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Picture Books

Solo Bromeando (Just Kidding)
Trudy Ludwig
Adam Gustavson, illustrator
Leonardo Maldonado, translator
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Instead of playing basketball with the kids who tease him, D.J. runs home to the seclusion of his backyard tree house. What may appear to be innocent playground joking may actually be quite malicious, and cause serious emotional harm.

In this Spanish translation of a simultaneously published English version, D.J. narrates how he struggles with a classmate's inappropriate kidding. The boy's father helps him learn new approaches, and talks with his teacher. The back matter and Stan Davis's preface inform parents and teachers about emotional bullying and its effects.

Every double page of this book contains text and at least one realistic acrylic painting. On one spread, two arms enter the illustration from opposite directions, with the hands—one a fist and the other with two fingers extended—almost meeting in front of D.J. The loser of this Rock-Paper-Scissors game has to accept D.J. on his basketball team. When D.J. starts walking away, Vince says, "*¿Es que no sabes aceptar una broma?*" ("Don't you know how to take a joke?").

In a school-bus picture, from behind a view-obstructing seat, a finger pokes D.J., whose shirt has a dark-blue pointed collar and dark-blue pointed pocket flaps. Vince chants, "*¡D.J. lleva su pijama!*" ("D.J. is wearing his pajamas!").

When the author's daughter was victimized in second grade, Ludwig embraced a mission: to help children confront bullying. She gave up her freelance-copywriting career and wrote her first book, *My Secret Bully*. She now speaks on bullying to educators, school children, and other groups nationwide, and has appeared on national television, including programs like *Good Morning America* and *Keeping Kids Healthy*. She has another book forthcoming, called *Sorry!*

Here, she takes a realistic, non-panacea approach, suggesting several ways to deal with bullying. Children ages four to seven will get ideas for coping with bullies and will learn to get help from adults. The Spanish version will reach Latino and Latina children who may prefer books in their own language.

The illustrator has a master's degree from the School of Visual Arts in New York. His children's book illustration credits include two Junior Library Guild selections: *The Day Eddie Met the Author* and *Good Luck, Mrs. K!* Gustavson also illustrates for corporate presentations and magazines. His artwork has appeared in exhibitions in New York, Los Angeles, and Jersey City. In addition to giving lectures in libraries, schools, and universities, he has taught illustration and art appreciation at the college level. In this book, his skilled use of shadows and shading in the illustrations increases their realistic appearance.

When he gets the proper help, D.J. will gain confidence in handling unwanted teasing. All children who become victims of emotional bullying deserve similar support.

Norma D. Kellam