THE LURE

By Patrick Rainville Dorn

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PUBLISHED BY
ELDRIDGE PUBLISHING COMPANY
95church.com

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Three teenagers are lured into malevolent Professor Carny Barker's Once-in-a Lifetime Traveling Career Fair. There they are tempted with futures of glamour, riches and power by warped and wicked counterfeit pretenders from the military, medical, legal, and business branches of Golden Calf Industries. The teens, with the oddball assistance of Holly Coast, a janitor, think about what they're willing to trade off to achieve career "success." Will the teens avoid being trapped in a futureless fate worse than death? This modern morality play is loaded with slapstick comedy, wry satire and a flexible cast of bizarre characters. Performance time about 45 minutes.

SETTING: Various school hallways and the career fair.
TIME: One afternoon last week!

PROPERTIES

Push broom
Spray bottle
Sheet of paper
Folding chairs
Chart
Electronic gadget that beeps
Tongue depressor
Contract
Hypodermic syringe (no needle!)
Four documents in envelopes
Scraper
Books and backpacks
Clipboard
Briefcases
Papers, pens
Thermometer
Paper money
Pen

SOUND EFFECTS / MUSIC

The sound of the ringing bell could easily be made by an Ensemble member saying "Ringing!"

The song "Bill Bailey, Won't You Please Come Home" is in public domain.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 m, 6 f, 4 either, plus flexible ensemble of 5-20)

JACK: A teenager who likes action and adventure (m).

JILL: His twin sister (f).

ALICE: A teenager; sensible, the leader of the three (f).

HOLLY COAST: An eccentric janitor (f).

MS. PEABODY: A teacher (f).

PROF. CARNY BARKER: Ringmaster of Career Fair (m or f).

MINION: A groveling servant (m or f).

SGT. SLIPSHOD: Reckless recruiter (m).

PENNY BUCKS: Top of the heap and means to stay there (f).

RED INKLETTER: Not exactly executive material (m or f).

DR. SNIPPENSTITCH: A quack (m or f).

SUE DE PANZOFF: Shady lawyer (f).

ENSEMBLE: Portray students, doors, lockers, the Slipshod Squad, junior executives and the Paralegal Eagles.

COSTUMES

JACK, JILL, ALICE: contemporary clothing.
ENSEMBLE: contemporary but neutral-colored clothing, maybe shades of black and gray.
HOLLY: overalls.
BARKER: cutaway coat, top hat.
SGT. SLIPSHOD: military uniform with ridiculous cardboard medals.
SLIPSHOD SQUAD: plastic helmets.
SNIPPENSTITCH: white lab coat.
PENNY: tailored business suit.
JUNIOR EXECUTIVES: clip-on ties.
SUE: tailored business suit.
PARALEGAL EAGLES: judge/graduation robes, white wigs optional.

THE LURE

(AT RISE: An empty stage or playing area. HOLLY COAST enters from UL, pushing a broom. She is a down-to-earth, practical person, yet there is something very unusual about her which suggests there is more to her than meets the eye. She has a spray bottle of window cleaner, a rag, and a scraper dangling from her overalls.)

HOLLY: *(Sweeps to CS, stops, looks carefully at the ground. Exclaims.)* Gum! *(Sets broom aside, takes out scraper, and kneels over the spot, scraping.)* Hmm. Looks like Bubbalicious *(or other popular flavor. Sniffs the scraper.)* Cherry flavored. *(Sniffs again.)* Sugarless, too. *(Stands, holds the scraper up to the light.)* Judging by the tooth prints I'd say the budding young scholar who started this gum had to ditch it before going to class. Didn't get half the flavor out of it, either. *(Returns scraper.)* I'll just add that to the collection. *(Picks up broom.)* Kids today! Always rushing from class to class, from place to place. Before they know it, they've run headlong into the middle of life and don't know how they got there. *(Philosophically.)* Take time to taste the bubble gum. That's what I say.

(HOLLY exits DR, sweeping. SOUND: A bell rings and the stage is flooded from every direction with excited, chattering STUDENTS.)

STUDENTS: Get my homework, will ya?
Where's my geography book?
Where are you going after school today?
No place. How about you?
No place.
My folks are getting a plasma TV! (Or current gadget)
Great! When can we come over?
How about eight?
I'll bring the popcorn.

(ENSEMBLE EXITS in all directions, except for a few who form "lockers." JACK, JILL, and ALICE remain in the playing area. Jack is an energetic powerhouse. He is easily excited and may be counted upon to do the wrong thing with the best of intentions. Jill, his twin sister, masks a fierce loyalty to her brother with impatience, aloofness, and mortification at Jack's antics. Alice, the leader of the three, possesses wisdom unusual for her age, which is the result of good manners and a genuine interest in doing the right thing.)

JACK: *(Shouts to a student.)* See you at soccer practice!
ALICE: *(Seeing Jill.)* Jill! Hey, Jill, over here!
JILL: *(Joining them at SL.)* What's up?
ALICE: There's some kind of Career Day going on at the multi-purpose room.
JACK: So what? *(Opens "locker," puts in imaginary book.)*
ALICE: So I thought maybe we could get out of study hall and check it out.
JACK: I'm all for that. Anything to get out of study hall.
JILL: Do you think Ms. Peabody will let us?
JACK: *(Assumes karate stance.)* She will if she knows what's good for her. *(Kicking the air.)* Heeyah!
JILL: Jack, you are so immature.
JACK: Oh, yeah? I'm older than you are.
JILL: Fifteen minutes older, big deal. You don't see me going around kung fu-ing our study hall teacher, do you?
ALICE: I'm sure if we ask her nicely, Ms. Peabody will let us go. It's for a good cause.
JILL: It is?
ALICE: Sure. Career Days are supposed to help us decide what kind of future we want; what we'll do with our education. What do you think we are going to school for?
JILL: I hadn't thought much about WHY. I just thought we HAD to go to school.
JACK: We go to school so that we can drive our parents AND our teachers crazy, stupid.
JILL: Don't call me stupid, stupid!

JACK: Oh Yeah? *(Prolonging the vowel.)* Stuuuuupid!
JILL: I'm telling Mom when we get home!
ALICE: Maybe we should try the Career Day next year, when we're ready for it.
JACK: I'm ready now! I was born ready!
ALICE: Well, then, let's go ask Ms. Peabody. We're due at study hall in about … *(SOUND: bell rings.)* … Uh oh. Come on!

(THEY slam their "lockers" shut and dash off SR. The "lockers" reform themselves into a hallway and door at CS. HOLLY ENTERS from SR, pushing her broom. She sweeps to CS, stops. Sees a piece of paper on the ground.)

HOLLY: What's this? *(Pick up the paper, reads.)* "Study hall is cancelled today due to the Career Day in the multi-purpose room. Attendance will be taken at the assembly. Ms. Peabody." Hmm. Must have come off the door. *(She sticks the note on the back of the PLAYER/DOOR, pounds it a few times. The paper falls.)* Tape must have lost its stick. *(Thinks a moment.)* I can fix that. *(Takes out scraper, wipes it on the paper. NOTE: Have tape pre-set on the scraper. Holly sticks the note on the back of the Player. PLAYER/DOOR turns, looks at her with disgust.)* There. That ought to hold it.

(JACK, JILL and ALICE run in from SR. Jill tries the "door.")

JILL: Looks like we got here too late. The door's locked.
JACK: Great! Now instead of study hall, we can report to detention.
ALICE: *(To Holly.)* Excuse me, do you know if Ms. Peabody's study hall class has started?
JACK: *(To Alice.)* Why ask her? She's just a janitor.
HOLLY: *(Leans against the "door," blocking the sign. To Jack.)* Oh, is that so? And because I'm a janitor I don't know a thing or three?

End of Freeview

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