

The Puppeteers

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THE PUPPETEERS

SCENE 1

INT. MICHELLE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Sunlight streams faintly through blinds. MICHELLE (20s, kind of dorky, hair a mess) is sound asleep, tangled in her sheets. Her ALARM CLOCK on the nightstand is dark.

A sudden, horrified gasp. Michelle's eyes snap open. She scrambles for her phone.

MICHELLE

(MUTTERING)

No, no, no!

She checks the time. Her eyes widen.

INT. MICHELLE'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Michelle, still in pajamas, rushes into the kitchen. She fumbles with a coffee mug - her favorite, with a silly cat design. She's moving too fast. The mug slips from her hand, shatters on the tile floor.

MICHELLE

Are you kidding me?!

She throws her hands up, defeated, then spots the time on the microwave.

<MICHELLE

god, I'm so late!

She races out of the kitchen.

INT. MICHELLE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Michelle pulls on a nice, but slightly wrinkled, blouse. She glances at herself in the mirror, looking disheveled.

MICHELLE

This is a disaster.

She grabs her purse, keys, and rushes out.

EXT. MICHELLE'S DRIVEWAY - CONTINUOUS

Michelle hurries to her modest sedan. She gets in, shoves the key in the ignition. Turns it.

CLICK. CLICK. CLICK.

Nothing. The car sputters weakly.

MICHELLE
No, no, no, no, no!

She tries again. Same result. Frustrated, she grabs her phone, jams it to her ear.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

(INTO PHONE)

Mark, hey, it's Michelle. You're
not going to believe this...

Her eyes go wide. The phone is dead. Black screen.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)
You have GOT to be kidding me!

She glares at the useless phone, then at her dead car. She takes a deep breath, defeated, and starts walking towards the main road.

EXT. BUS STOP - CONTINUOUS

Michelle stands at a bus stop, looking miserable. A city bus pulls up. She quickly gets on.

INT. CITY BUS - CONTINUOUS

Michelle finds a seat near the back. She pulls out a book, trying to calm down.

A YOUNG HOODED TEEN (17, skinny, wearing a black hoodie and red baseball cap, pulled low) walks past her seat. As he passes, he deftly SNATCHES Michelle's purse from her lap.

Michelle gasps.

MICHELLE
Hey! My purse!

The Skinny Teen darts for the bus exit, yanking the cord. The bus hisses to a stop. He leaps off.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)
Get back here!

Michelle scrambles off the bus, chasing after him.

EXT. CITY STREET - CONTINUOUS

The Skinny Teen sprints down the sidewalk, Michelle hot on his heels, yelling.

Suddenly, LIAM (20s, good-looking, casually dressed) appears seemingly out of nowhere. He lunges, tackling the Skinny Teen to the ground in a smooth, athletic move.

The Skinny Teen yelps, drops the purse, and scrambles up, running off down an alley.

Michelle, out of breath, catches up. Liam is getting up, brushing himself off. He holds out her purse.

LIAM
I think this is yours.

Michelle takes it, beaming.

MICHELLE
Oh my gosh, thank you! You're amazing! I thought I'd lost it for good.

Liam smiles.

LIAM
Just glad I could help. You look like you could use a break. How about I buy you some coffee? To shake off the morning?

Michelle's face lights up.

MICHELLE
I would love that.

INT. DINER - LATER

Michelle and Liam are sitting in a booth, laughing. Michelle is animatedly telling him about her disastrous morning. Liam listens, amused.

At a nearby booth, a group of similarly dressed individuals are eating.

They are ALL wearing black hoodies, red baseball caps, pulled low, and small EARPIECE HEADPHONES. They seem to be in hushed conversation.

An older, BALD GENTLEMAN (50s-60s) in a black trench coat walks towards their booth. He takes a seat at the head of the table.

BALD MAN

Report.

One of the Puppeteers speaks softly, but we can't quite make out the words. They are discussing what they "just got done doing."

Michelle and Liam, still smiling and laughing, stand up to leave. As they walk past the Puppeteers' booth, the Puppeteers subtly duck their heads or turn away, not wanting to be noticed.

Michelle and Liam exit the diner, still in lively conversation.

We cut back to the Puppeteers' booth. The Bald Man sips some coffee.

The Skinny Teen from before pulls his hood down. It's the same guy who stole Michelle's purse. He grins.

SKINNY TEEN

I love when she has happy days like today.

The Bald Man takes another sip of coffee, a knowing look in his eyes.

BALD MAN

Well, she definitely should enjoy today... because tomorrow is going to be a bad one.

SCENE 2

INT. MICHELLE'S BEDROOM - THE NIGHT BEFORE (FLASHBACK)

It's dark. Michelle is sound asleep in her bed.

Suddenly, her front door slowly creaks open. Several figures, dressed in the same black hoodies and red caps as the Puppeteers in the diner, silently slip inside.

They split up. One figure, the Skinny Teen, creeps into Michelle's bedroom. He goes straight to her nightstand, silently pulling the cord off her alarm clock.

INT. MICHELLE'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS (FLASHBACK)

Another Puppeteer, the one who pulled his hood down in the diner, is carefully filing down the handle of Michelle's favorite cat coffee mug. A tiny, almost invisible crack forms.

INT. MICHELLE'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS (FLASHBACK)

Another team member, stealthily, pulls the battery out of Michelle's cell phone, leaving it just slightly ajar.

EXT. MICHELLE'S DRIVEWAY - CONTINUOUS (FLASHBACK)

A larger, hooded man, crouched low, is meticulously removing the battery from Michelle's car.

As the sun begins to rise, we see the team in their hoodies slowly, silently, sneaking out of the house. They vanish into the pre-dawn light.

SCENE 3

MONTAGE - QUICK CUTS

A rapid-fire series of images, showing the meticulously orchestrated events of Michelle's morning, now understood through the lens of the Puppeteers' manipulation:

- * The UNPLUGGED ALARM CLOCK.
- * The COFFEE MUG falling, the tiny crack on the handle becoming the point of breakage.
- * Michelle frantically pressing the DEAD CELL PHONE.
- * Michelle turning the key in her CAR, the missing battery making it useless.
- * The Skinny Teen, with a smirk, SNATCHING the purse on the bus.
- * Liam, just a few feet away, patiently waiting for his cue.

FADE TO BLACK.

ON SCREEN TEXT:
THE PUPPETEERS

THEY DON'T CONTROL THE WORLD... THEY CONTROL YOUR WORLD.