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DEAR GOD, LET ME BE POPULAR

A drama about dating and popularity by
KT Curran
and
The SOURCE Teen Theatre

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(DEAR GOD, LET ME BE POPULAR)

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DEAR GOD, LET ME BE POPULAR

CHARACTERS

SARAH. Older Teen. She is very likeable; young people should be able to identify with her easily. Smart beyond her years.

DAN. Older teen. He is smart, handsome, and trying to impress Sarah with his wit and charm.

JENNY. Middle school girl. She is caught between childhood and adolescence. Wistful, creative, and yet worried about not being popular.

ELIZABETH. Middle school girl. Very popular. Fast-talking and very much into clothes, magazines, and dating.

STEVEN. Middle school boy. Huge ego. All he thinks about is girls, sports, and having fun.

BILLY. Middle school boy. Somewhat nerdy but tries to be hip. Interested in rock-collecting and exploring. Starting to worry about girls.

Time: Today

Place: Your city—or anywhere

Original Touring Cast: SOURCE Teen Theatre performance for Sarasota County Schools, Sarasota, Florida, 1992:

Sarah.....Cinde Levesque
 Dan.....Steven Barger
 Jenny.....Tori Floethe
 Steven.....Steven Alderfer
 Elizabeth.....Lauren Mazer
 Billy.....Chad Bell

SPECIAL THANKS

To the original cast, The SOURCE Teen Theatre, the students of Sarasota County for their input and suggestions, Marilyn Anderson, Barbara Bolton, and to Nancy Hetcko for her patience and hard work.

ABOUT THE PLAY

This play by KT Curran was developed with the help of members of The SOURCE Teen Theatre, a group of young people dedicated to influencing their peers by encouraging them to make healthy decisions based on factual information.

“We desire to create an environment where teens feel confident and secure to make responsible decisions,” Ms. Curran said. “Innovative theatre allows a breakdown of communication barriers so that we can reach adolescents at an early age and encourage them to think for themselves in ways that serve their best interests.”

Under these circumstances, peer pressure turns into positive peer education. The purpose of the activities presented in the Appendix (pages 20-23) is to bring the issues the young people see presented onstage closer to their own lives. When one identifies with the situation and relates to the issues on a personal level, responsibility follows.

The characters in the play are two high school students, juniors or seniors, watching the activities of four middle school students—emerging teenagers—and trying to advise them and guide them.

The play lends itself to pre-performance and post-performance discussions and activities. See pages 20-23 for suggestions.

There is probably no more difficult time in a person’s life as far as developing personality and coping with peer pressures than the late pre-teen and early teenage years.

If your play can help even one middle school student to avoid the pitfalls of peer pressure, it will be worth all the effort you and your actors put into it.

Because of the virtually bare stage, and the important message, the play is ideal for touring.

Playing time: About 30-35 minutes.

DEAR GOD, LET ME BE POPULAR

[The play begins with the MIDDLE SCHOOL BOYS AND GIRLS standing Center Stage, staring off in opposite directions. Upstage of them looking down, perhaps from a high platform, are the OLDER BOY AND GIRL. MUSIC begins and the YOUNGER ONES nervously look around, fiddle with their clothes, etc. They are thinking out loud]

SARAH. I remember it so well.

DAN. Middle school.

SARAH. Trying to fit in.

DAN. Trying not to stand out or be different.

SARAH. Thinking if only a certain boy liked me I would be the happiest seventh grader in the world.

ALL. *[Prayerfully]* Dear God, let me be popular! *[Focus shifts to the Younger Ones]*

JENNY. Everyone in the whole school is laughing at me. How could I have worn this today? I look like a nerd. I feel so stupid! I don't feel ready for all this dating stuff yet. I wish it didn't have to happen so soon. I still feel like a kid.

STEVEN. I want to kiss a pretty girl. I want to kiss ten pretty girls.

ELIZABETH. Let's see...Spandex stretch pants *[update all trendy expressions as desired]*. Extra large shirt from The Limited. Sam and Libby shoes. And a new haircut. I guess I'm ready to face the boys.

BILLY. If I don't get a girlfriend this year, the guys are going to think I'm weird or something. How do you get a girl to like you? I wish I was Robinson Crusoe. I'd go live on a desert island and never have to face being unpopular.

JENNY. Why do boys like girls only for the way they look?

BILLY. What do girls *like* in boys?

ELIZABETH. Why do boys think so much about *sex*?

STEVEN. What do girls even talk about?

JENNY. How do you act around a boy?

BILLY. How can I tell if a girl likes me?

ELIZABETH. Why do boys think they know everything?

[All four YOUNG ACTORS start ad-libbing questions at the same time, then STEVEN yells out, followed rapidly by the others]

STEVEN. Why?

JENNY. What?

BILLY. How?

ELIZABETH. What?

ALL. Why????

DAN. I had so many questions. So many things I wanted to find out.

SARAH. Most of all I wanted to be popular. Oh, how I wanted to be popular.

[MUSIC plays and JENNY steps out and kneels at Down Center Stage. The other YOUNG ACTORS exit]

JENNY. *[Praying]* Dear God, please, please let me be popular. Let me get lots of phone calls. Let people notice me. Let me have a boyfriend. I'm so scared of being a nobody. *[She freezes as Sarah and Dan speak]*

SARAH. Girls need to stop worrying about making friends, or getting boys to like them and try to discover more about themselves—what makes them unique and special. Boys like girls who dare to be different. Boys like girls who—

DAN. Wait a minute! What makes you the expert on dating?

SARAH. I'm no expert. I just think—

DAN. Look, it's easy to say that being popular doesn't matter. But everyone wants to be liked. At least in middle school you do.

SARAH. Oh right. And now that you are an old and worldly wise junior in high school you don't care what other people think.

DAN. Something like that, yes. But when I was in seventh grade I remember wanting to be popular. How can you find out what kind of person is right for you if you don't get to know a lot of different people first? Hanging out with friends, going to parties, that's the beginning of dating.

SARAH. Do you know what the beginning of dating was for me? Talking on the telephone.

DAN. Oh yes. Boy do I ever remember sitting at home, trying to get up the courage to call a girl.

[MUSIC up and out. BILLY enters at another area of the stage dialing a telephone. The TELEPHONE RINGS and ELIZABETH comes out to answer it]

ELIZABETH. *[Picking up the telephone or carrying a portable phone]* Hello?

[In this scene all four ACTORS use different telephones]

BILLY. Hello, Elizabeth?

ELIZABETH. Yes?

BILLY. This is Billy.

ELIZABETH. *[Disappointed]* Oh. Hi Billy.

BILLY. Hi. *[There is a long pause]*

ELIZABETH. Well?

BILLY. Well?

ELIZABETH. Did you want to ask me something?

BILLY. Uh...uh...yes. I...uh...wanted to ask you...uh...about our homework tonight.

ELIZABETH. Yes?

BILLY. Well...uh...what is our homework tonight?

ELIZABETH. *[Sighing]* We're supposed to read 150 pages of *Robinson Crusoe* and then draw a picture of something from the story.

BILLY. Thanks. I...uh...guess I wasn't listening in class too well.

ELIZABETH. I guess *not*.

BILLY. Well. Bye.

ELIZABETH. Bye, Billy. *[She hangs up]* Ohhhh yuk! He's such a geek. *[She quickly dials the phone]*

JENNY. *[Continuing her prayer]* ...and God, if only you would get Billy Barnett to like me I will be nice to everyone, especially to my parents, and I will keep my room clean, and I will make all A's. Amen. *[The TELEPHONE RINGS]* Maybe that's Billy! *[She finishes her prayer]* Well I might not make *all* A's, but I'll try. *[She picks up the phone]* Hello?

ELIZABETH. Hello, Jenny? You'll never believe who just called me.

JENNY. Tom Cruise? *[Update]*

ELIZABETH. Billy Barnett!

JENNY. Billy Barnett? Why did *he* call you?

[In the meantime BILLY has called STEVEN]

STEVEN. Hello.

BILLY. Steve! Hey man. What's going on?

STEVEN. Nothing. I'm just trying to read a stupid book. For English class.

BILLY. You mean *Robinson Crusoe*?

STEVEN. Yeah. It's really dumb. I can't even get through the first paragraph.

BILLY. No it's not. I already read the whole thing. It's really great. It's all about...

STEVEN. Is that why you called me? To talk about a stupid book?

[ELIZABETH and JENNY continue talking]

ELIZABETH. So *then* he said, "I...uh...guess I wasn't listening in class too well." and I said "I guess not."

JENNY. That's funny.

ELIZABETH. I know. Isn't he a total reject?

JENNY. No. I mean the part about him not listening in class. He always has his eyes glued to the teacher.

ELIZABETH. Jenny. Don't you get it? He was trying to get up the courage to ask me out.

JENNY. Oh. *[Pause]* You think so?

ELIZABETH. *Yessss!* Ohhh I can't believe it. He's such a nerd.

[BILLY and STEVEN continue]

BILLY. Listen, Steven. I was wondering if you would do me a favor.

STEVEN. No, you can't borrow my new CD.

BILLY. I was wondering if you would call up Elizabeth for me.

STEVEN. What for?

BILLY. To ask her out. With me.

STEVEN. Oh. Ohhhhh.

ELIZABETH. I wouldn't go out with Billy Barnett if he was the only guy in seventh grade. I wouldn't go out with Billy Barnett if he was the only guy in Sarasota *[or name your city]*.

JENNY. Why?

ELIZABETH. *Why?*

JENNY. What's *wrong* with him?

ELIZABETH. Jenny, don't you notice anything? What's wrong with him? Everything's wrong with him. His clothes. His shoes. He wears socks. Nobody wears socks. His hair. He likes to *read*. He listens in class. He likes the teacher. I don't know. What's wrong with him? What's *not* wrong with him?

BILLY. So I was thinking if maybe you asked her to maybe go rock collecting with me this Saturday, we could maybe have a picnic and maybe go exploring. What do you think?

STEVEN. I think maybe you're crazy.

BILLY. Huh?

STEVEN. Elizabeth is the most popular girl in the seventh grade.

BILLY. So?

STEVEN. You want to ask *Elizabeth* to go *rock collecting*?

BILLY. What's wrong with rock collecting?

STEVEN. Look, Billy. If you want me to—I'll ask her. But it's going to be all over school tomorrow. You'll be a jerk.

BILLY. Forget it. Forget it!

ELIZABETH. Jenny, it's not that I hate Billy. It's just that he's so...so...uncool. Oh I almost forgot. My mom said you could spend the night tonight. Do you want to?

JENNY. Yeah. Sure. Okay.

STEVEN. Billy, don't be upset. I like you. And I appreciate how you help me with my homework and everything. You're really smart—just not about girls. Listen—do you want to come over and spend the night tonight? You could tell me the plot of *Robinson Crusoe*.

BILLY. Yeah. Sure. Okay.

ELIZABETH. So I'll see you at seven, okay?

STEVEN. What time will you be over?

JENNY. Okay.

BILLY. I'll be over at seven.

ELIZABETH. Okay.

STEVEN. Okay.

JENNY. Okay.

BILLY. Okay.

ELIZABETH. Bye.

STEVEN. See ya.

JENNY. Bye.

BILLY. Adios.

[MUSIC up and out. The YOUNG ONES exit]

DAN. Sarah, did you follow all that?

SARAH. *[Laughing]* I'm not sure. Poor Billy. He's in for a real letdown. It's obvious that Elizabeth doesn't like him.

DAN. How is it obvious? What do you mean?

SARAH. You heard her. She thinks he's a geek.

DAN. Yes. But she didn't tell *him* that. How is he supposed to know.

SARAH. When a girl likes a guy, most of the time it's pretty obvious because she will be friendly and enjoy talking with him. But sometimes a girl may be just too shy to show she's interested. You heard Jenny. Now *she* likes Billy.

DAN. How is he ever supposed to find that out? Guys always feel it's up to them to make the first step. It's hard figuring out what girls think.

SARAH. Well it's even harder being the one at home waiting for the phone to ring.

DAN. I wouldn't mind if a girl called up and asked me out once in a while.

SARAH. Oh yeah? What's your phone number?

[MUSIC up and out. SARAH and DAN exit. ELIZABETH is in her room, fixing her hair and fooling around with make-up. JENNY enters]

JENNY. Your mom told me to come on in.

ELIZABETH. Hi! This is going to be so much fun. We can stay up all night. I got three new tapes from Blockbuster Video, and my Mom is ordering us a pizza.

JENNY. *[Unenthusiastic]* Great.

ELIZABETH. What's wrong?

JENNY. What do you mean?

ELIZABETH. You seem depressed or something.

JENNY. How can I be depressed? I just got here.

ELIZABETH. That's what I'd like to know.

JENNY. I'm not depressed.

ELIZABETH. Well act happy. This night is going to be fun.

JENNY. Act happy? Elizabeth, what is your secret? You're always happy. Everybody likes you. Why do you hang out with me anyway?

ELIZABETH. Well for one thing you live right next door. And for another thing—I like you. You could be popular too. If you wanted to be.

JENNY. Are you kidding? Of course I want to be popular.

ELIZABETH. You say you want to be popular, but you don't act like it.

JENNY. I don't?

ELIZABETH. You could be so pretty if only you would wear the right clothes...They don't really...

JENNY. They don't really what?

ELIZABETH. It's kind of like what I was saying about Billy. It's not that he's bad-looking. He just doesn't look like everybody else. Don't you notice things? Don't you notice what the popular kids are wearing?

JENNY. Well....I guess so. But I just don't know how to look like that.

ELIZABETH. It takes practice. Didn't you ever play with Barbie dolls?

JENNY. Are you kidding?

ELIZABETH. You never played with Barbie dolls? What did you do when you were a little girl?

JENNY. I don't know. I was drawing pictures and singing songs. Climbing trees and riding horses. I used to try to ride my horse so fast I almost thought I could fly. I dreamed that I would fly on my horse to a magic castle in the sky.

ELIZABETH. Jenny. While you were riding horses I was learning how to be popular. I was learning how to be a Barbie doll.

JENNY. That's what I want to be. I don't know why, but riding horses and climbing trees just seem stupid now.

ELIZABETH. Of course they are! You're absolutely right, Jenny.

JENNY. Elizabeth, will you teach me how to be like you?

ELIZABETH. I don't know. Sometimes I think being popular is just something you're born with.

JENNY. Come on. Please, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH. Here. Put on this scrunchie.

JENNY. This what?

ELIZABETH. Scrunchie. It's for your hair. [*She starts to put it in Jenny's hair*] And I can't believe you don't wear lipstick. Boys love lipstick.

JENNY. My mother would kill me if she saw me. She thinks I should keep on doing little girl things forever.