia is business casual, with bright colors. Bluffy can be created in whatever way is most feasible, either through a mascot suit or some suggestion pieces. The more chaotic, the better. Must have a purple look, must have an attached tail, and must appear out of place in his surroundings.

Synopsis: Young therapist Julia is tested when an unusual client comes to her door: the best known mascot of preschool television, Bluffy the purple dragon. He quickly turns her expectations upside down, and together they go on a surprising journey through their darkest thoughts and fears.

LIGHTS UP. A small therapist's office. The therapist (JULIA) sits in a large papasan chair with her legs crossed. Her energy and surroundings give the impression that she would have been a great teacher in an alternate reality. The room is a clunky mix of professional and playground; the walls and furniture are corporate and sterile, but a large pastel rug and decorations - clearly added by JULIA- bring a warmth to the space. She sits making notes in a notebook. When she's done, she looks up at the ticking clock, then sighs. She picks up and inspects a large stuffed animal propped against her chair.

JULIA: Oh, no! Mr. Snuggles, what happened to your arm? I guess the kiddos really like you, huh? Don't worry, buddy. We'll get you patched up tonight.

(A phone rings on the desk, which JULIA hurriedly answers.)

JULIA: Yes? B is here? Great, send him in. *(listening)* No, I'm not freaking out. He's only the literal face of my childhood; why would I be freaking out? *(listening)* Just send him in!

(JULIA hangs up the phone, and squeals a little with excitement before calming herself down and facing the door, smoothing her clothes.)

JULIA: Wish me luck, Mr. Snuggles.

(The door swings open and BLUFFY enters - a big purple dragon with wings and a long tail. He enters with his head low. His body language is at odds with the singsong-y quality of his voice.)

BLUFFY: Hello there. I'm Bluffy. Are you Dr. Leach?

JULIA: Please, call me Julia! We're not stuffy in this office. I'm so happy to meet you, Bluffy. Why don't you have a seat?

BLUFFY: I'll do my best, but couches aren't really my friends.

JULIA: Why's that?

(BLUFFY sits down, then fights with his tail, as it keeps him from getting comfortable.)

BLUFFY: I hate my tail sometimes.

JULIA: Oh, it's okay! We can sit on the floor, if you want. I have cushions.

BLUFFY: That sounds nice.

JULIA: For the record, I like your tail.

BLUFFY: You're very sweet, Dr. Julia, but you're not the one who has to deal with it.

(They sit down on the floor. It takes BLUFFY a little longer to get down there, since he's a bit too large for his surroundings. He looks pretty silly.

JULIA reaches for a notebook while BLUFFY awkwardly surveys the room.)

BLUFFY: *(with a weak chuckle)* I recognize that dragon on the shelf!

(JULIA looks up, following his gesture. It's a BLUFFY action figure. She takes it down.)

JULIA: Oh! You're right, it's you! I have to confess: I'm totally starstruck having you here. I used to really love your show when I was a kid.

BLUFFY: Yeah, people tend to move on from me pretty quickly.

JULIA: Oh, no, I don't mean it like that! I kept you on my shelf for a reason, didn't I?

BLUFFY: Can I see it?

(She gives him the toy. He tries to clean it, but goes too hard and a wing breaks in his claws.)

BLUFFY: Oh dear. I'm sorry. I don't know why I always do that.

JULIA: Oh, no biggie. I have the real one in front of me; that's way better!

BLUFFY: I don't know about that.

JULIA: Here, I'll fix him later. *(BLUFFY hands her the toy.)* So, let's get started, shall we? I always love the first consultation, because it's the first step of our therapy journey together. I'm just going to ask you a few questions. Some of these I have to ask – you know, boring bureaucracy *(makes a silly face)* – but once we get through those, we can really start to–

BLUFFY: Dr. Julia?

JULIA: Yes?

BLUFFY: What drugs are you on?

JULIA: Ex...excuse me?

BLUFFY: I don't want to be rude, but you are just unnaturally happy. You can't be this excitable unless you're faking it for effect, or you're on some really powerful drugs. And if you're on drugs, I want whatever you're on. That's really your job, isn't it? To decide what's wrong with my brain so you can put me on the right drugs. It'd be hypocritical of you not to, since they're clearly working so well for you.

JULIA: (*thrown off*) I...I'm not on...

BLUFFY: You're telling me you're naturally this smiley all the time?

JULIA: No, of course not.

BLUFFY: Then cut the shit. I'm miserable. You're probably miserable. Let's be friends in misery.

JULIA: Well, let's explore that a little—

BLUFFY: For fucks sake, don't do that therapy bullshit! "Explore that," what is there to explore? I'm just miserable. No exploration needed; it's a fact.

JULIA: I'd like to ask a follow up—

BLUFFY: Still therapy bullshit. Nope.

JULIA: What if we—

BLUFFY: No.

JULIA: I'm wondering if—

BLUFFY: No.

JULIA: What I'm hearing is—

BLUFFY: Fuck no.

JULIA: (blowing up a little) Alright, asshole, what *do* you want, then?

BLUFFY: Oh, you *can* get angry. Good for you. I can't get angry anymore. I just get dickish.

JULIA: Well, answer the question. What do you want?

BLUFFY: A 'happy brain' pill. I've got a TV show to do; let's get on with it.

JULIA: That's not how this works.

BLUFFY: Then I'm leaving.

JULIA: But you're here now. If there was any place where you could get angry, wouldn't it be here? In a small room where no one can see you? Except me, of course, but I can't repeat anything you say unless you threaten to hurt yourself or other people. Beyond that, this room is a void. I'm a void.

BLUFFY: Me too.

JULIA: If you were a void, you wouldn't be here.

BLUFFY: I'm here to get fixed.

JULIA: You're here because you want things to be better. Right?

BLUFFY: (begrudgingly) I guess so.

JULIA: (overcompensating) See? Now that's the Bluffy I know!

BLUFFY: Yeah. You know me so well.

JULIA: You know, I'll let you in on a secret.

BLUFFY: (dryly) I'm on the edge of my cushion.

JULIA: *The Bluffy Show* was the first thing that inspired me to be a therapist for kids. I wanted to make kids smile like you do. Give them all a big, metaphorical hug, just like your theme song!

BLUFFY: Don't do this.

JULIA: (singing, offkey but trying her best) *A hug for your neighbor, a hug for your friend; the kind of love that never ends/A hug turns a sad frown upside down...*

BLUFFY: (cutting her off) Dr. Julia, have you ever read *Oedipus*?

JULIA: The... one where the guy gouges out his eyes?

BLUFFY: Yeah, that one. Your singing makes me want to do that, but to my ears. Shut up.

JULIA: Well, that was just unnecessary. And dickish.

BLUFFY: You think I make everybody smile? Well, I can't. I've tried. Doesn't matter if you're giving out hugs left and right, sometimes you're just unlovable. I clearly am. Parents hate me, kids start hating me as soon as they graduate to solid food. Nobody would take a hug from me if it saved their life. Which is ironic, because I'm allergic to hugs. Really. I break out in hives when somebody touches me. How is that even possible? I don't have real skin! I'm just a puppet who was given sentience and wants to give it back! How do I do that, Doc? Huh?

JULIA: I love you, Bluffy.

BLUFFY: (briefly touched, then snapping back) You have to say that. I pay you to love me.

JULIA: You don't pay me to keep your figurine on my shelf.

BLUFFY: That doesn't mean that you love me. Nobody does.

JULIA: If you don't believe the things I say, we'll never get anywhere. Plenty of folks love you.

BLUFFY: (beat) Have you ever seen *Bluffy Goes to Hell*?

JULIA: No. What is that?

BLUFFY: It's a skit from some jackasses on *Adult Swim*. There's a little claymation version of me that dies and goes to Hell, and all the world's most famous serial killers beat me up. That's the whole joke.

JULIA: Well, whoever wrote that is a jerk...

BLUFFY: But people laughed, Dr. Julia. If it's on *Adult Swim*, it's pretty culturally universal. It's like becoming an adult means killing your inner kid. And everything that goes with it.

JULIA: Not necessarily. That's just one show.

BLUFFY: Really? You spend a lot of time on Twitter?

JULIA: No...

BLUFFY: So you've never seen threads about how I'm the antichrist? Or a picture of me photoshopped with my wings cut off?

JULIA: ...I'm too fragile for Twitter.

BLUFFY: Or what about *World War Bluffy*? It's a video game. You have to build an army to hunt me down and burn me at the stake.

JULIA: ...I... never played it.

BLUFFY: Oh really? You never watched somebody play it? Maybe an edgy older brother?

JULIA: My brother only played Xbox; he never liked computer games.

BLUFFY: How'd you know it was a computer game, then?

JULIA: (beat) Oh, shit.

BLUFFY: Caught ya.

JULIA: Alright, fine! Of course I've played it. Every 2000's kid played it. My brother loved it so I played along. I was eight, I thought it would make me cool.

BLUFFY: If that's your definition of cool. (beat) So you suck too. Just like everybody else.

JULIA: You're right. I suck. I'm a boring, lonely, sad little woman who pretends to be happy because it's all I have. You caught me, asshole. Are you pleased with yourself?

BLUFFY: No. (beat) I wish you hadn't lied to me, Dr. Julia. It felt nice to be loved.

JULIA: I didn't lie, Bluffy. I do love you.

BLUFFY: You're no better than the rest of them.

JULIA: Then you don't need the rest of them! You don't have to care what we think!

BLUFFY: But I was made to be loved. What makes love so special is that you share it. And if nobody loves me, then there's no one to share my love with. It can't exist by itself. That's just being conceited.

JULIA: Well, maybe we need to be a little conceited sometimes. And a little angry, for that matter. Or lonely. Or sad.

BLUFFY: Dragons can't be angry. Then they're too scary for PBS. People hate me because I'm too happy. Did you know that? They say I'm a bad example for kids because I'm too lovey-dovey, and I don't let kids feel upset. I thought they wanted kids to be happy. But now they can't be *too* happy? How was I supposed to know that? I can't change what I was made to do. Do you want me to stomp around and shoot fire like a real dragon and scare all the kids shitless? Do you want me to really get angry? No. Of course not. Then I wouldn't get public funding.

So I took it all inside. I hugged until I magically sprouted hives. I can't even breathe fire anymore. They won. They broke my nonexistent bones and my fuzzy felt heart. Will they like me now, do you think?

JULIA: They don't know what they like.

BLUFFY: They know what they don't like, though.

JULIA: They suck.

BLUFFY: They suck.

JULIA: They suck!

BLUFFY: They suck!

JULIA: Everybody sucks!

BLUFFY: Everybody fucking sucks!

(JULIA suddenly jumps up onto her desk and starts stomping her feet.)

JULIA: Everybody in the whole wide world makes me so angry that I could scream!

BLUFFY: (leaping to his paws) And breathe fire!

JULIA: And stomp!

BLUFFY: Stomp so hard the room shakes!

JULIA: Let me see you fucking stomp, Bluffy!

(They yell, and jump around, and, of course, stomp their feet.)

BLUFFY: FUCK YOUR PUBLIC FUCKING FUNDING!

JULIA: FUCK YOUR TOXIC FUCKING POSITIVITY!

BLUFFY: NO HUGS FOR YOU, MOTHERFUCKERS!

JULIA: YOU DON'T DESERVE OUR HUGS!

(They both roar to the sky. It sounds like a howl, a scream, and a cry of anguish all at once. This continues until they both get tired. BLUFFY is content when he notices JULIA quietly crying.)

BLUFFY: Dr. Julia? Why are you crying?

JULIA: Because... I'm tired. Of seeing sad, angry, lonely people day in and day out. I'm tired of being expected to make it better, and I'm tired of having to play happy. I swear I'm not faking it, it's just... a performance sometimes.

BLUFFY: I know exactly what you mean.

JULIA: Why is the world so mean, Bluffy? Why are we all so sad and angry?

BLUFFY: I don't know.

JULIA: If we're all like this, why are we still so lonely? Why does it hurt so bad if it's normal?

BLUFFY: Because we don't know it is normal.

(JULIA curls into a ball.)

Hey now, look at all your stuffed animal friends. You don't have to be lonely.

(He reaches for Mr. Snuggles.)

What about this fella?

(JULIA cries harder. She's breaking down a bit.)

JULIA: No! Not Mr. Snuggles! He can't cuddle right now because his arm is torn and I haven't had time to fix him!

BLUFFY: Oh. Okay. Sorry.

I think he'll be okay, though. He might have a booboo, but... he's still Mr. Snuggles. A busted arm can't change that.

Can I give you a great big hug?

JULIA: (beat) Yes, please.

(JULIA falls into him, and they hug on the floor. The size difference between them makes this a funny sight. They stay in each other's arms.)

BLUFFY: (giggles) Look at that. No hives.

I love you, Julia.

JULIA: I love you too.

BLACKOUT. END.