

PUPPETS

A Classroom Play

by Brian McGuire

SchoolPlay Productions Ltd

SPANNER IN HER POCKET,
SANDGRAN
and
PUPPETS

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CAST

Mark

Dad

Child 1

Child 2

Child 3

Child 3

PRODUCTION NOTES

The set represents the seaside. Centre stage is a Punch and Judy booth. The clock on the booth indicates "**Next show 3.30.**" The play begins with close lighting on the Punch and Judy booth. When Mark comes out of the booth the rest of the acting area is lit.

The children can be played by actors or recorded voices can be used. If recorded voices are used then the use of close lighting when Mark begins his first puppet show would be helpful. During Mark's second show Dad should be lit.

PUPPETS

by

Brian McGuire

(Voices are heard from the PUNCH and JUDY BOOTH).

Mark: It's cramped.

Dad: It's not built for two people. I've always done these shows by myself. But, if you think you're ready

Mark: There's nobody around should we try a run through?

Dad: How are you doing? Have you got it on?

Mark: Nearly. Em It doesn't seem to be working.

Dad: Put your fingers right through. Are you sure you want to do it?

Mark: I can read the script. I've seen you do it hundreds of times before.

Dad: It's different being behind the scenes though, isn't it?

Mark: There's not much room.

Dad: As long as you're careful. Let me see what you're doing.

Mark: My hand is too small dad. The head flops forward.

Dad: Keep your fingers straight.

Mark: It hurts.

Dad: Don't be so soft. You'll be all right.

Mark: Ah!

Dad: That's better. It's on. Now try the voice.

Mark: What shall I say?

Dad: That's the way to do it.

Mark: How do I say it?

Dad: *(like PUNCH)* That's the way to do it. *(Own voice)* You try.

Mark: *(no change in his voice)* That's the way to do it.

Dad: No, try again.

Mark: *(no change)* That's the way to do it.

Dad: Mark, listen carefully. *(Like PUNCH)* That's the way to do it.

Mark: *(still no different)* That's the way to do it.

Dad: *(irritated)* Come on, concentrate. Think about what you're doing. Try it again.

Mark: *(managing one word like PUNCH)* That's the way to do it. *(Own voice)*
Do you think that was better?

Dad: No. *(Like PUNCH but irritated)* That's the way to do it.

Mark: I'm trying dad, honest I am.

Dad: You're not. Listen to me. (*Like PUNCH but angry*) That's the way to do it.

Mark: (*slight improvement but still not very impressive*) That's the way to do it.

Dad: (*like PUNCH but very angry*) That's the way to do it! (*Own voice*) Here, give me the puppet back!

Mark: Ow!

Dad: What's the matter with you?

Mark: You scraped my fingers.

Dad: That couldn't hurt you. Put this one on.

Mark: It's Judy.

Dad: I know it's Judy. I'll be Punch and you can be Judy.

Mark: You said I could be Punch.

Dad: (*angry*) But you can't do the voice.

Mark: Can I be the crocodile then?

Dad: Here give me Judy.

Mark: I'll take it off myself.

Dad: Get over there. Watch where you're putting your feet. I said watch what you're doing. You've stood on the sausages! What's the matter with you? I've just said watch what you're doing.

Mark: Sorry.

Dad: Look at the state of them. We won't be able to use them. Give me that crocodile back. We can't do that story. (*Very annoyed*) Will you take that crocodile off?

Mark: I'm trying.

Dad: Hurry up!

Mark: It's stuck.

Dad: Here!

Mark: Ow! You've pulled it's head off.

Dad: Give that to Ow! You've stood on my foot!

Mark: I was going to have another try with Punch.

Dad: Don't touch it.

Mark: I think I can do the voice now.

Dad: Give it to me.

Mark: Just let me try.

Dad: Give it to me! (*A tearing noise is heard*) You've torn it. Right down the middle. You're absolutely hopeless. I don't know what to do with you.

Mark: Sorry dad.

Dad: Don't move! Don't step back! (*A crunching noise is heard*).

Mark: What was that noise dad?

Dad: (*trying to control his anger*) That was Judy's head. We can't have a Punch and Judy show now, thanks to you. You never ever look around you, do

you?

Mark: (*backing out of the Booth*) Sorry dad.

Dad: We might as well pack up and go home. So much for my day out.

Mark: Sorry dad.

Dad: I'm going to put everything in the suitcase.

(*He brings out a suitcase from behind the Booth. The lid flies open*).

Mark: Sorry dad.

Dad: And stop saying sorry dad.

Mark: Sorry dad. I mean em I mean em I don't know what I mean
except you're always picking on me. I try my best.

Dad: But it's never good enough, is it? I said, is it?

Mark: You're talking to me like a teacher.

Dad: This is my hobby, my way of relaxing and you've ruined the afternoon for me. You said you were interested in the Punch and Judy so I brought you. I actually began to think that this might be something you would stick at for more than five minutes. But what happens? You're so clumsy you break everything.

Mark: There's not much room in there.

Dad: All the more reason to watch what you're doing. I didn't want you with me. I thought I'd give it a try but you let me down just like you let yourself down every time. I want you to be successful at something. It doesn't matter what, anything will do.

Mark: I wanted to work the puppets.

Dad: You couldn't do the voice.

Mark: I need to practise

Dad: Punters can't wait all afternoon whilst you practise a voice.

Mark: (*walking downstage*) I really wanted to do it.

Dad: Well nobody can do it now. What are you doing?

Mark: I'm looking at the sea.

Dad: What about helping me?

(*He returns to the Booth*).

Mark: There's nobody around. I could have practised. I could have got it right if you'd had more patience.

Dad: (*from inside the Booth*) I can't hear what you're saying.

Mark: (*no louder*) I said you get on my nerves.

(MARK moves to the suitcase. He is about to touch one of the PUPPETS).

Dad: Don't touch anything.

(MARK is startled).

Mark: What are these new puppets dad?

Dad: *(coming out of the Booth carrying broken Puppets and properties)* I said don't touch.

Mark: I haven't seen them before.

Dad: They're new.

Mark: This one's a little boy, isn't it? Is it Pinocchio?

Dad: Does it look like Pinocchio?

Mark: Not really. Does he have a name?

Dad: No.

Mark: *(picking up the Puppet)* He looks just like an ordinary boy.

Dad: Then it doesn't matter who he is, does it?

Mark: He's still a puppet.

Dad: A puppet of no importance at the moment. Put it back. What's the time?

Mark: *(putting the Puppet back)* Twenty past three.

Dad: We're going home.

Mark: But the clock says the next show is at half past.

Dad: And what am I supposed to use for puppets?

Mark: The new ones.

Dad: They're too plain. I still need to work on them. The audience has to go away remembering them. Nobody goes away and forgets Punch. It's my job to present stories but it's also important to create a face that audiences will remember and want to see again. Do you understand? *(Although a little uncertain MARK thinks he does).* When I make a new puppet I try to give it a special sort of character in its looks. Now that could mean that I add lumps, spots or extend its nose but I make it visually interesting. Then I try to create the right voice. Now that is important. I mould them into a little personality and over a period of time I develop that personality into something interesting.

Mark: I don't think they need funny voices.

Dad: It's traditional. They have to have funny voices. Tradition is important in the Punch and Judy show. Some of the stories I present have been handed down year after year. That's the beauty of it.

Mark: But the new puppets aren't traditional.

Dad: But I make them fit in with tradition. That's why I bring them. It makes me

remember they will become part of a whole show. It's a context I need to see them in. (*MARK looks puzzled*). Close the lid.

Mark: I think they're all right as they are.

Dad: They're dull.

Mark: (*closing the lid*) I'm sorry I ruined everything.

Dad: It's not the first time is it? (*pleasantly*) I'll be able to fix the puppets. I said close the lid on that suitcase.

(*DAD watches as MARK closes the lid*).

Dad: Maybe I was too quick tempered with you.

Mark: You always expect me to do things straight away.

Dad: I only ask what is reasonable. I don't ask for the impossible.

(*MARK wanders downstage again*).

Dad: Let's take the booth down.

Mark: I don't want to go home.

Dad: I don't but there's no point in staying.

Mark: It's nice to be at the beach. We could mess around.

Dad: You know I don't like that sort of thing. (*MARK looks disappointed*). Do you want to stay?

Mark: Can we?

Dad: You can stop here. I'll pop up to the White Horse for an hour. You can mind everything. Do you want to do that?

Mark: Yes.

Dad: Don't try to dismantle the Booth by yourself. Wait until I get back. (*Exiting*) And take the clock off the front. There won't be any more shows today.

(*MARK surveys the beach. He moves to the suitcase, he opens it. He looks at the contents. He takes out the new Boy Puppet. He sits. He pulls the Puppet on to his hand*).

Mark: And what's your name? (*Replying for the Puppet in a strange voice*). It's Clarence. (*Own voice*). No, that doesn't sound right. (*He tries another voice*). It's Wayne. (*Own voice*). That doesn't sound right either. You don't look like a Wayne. You could be anybody, couldn't you? You could be me. You've had a lousy day, haven't you? Stuck in the suitcase waiting for somebody to take you out.

(CHILDREN'S voices are heard. MARK takes out another Puppet. It is bigger than the Boy Puppet. It is a Man. MARK pulls it on).

Mark: And you're like my dad. *(He looks at them).* Father and son.

(Again he looks at the Puppets. CHILDREN enter).

Child 1: What time is the show?

Mark: *(a little startled)* What?

Child 1: Excuse me, what time is the show?

Child 2: It says half past three.

Child 3: It might be earlier.

Child 4: I don't like Punch and Judy, they're old fashioned.

Mark: It isn't Punch and Judy.

Child 1: Then what is it?

Mark: You'll have to wait and see.

Child 2: We're not waiting very long.

Child 3: We might as well sit down.

Child 4: It might be all right.

(The CHILDREN continue to speak as MARK pulls the suitcase behind the Booth. He organises himself with the new Puppets. He steps into the Booth).

Child 1: There's nothing happening here.

Child 2: Give him a chance.

Child 3: Have some patience.

(The BOY PUPPET appears).

Child 3: There you are.

Boy Puppet: Hello. I said, hello.

Children: Hello.

Boy Puppet: My name is Matthew. Has anyone seen my dad? I said, has anyone seen my dad?

Child 4: What's he like?

Boy Puppet: Bad tempered. He wants me to get everything right first time. He forgets that he's had a chance to practise things over and over again. Adults are like that, aren't they?

Child 3: You can say that again.

Child 2: I like my dad, he brought me to the beach.

Child 3: Is he nice all the time?

Child 2: Yes he is.

Child 3: Then you're lucky.

Boy Puppet: I like my dad but I wish he had more patience with me. I don't know where he is today.

(The DAD PUPPET appears).

Boy Puppet: Have any of you seen him?

Children: He's behind you.

Boy Puppet: Where is he?

Children: He's behind you.

(As the BOY PUPPET turns the DAD PUPPET disappears. The routine is repeated several times).

Dad Puppet: Have you tidied your bedroom?

Boy Puppet: No Dad.

Dad Puppet: Then you're a stupid boy, aren't you? Should I shout at him boys and girls?

Children: Yes.

Dad Puppet: Should I shout really loudly?

Children: Yes!

Dad Puppet: I can't hear you.

Children: Yes!

(As the DAD PUPPET speaks to the BOY PUPPET the lights fade).

Dad Puppet: Come here son. I'm going to have a good shout at you. I'm not going to listen to your excuses.

(As the lights come up the CHILDREN are laughing).

Boy Puppet: *(in mid speech)* the sausages were spoiled, Judy's head was cracked and the crocodile would never walk again.

(The CHILDREN laugh even louder and clap. The BOY PUPPET disappears. MARK comes out of the Booth. He bows. The CHILDREN clap again. They call "we want more". MARK puts up his hands to quieten them).

Mark: That story was based on real life. I enjoyed telling you that story. Do you want another one?

(There are ad libs from the CHILDREN indicating they do).

Mark: The next story isn't true but you'll still find it funny.

(MARK returns to the Booth. Enter DAD. Up pop the BOY and GIRL PUPPET. DAD watches and enjoys the show).

Boy Puppet: *(putting out his hand)* Do you want a sweet?

Girl Puppet: I don't know. *(MARK makes a good attempt at a girl's voice).*

Boy Puppet: What do you mean, you don't know? Here take one.

(As the GIRL PUPPET attempts to take a sweet the BOY PUPPET pulls back his hand).

Girl Puppet: What did you do that for?

Boy Puppet: I'll give you a sweet if you give me a kiss.

Girl Puppet: Ugh! I'm not kissing you.

Boy Puppet: Well I'm not giving you a sweet then.

Girl Puppet: I don't really want a sweet.

Boy Puppet: Yes you do.

Girl Puppet: No I don't.

Boy Puppet: Yes you do!

Girl Puppet: If you don't stop teasing I'm going to tell my dad on you.

Boy Puppet: You're a softy.

Girl Puppet: I'll tell him.

Boy Puppet: I don't care, your dad's soft as well.

Girl Puppet: He's not as soft as yours.

Boy Puppet: You don't know what you're talking about.

Girl Puppet: Yes I do. My dad could fight your dad with one hand tied behind his back.

Boy Puppet: No he couldn't because my dad does karate.

Girl Puppet: My dad does karate and judo.

Boy Puppet: Well

Girl Puppet: Well

Boy Puppet: Well My dad's taller than your dad.

Girl Puppet: No he's not. My dad's six foot.

Boy Puppet: My dad's seven foot.

Girl Puppet: Well, my dad can get really angry.

Boy Puppet: So can my dad.

Girl Puppet: I bet my dad can get angrier than your dad.

Boy Puppet: No he can't because my dad gets really, really angry.

Girl Puppet: Well my dad gets really, really, really angry.

Boy Puppet: My dad turns red.

Girl Puppet: My dad turns red and purple.

Boy Puppet: Well my dad turns red, purple and his veins stick out.

Girl Puppet: I'm going, you're stupid.

Boy Puppet: I'm not as stupid as you.

(The PUPPETS move away in opposite directions. They stop, they turn and face each other).

Girl Puppet: I don't care what you say my dad's better than your dad.

Boy Puppet: No he's not. And I'm glad I didn't kiss you.

Girl Puppet: I'm glad I didn't let you.

(The PUPPETS disappear. The CHILDREN clap. Their dialogue overlaps).

Child 1: That was funny.

Child 2: It was great.

Child 3: I liked the boy puppet.

Child 4: I liked the girl puppet.

Child 1: They made me laugh.

Child 2: I wonder when the next show is?

(MARK appears in front of the Booth).

Mark: Thank you for coming. That was the last show for today. I hope you all enjoyed yourselves.

(Again the CHILDREN'S dialogue overlaps as they exit).

Child 3: We did.

Child 4: It was smashing.

Child 1: Much better than Punch and Judy.

Child 2: I would like a turn with the puppets.

Child 3: It was really good.

Child 4: I wouldn't mind seeing that again.

Dad: It was a good play Mark.

Mark: Have you been watching it all?

Dad: Most of it.

Mark: Did you see the first play?

Dad: I saw the boy and girl puppets.

Mark: You probably wouldn't have liked the first one.

Dad: I'm sure it was as good as the "My dad" play. There's a title for you. "My dad". You could write that script down and it could be included in the show.

Mark: Do you think it was that good?

Dad: It's worth working on. The children can probably identify with the characters. That was skilful puppetry. Well done. Maybe a bit of accent would have helped make the characters stronger, more traditional..

Mark: It was supposed to be like real life. I don't want to change it.

Dad: It could be a lot better.

Mark: Why do you always want to change things? I'm happy with it.

Dad: But you can only perform it in my Punch and Judy show and there has to be an overall standard.

Mark: You wanted to change the puppets, add bits and pieces to them. I used them as they were.

Dad: I'm not criticising, I'm trying to improve what you did. I was very pleased with what I saw and with the right voices

Mark: Why did you come back early from the pub?

Dad: I only had a half. I don't really like sitting in a bar by myself.

Mark: Was there nobody to criticise?

(MARK runs stage right).

Dad: *(angrily)* They are my puppets! *(Controlling his anger)* It's a good job you moved away over there. It's time to clear up and go home.

Mark: I enjoyed it when I thought you weren't here.

Dad: Well you've still got a lot to learn.

Mark: I don't want to do it like you.

Dad: You're the one who wanted to be Punch.

(DAD gathers up PUPPETS into the suitcase).

Mark: You can't change me like you change puppets.

Dad: It's not that important Mark. We should be going home now.

Mark: Are you sure you don't want me to get into the suitcase?

Dad: *(calmly)* Come and help me with this Booth.

(As MARK and DAD begin taking down the Booth the lights fade. The CHILDREN'S voices are heard. The comments overlap).

Child 1: That was funny.

Child 2: It was great.

Child 3: I liked the boy puppet.

Child 4: I liked the girl puppet.

Child 1: They made me laugh.

Child 2: I wonder when the next show is?

Child 4: It was smashing.

Child 1: Much better than Punch and Judy.

Child 2: I would like a turn with those puppets.

Child 3: It was really good.

Child 4: I wouldn't mind seeing that again.

CURTAIN