

# THE PUPPET MASTER

ONE-ACT DRAMATIC COMEDY PLAY

by  
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## SCENE ONE

### ***Curtain opens.***

MARKUS: (*Dials his cell and speaks*) Hey dude. (*Pause*) No, you just called me. (*Pause*) Dude, no, you just called me. (*Pause*) Dude, no, you just called ... (*Pause- looks at phone*) Oh. (*Laughs*) Why did I call you? (*Pause*) Well if you don't know how am I supposed to know? (*Pause*) OK, yeah later, I kinda got the munchies anyway. (*Closes cell phone*)

HELENA: It was the best of times  
It was the worst of times  
It was the wasted generation  
It was a youth led segregation  
Lives are labelled early on  
A puzzle piece, a willing pawn  
The puppet master stirred the pot  
While social conscience began to rot  
So watch along as we re-create  
Your generation's self-inflicted fate.

MARKUS: It was like ... you know ... not good.

KAREN: It is not easy being a popular trend setter. Everyone watches your every move; everyone wants to be you. You need the right hair, right clothes, right look and the right body. (*Poses*) Plus the pressure to always be on and in the know is a lot of work. That said, high school is a sweet time. I love watching the eye candy, flirting with the football players, going to cheerleading practice and hanging out with my posse. Of course, like all teenagers, I love to hear the latest rumour and enjoy adding my two cents worth. What is the harm?

ROBYN: OK, let's get one thing straight. Did you see Cruel Intentions? If you did, I compare myself to the Sarah Michelle Gellar character. I like to manipulate; to connive; I get pleasure out of other's pain; I revel in the universal suffering of others.

MARKUS: (*Covering his words with a cough*) Psycho.

TAMARA: So I was always perceived as the shy one, because I didn't talk much. I suppose in some ways that was true; yet, I simply tended to only talk if I had something intelligent to say. There is nothing more annoying than listening to people talk just so they can hear themselves speak. If you have nothing intelligent to say, don't speak.

MARKUS: I (*Pause*) ... never mind.

ETHAN: High school was what you made it. You could be the centre of attention and in the mix of everything or you could watch the show from the sidelines. I choose the happy medium. I played on the volleyball team, was part of the SRC and, although some would say nerdy, I was on the debate team. I went to pep rallies and actually had fun; I cheered our teams on at every game and was proud to wear our school colours. That said, as much as I tried to not fall into the cliques of high school, I did.

TAMARA: I spent most of high school watching it pass me by. I didn't hate school; it was just there. I did my time, did my work and that was it. I didn't go to school activities, didn't hang out in the cafeteria and didn't go to the legendary high school parties. But in my grade 12 year, I wanted to be a part of something, to break out of my shell; Ethan did that for me.

ETHAN: Tamara was an amazing girl. I knew I had to get to know her. I knew beneath that shy exterior was a beautiful, sweet girl who was way deeper than the average girl. I liked her smile, her cute laugh and the way she chewed her hair when she was nervous. Did I love her? I don't know, what exactly is love? Isn't that the ultimate question? Either way, I knew I wanted to spend all my free time doing nothing with her.

TAMARA: Ethan was an amazing guy. On the one hand, he was witty and sarcastic; on the other hand, he was sensitive and compassionate. He volunteered at the local old folk's home, he actually enjoyed hanging out with his parents and had a blog where he ranted about the injustices of the world and what should be done to change them. Although I felt nervous around most boys, I was incredibly comfortable with Ethan. His easygoing nature allowed me to open up and be myself. With his help I became more confident, started to wear make-up, dressed a little prettier and learned to be proud of who I am. I fell in love.

ROBYN: Ever start a rumour and watch it grow? It really is a magnificent piece of work. One simple lie and the web it wove. There are very exact tips to the art of gossip. First, the more outrageous the lie, the more believable it is; second, the more innocent the target the more eagerly others believe. People love to see white turn black. Third, never, ever, let the truth come out ... the perfect lie eventually comes true.

TAMARA: (*Upset*) It can't be true, it just can't. He would never say such things.

ETHAN: One minute our relationship was going smooth; we laughed together, cried together and already had plans to go to the same university. Me to be a lawyer and her a teacher.

TAMARA: We had talked about it for a while, a lot more lately.

ETHAN: We had dated for months; I respected her and was fine with taking it slow.

ROBYN: Did you hear that Ethan was bragging about Tamara . . . and there was nothing *slow* about his comments.

TAMARA: I couldn't believe he would say that. He was always telling me he wasn't in a hurry; that he loved spending time with me ... that he loved me.

MARKUS: Dude ... nice score ... I wouldn't mind a piece of that.

ETHAN: (*Defensive*) I never said that. I was being razed by the guys for not taking it to the next level. You know, the usual guy stuff. 'Dude what about the three date rule' or 'I bet Karen would be more than your girlfriend'.

KAREN: Guys talk the talk and then talk the talk some more. Guys are so predictable. Ninety percent of what guys say to their buddies is bogus, the other ten percent is a vague resemblance of the truth.

ROBYN: It was like a prairie fire, spreading and spreading ...

HELENA: Mirror, mirror on the wall,  
Who is the baddest of them all?

MARKUS: Beer, beer in my hand,  
I am your biggest fan.

ROBYN: And spreading and spreading ...

TAMARA: I was furious, how could he do this to me? Treat me as an object.

ETHAN: She would not believe me; I did not know what to do. The girls began to be malicious to her and the guys treated me as if I was some super stud. It would have been funny if it wasn't so sadly pathetic.

ROBYN: A beautiful lie can ruin, it can bring down the mighty, and it can crush the weak. Really, the perfect falsehood is a piece of art, a masterpiece. Like a well crafted Shakespearean tragedy; a Picasso; a Rembrandt.

TAMARA: Soon I had a reputation and once you are given a label it is impossible to break free. In high school, you are who you are perceived to be.

ETHAN: Tamara broke up with me and at the end of the semester transferred to another school.

KAREN: Hmmm ... Ethan is single.

HELENA: Mirror, mirror on the wall,  
Another victim takes a fall ...

ROBYN: So time went on and a new rumour spread about someone else and this one faded quickly from memory. Just like a tabloid, interesting for a while, but nothing to hold the interest for longer than the next juicy bit of gossip. Two people changed forever, and me ... amused.

## SCENE TWO:

SARAH: I thought I had a relatively normal life. I wasn't really popular, nor was I unpopular. I just did my time at school, got my B marks and hung out with my few friends. I liked going to the movies, reading a good book and chatting online. I liked meeting new people online who had similar interests as me. It was the opposite of high school. Instead of being judged by my looks, clothes and zip code, I was judged by my thoughts and personality. I didn't have to pretend to be something I wasn't - like I did every day at school.

JEREMY: Life is all about rock and roll. Not the sex and drugs of the 80s, but the power of a song. A rollicking guitar riff, a five-minute drum solo, a sweet jamming session, now that is rock and roll. Real musicians, not the Justins and Britneys of the world, but the Jimmy Pages and Eric Claptons; they're hardcore. They play the music from their soul; they use blood, sweat and tears to produce a song that resonates to everyone; because true rock and roll, the kind that you can bang your head to and just let go, lasts forever. What bands last? Not the pop crap like the Backstreet Boys or Spice Girls, but straight ahead, layered guitars, pounding drums, explosive vocals, head-banging rock and roll. AC/DC, Metallica, Van Halen, The Who, The Doors, The Police, the list goes on.

MARKUS: Dude, what about Kiss? How can you not mention Kiss? They rock and roll all night. (*Laughs at his own joke*)

SARAH: Then I met Jeremy. Instantly everything changed. We immediately clicked and although we came from very different backgrounds, we were inseparable. He was funny, outgoing, secretly intelligent and the lead singer of Social Disorder, a local rock and roll band. They say opposites attract, with Jeremy and I that was definitely the case. He introduced me to many new things like rock and roll concerts, XBOX, poker ... French kissing.

MARKUS: Or Motley Crue. Motley Crue is a rock and roll must. (*Pauses and smiles*) Sarah is like super cute. I'd like to um, like, you know ... kick start her heart and be her Dr. Feelgood.

JEREMY: Sarah was my opposite - shy, conservative and in the church choir. I was outgoing, pro-active and anti-church. She helped me understand religion and although I was still very skeptical and had more questions than answers, I did begin to believe. Yet, none of that mattered when we were together.

KAREN: I had to laugh when I saw Sarah and Jeremy holding hands. The church snob and the slimy greaser a couple, what a hoot. I mean what next, was the quarterback going to date some lowly nerd?

ROBYN: Sometimes when I am really bored, I watch 80s movies and just laugh. The plots are always so cheesy. Like 16 Candles - a girl whose family forgets her 16<sup>th</sup> birthday, (*Sarcastic*) how tragic, like ... how does she go on?; or how about The Breakfast Club - as if one day in detention would have all the different cliques of a high school bond. Cliques stay with their own - that is just the way things are. Jocks date cheerleaders, band geeks hang out with other band geeks, nerds hang out with their computers and the slugs of society hang out in the smoking section with other slugs. So when I learned about Jeremy, the skid, and Sarah, the church girl, dating, I knew I had to do something extreme.

SARAH: High school was funny. Jeremy was stereotyped as a stoner because he had long hair, wore heavy metal concert shirts and hung out in smoker's corner. Yet, Jeremy did not smoke, drink or do drugs. He simply loved rock 'n' roll. He wrote songs about politics and social issues. Although he barely passed his classes, he was actually really smart.

JEREMY: I despised school. The classes were usually redundant and boring, except history. History was amazing. Why doesn't man realize that history repeats itself? Ghangis Khan, Napoleon, Stalin, and Hitler, all killed millions for their own personal agendas. Now we have Darfur. One thing is certain; although everything changes, nothing really changes.

SARAH: As soon as people learned we were dating, I got skeptical or quizzical looks. 'What are you doing with him?' I was asked. 'Really? You and Jeremy,' I was quizzed. Even one of my teachers questioned me about Jeremy. At first I was annoyed, but then I got angry. I was sick of being judged, I was sick of Jeremy being judged. Why does anybody care who I date?

JEREMY: As much as I disliked the classes, what I really hated were the people. The posers, the followers, the jocks, they all think the school is theirs. What a howl. In ten years, who will remember who the captain of the basketball team was? Who was named prom king and queen? What the heck was said in the valedictorian's speech? The answer ... nobody.

KAREN: Sarah was my lab partner. I wouldn't say we were good friends, but I liked her. She helped me get by in Chemistry, a course I still know nothing about. So being a friend, I suggested that dating Jeremy may hurt her reputation. All girls have to worry about their reputation, but she would just not listen.

MARKUS: For-a-good-time-call-Karen giving goody-goody-Sarah reputation advice ... now that is ironic. Is that the right word? Ironic. Wow, I learned something in English the third time. Cool.

SARAH: My reputation? No one at school noticed me before, why should I care about my reputation?

ROBYN: The rumor about Sarah was not actually about being malicious. It was about keeping the hierarchy of high school social status the way it should be. Sarah was technically a prep, be it a not very cool one, but still she was substantially above the worm that was Jeremy. Technically, I was doing Sarah a favor.

JEREMY: I am not sure if I was in love with Sarah, I am a guy so love is somewhat abstract to me, but I sure liked her a lot. We hadn't really done anything much. Held hands, made out, the usual. Going further had only been a fantasy in my head, often late at night if you get my drift, and the topic had not yet been broached. Next thing I know ...

KAREN: Sarah is pregnant. Debbie told Allie who told Cara who told Betty who told Danielle who told Cayley who told me that she saw Sarah leaving Dr. Wilson's office yesterday. Dr. Wilson only deals with people who have a bun in the oven so obviously ...

MARKUS: Dudes ... Jeremy is going to be a daddy. So, so, so, not cool.

SARAH: When I first heard the rumor I was pregnant, I actually laughed so hard I had tears in my eyes. Mom gave me the birds and the bees' speech, I did pretty well in biology and Jeremy and I had not had sex yet, so I was pretty darn sure I was not pregnant. Yet, the rumor would not go away.

JEREMY: When I first heard the rumor, I just chalked it up to the usual high school crap. Yet, it kept haunting me. She spent a lot of time with Martin, her best friend, and soon I began to wonder if there was something going on.

HELENA: Ring around the high schools  
Pocket full of teen fools  
Husha husha  
They all fall down.

ROBYN: I couldn't believe my eyes. Jeremy just ripped Sarah apart in the lunchroom in front of half the school. He accused her of cheating with that geek Martin, now that is funny, and Sarah ran out of the room crying. This had gone even better than I had imagined. I thought this one might not go anywhere, but jealousy, oh, the insecurity of man, wins again.

### **SCENE THREE:**

MIRANDA: OK, so what, exactly, is wrong with being smart? Why is it that getting good grades is frowned on and you are automatically isolated from the so-called cool group, whatever that is? Like really, when was it decided who would be the cool kids and who would be the outcasts? Was it based on social class? Looks? Athletics? Well, I come from a poor family, I get extremely high marks and I don't know a touchdown from a home run. Yet, I am a very interesting

person. The funny thing is they really have no idea who I am, what I like, my joys, my fears, my hopes and my dreams. In reality, I am a fun person to be around, if only they would look past the exterior.

MARKUS: Yeah that is likely. Could you imagine it? The guys just hanging out and checking out the chicks. 'Hey man, look at the personality on that babe.' (*Different voice*) 'Wow, I have not seen personality like that forever.' (*Normal voice*) 'Yeah man, if you play your cards right - you and her can converse all night long.' (*Different voice*) 'Sweet man. Yeah I'd love to just lay awake all night and listen to her tell me about her fears, her hopes and her dreams while we watch The Notebook.' (*Normal voice*) 'The Notebook, a classic film, man. I cry every time I see it.' (*Different voice*) 'Me too man, sometimes I just need to be held.' (*Normal voice*) 'Don't we all. Come here man, I'll give you a hug.' (*Pause*) As if!

CHANCE: People assume that because you are the quarterback, your parents are rich and you are rather attractive, that life is just peachy. Yeah right. My dad is a doctor and expects I should go to Harvard for my doctorial, just because he did, and, of course, play football. My mom drinks a lot; my parents' marriage is a charade and slowly the pretending she is happy facade is wearing her down. Lastly, I do not even want to be a doctor, I want to be an actor. Not that anyone has ever asked.

KAREN: Chance is so fine, delicious eye candy.

MARKUS: Dude ... Karen has like ... so been around the block ... like I even tapped that.

ROBYN: Funny how sometimes gossip can backfire.

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