

PLAYS FOR  
**New Audiences**

A Division of Children's Theatre Company

***The Hardy Boys in the  
Mystery of the  
Haunted House***

by

**Jon Klein**

Based on *The House on the Cliff*

by Franklin W. Dixon

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## SETTING

Multiple locations. A single structure representing the “haunted house” is the main set piece, with other scenes to be played on the forestage.

There’s also an old-fashioned panoramic view of Bayport, either to the side or above the main structure. This can include the town of Bayport, Barmet Bay, the house on the cliff, and the beach are including the Shaw home.

## PLACE

The town of Bayport, a coastal town, and its environs

## TIME

The beginning of summer, 1927.

## SCRIPT AND PRODUCTION NOTES

This script is, of course, a gentle spoof in the style of the original books. So production elements can and probably should reflect the “two-dimensional” aspects of the characters and plot. In the original production, this meant moving away from realistic depictions of scenery and set pieces. For example, the motorbikes, boats and cars were all flat cardboard pieces, painted to look like vehicles but obviously held by the walking or running actors as they “rode” inside. There were also a number of evocative drops and structural units that quickly dropped or slid into place. Also, there are plenty of visually scary moments caused by sudden darkness, shadows or quick reveals. Imaginative lighting is even more important than the set design, to establish the spooky and silly atmosphere of the play.

The original production had a number of extended fight and chase sequences, that were worked out in detail by the director and the fight choreographer. I’ve only scripted these in the most general terms, to allow other directors to incorporate their own ideas.

We also had a composer come up with what sounded like an exciting movie score, perhaps in the style of Bernard Herrman, which became essential to propelling action and filling transitions.

Most importantly, anything that slows down the action should be discarded for simpler solutions!

CHARACTERS:

Original casting, with doubling: **6 Men, 2 Women**

Without doubling: **7 Men, 3 Women**

In Order of Appearance:

**FRANK HARDY** – 16.

**JOE HARDY** – 15.

**CALLIE SHAW** – 16. Frank's friend.

**FENTON HARDY** – 40. Frank and Joe's father, a detective.

**MRS. SHAW** – Callie's mother.

Can be doubled with:

**MARGARET MOLLOY** – A gun moll.

**"JONES"** – a man of mysterious identity.

Can be doubled with:

**CHIEF EZRA COLLIG** – Heads the Bayport Police Department.

**MALLOY** – A smuggler.

**GANNY SNACKLEY** – The leader of the smuggling gang.

## ACT ONE

Lights up on a dark storage area. It's hard to make out the room, but it appears to be the inside of a cavern.

A nondescript man.  
 "JONES," nervously checks a small ledger against a series of crates with Chinese lettering. He pries one open with a crowbar and looks inside.

"JONES"

Paydirt.

He puts the book away and reaches inside the crate, pulling out pearls and jewelry.

Quickly, he drops them back in the box, replaces the lid and picks the box up.

Heading for a closed door, he is stopped by the door suddenly banging open. SNACKLEY stands there, a bright light behind him throwing him into silhouette.

SNACKLEY

Going somewhere?

"JONES"

Just getting a head start. On the next shipment.

SNACKLEY

You seem a little confused about the procedure. Allow me to explain it to you.

SNACKLEY pulls a gun on "JONES."

Lights down on them and up on FRANK and JOE, riding their motorbikes.

The boys wear leather jackets of the period and thick safety goggles. FRANK is dark-haired, JOE slightly younger and blonder.

FRANK shouts at JOE over the roaring motors.

Your bike needs a tuneup.

**FRANK**

What?

**JOE**

I said, your bike needs a tuneup.

**FRANK**

I can't hear you, my bike needs a tuneup.

**JOE**

FRANK glances behind him, and motions to JOE.

Pull over.

**FRANK**

They stop their bikes and the motors stop.

Take a look behind you, Joe.

**FRANK**

JOE turns around and whistles. They dismount their bikes.

Wow, look at Bayport!

**JOE**

What a spectacular view.

**FRANK**

Gosh, Frank, I can't imagine living in another place than Bayport!

**JOE**

You must be joking. Dad has been to all sorts of places other than Bayport.

**FRANK**

**JOE**

Like where?

**FRANK**

Well, he's been to Hartford, and he's been to Boston, and he's even been to Washington, DC. And he just got back from New York City.

**JOE**

New York City! I'd never live in New York City.

**FRANK**

Why not?

**JOE**

I hear it's so bad there, that people actually lock their doors.

**FRANK**

That's true. But not even Bayport is safe from crime forever.

**JOE**

Crime in Bayport! That will be the day.

CALLIE enters and approaches the bikes. She has an unusual spirit for the time, very much a "tomboy." FRANK likes her, but JOE finds her a nuisance.

**CALLIE**

Well, what do you know? If it isn't the Hardy Boys.

**JOE**

That's Hardy.

**FRANK**

Hi Callie!

**CALLIE**

What's going on? Did you break down?

**JOE**

No, as if it's any of your business.

**FRANK**

Be nice, Joe. (To CALLIE) What are you doing around here?

**CALLIE**

You stopped right in front of my house. See? That's where I live.

She points off.

**FRANK**

Gosh, you live right on the beach!

**JOE**

Big deal.

**CALLIE**

You'd like the beach, Joe. Cause you're such a crab.

**FRANK**

Let me talk to him, Callie.

FRANK dismounts and approaches JOE.

What's the matter with you? Can't you try to get along?

**JOE**

She thinks she's so smart. Just because she gets straight A's and knows more than everybody else.

**FRANK**

Well, I like her, so you better start being nice.

**JOE**

What for?

**FRANK**

Ah, the innocence of youth.

**JOE**

What's that supposed to mean?

**FRANK**

I mean when you become sixteen like me, and have acquired a little experience, you'll feel differently about these things.

**JOE**

Fat chance.

By now CALLIE has climbed aboard JOE's bike and started it. The motor sputters into action.

Hey! Get off my bike!

CALLIE  
You need a tuneup.

JOE  
I said get off!

CALLIE stops the bike, dismounts, and opens the tool box strapped to the back of the bike. She selects a screwdriver and goes to work on the motor.

FRANK  
I mean it, Joe, you better be friendly.

JOE  
Do I have to?

FRANK  
Maybe she'll invite us to her house, where we can spend the day at the beach. How wouldn't that be swell?

JOE  
I guess.

They return to CALLIE, finishing up her work on JOE's motor.

What do you think you're doing?

CALLIE  
Give it a try.

JOE  
Huh?

CALLIE  
Go ahead.

JOE climbs aboard and starts her up. The motor runs smoothly.

What do you think?

JOE (chagrined)  
It's okay.



**CALLIE**

Okay? It purrs like a kitten! Where are you guys headed, anyway?

**FRANK**

It's just a Saturday afternoon excursion. We don't really have a destination.

**CALLIE**

Too bad.

**FRANK**

Why?

**CALLIE**

I might have joined you if you knew where you were going. Personally, I'm more interested in men who have some idea of where they're headed.

JOE imitates her under his breath.

**JOE**

Oh, brother.

**CALLIE**

Watch it, Hardly. One turn of this screwdriver and your motor comes off.

**FRANK**

Is there someplace you'd like to go?

**CALLIE**

Hmm, let's see. How about the Polucca place?

**JOE**

What are you, nuts?

**FRANK**

What place is that?

**JOE**

She's talking about the haunted house!

They both turn to look at JOE.

That is, if you believe in ghosts. Which I don't, of course.

**FRANK**

You mean the house on the cliff?

Suddenly THUNDER strikes over the panorama, and a fierce LIGHTNING BOLT illuminates the house on the cliff. The house glows for a few seconds, then fades.

CALLIE

That's the one.

JOE

Looks like bad weather. Maybe we should go back, Frank.

CALLIE

Did I just hear a chicken cluck?

JOE

I'm not a chicken.

CALLIE

Maybe Joe will give us some fresh eggs for lunch.

JOE

Come on, Frank, you don't really want to go up there, do you?

FRANK

Tell me more about this place. Who is Polucca?

CALLIE

Who was Polucca, you mean. Someone bumped him off.

FRANK

Murdered? How?

CALLIE

He was found alone in the kitchen - with his throat cut.

FRANK

Hear that, Joe? What did I tell you? Not even Bayport is immune to the evils of criminal activity. Who did it?

CALLIE

To this day, no one knows. There were no signs of a struggle. They couldn't even find blood anywhere in the house - not even on his body.

FRANK

That's strange all right. And no motive?

CALLIE

They called it robbery, but I think Chief Collig was just guessing.

**FRANK**

Chief Collig!

**JOE**

Uh, oh.

**FRANK**

Why, he couldn't solve a crime if he committed it himself.

**JOE**

Now, don't get excited, Frank -

**FRANK**

An unsolved mystery, right here in Bayport! How exciting! Remember what Dad said, Joe? "If you want to be detectives, keep your eyes peeled for a mystery." And here it is, falling right into our laps! Is anyone living up there now?

**CALLIE**

Heavens no, not since the police investigation. Although sometimes I've seen some strange lights coming from the windows.

**FRANK**

Let's go.

**JOE**

I don't know about this, Frank.

**CALLIE**

What's the matter, Joe? Don't tell us you're afraid.

A furious JOE climbs aboard his bike and starts it up.

**JOE**

I'll show you who's afraid.

He starts off. FRANK mounts his bike and CALLIE climbs behind him.

**FRANK**

There are some safety goggles in my tool box.

**CALLIE**

But they look so goofy.

**FRANK**

There's nothing "goofy" about face protection. A small projectile lodging in your eye at 30 miles an hour could cause serious retinal damage.

All right, all right.

CALLIE

She reaches back and finds the goggles, then puts them on.

FRANK starts up his bike and begins to follow JOE up the coastal road.

As the bikes head offstage, a dark rain cloud moves over the cliff house on the panorama.

LIGHTNING and THUNDER strike as the teenagers enter the interior of the house, carrying flashlights.

This was a stupid idea.

JOE

Come on, Joe, where's your adventurous spirit?

FRANK

He's just afraid of ghosts.

CALLIE

You think our bikes are safe out there?

JOE

Who's going to bother them?

FRANK

A scampering SOUND is heard, accompanied by a furry dart across the floor.

What's that?

JOE

Just a rat.

FRANK

Not so fast.

CALLIE

They stop and look at her.

Maybe it's not a rat at all. Maybe it's ... the ghost of Polucca!

LIGHTNING illuminates an old portrait of Polucca. FRANK shines his flashlight on it.

FRANK

Speaking of which -

JOE

He doesn't look very happy, does he?

FRANK

Well, how would you feel if your throat was cut?

JOE

I'll let you know in a few minutes.

They walk away, but Callie keeps her flashlight on it as they explore the room.

CALLIE

Weird. His eyes seem to follow us around the room as we move.

JOE

Good to know. Thanks, Callie.

FRANK

That's just an optical illusion.

CALLIE

This place is a wreck.

FRANK

I'd say no one's been here in years. The grounds outside are nothing but tangled weeds and bushes, and this is no more than a collection of dust and cobwebs. Hard to imagine anyone ever did live here.

CALLIE

Still, it's nice to be out of the rain.

A strange SHRIEK is heard from above.

JOE

Personally, I like the rain.

JOE turns and runs off. The sound of a DOOR SLAMMING is heard, then JOE reappears, carrying a doorknob.

CALLIE

What happened?

JOE

A little trouble with the doorknob.

FRANK

Easy enough to rig. I still don't believe in ghosts.

CALLIE

Neither do I.

JOE

So, there must be a practical explanation for all of this, right, Frank?

FRANK

Absolutely.

Maniacal LAUGHTER is heard from the upper levels. LIGHTNING illuminates huge SHADOWS of menacing figures, all over the theatre.

CALLIE

I'm ready for that explanation.

FRANK

I think the noise is coming from upstairs.

JOE

You're not going up there?

FRANK

Just watch me.

As FRANK steps toward the stairs, a little PLASTER falls from the ceiling and falls behind him.

JOE

Frank! Look out!

**PURCHASE PERUSAL FOR FULL SCRIPT**