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Cast of Characters

ADAM
BOB
CINDY
DAVE
EMILY
FRED
GAIL
HARRY
IRA
JILL
LINDA, the secretary

Setting

Banff Enterprises, present day.

Production Notes

All characters can be double-cast, with the exception of Linda. During each blackout, the job applicant assumes the employer position behind the desk, thus becoming the employer for the next scene. To further clarify, each employer could wear the same pair of serious-looking glasses.

The set of the Banff Enterprises employment office requires a desk and two chairs. Throughout the play, Linda sits elsewhere at a small desk, representing the outer office. Applicants approach LINDA with their résumés before passing into the inner office.

Acknowledgments

This original version of *Hard Candy* was first produced at Stanton College Preparatory School in Jacksonville, Florida in April of 1997. It was directed by Jennifer Sutherland and Lauren Davis with the following cast:

Sarah Bolling

Alison Carollo

Matt Crider

Andrew Gill

Autumn Green

David Organes

Ann-Marie Sowder

Matt Warner

HARD CANDY

by Jonathan Rand

Scene 1

(This is BOB's first job interview, and he's a little nervous. As he enters, LINDA immediately pops out of her chair to greet him. LINDA jubilantly shakes his hand, takes his résumé, and escorts him to the inner office. ADAM is sitting behind the desk.)

ADAM. Please, come in. Have a seat.

BOB. Thanks.

ADAM. Hard candy?

BOB. Sure.

ADAM. So, why do you wish to work here at Banff Enterprises?

BOB. Well, I'd really like to see what working is all about. I've never had a job before, and I'd like to get some experience.

ADAM. I see...

BOB. A guy's gotta start somewhere, right?

ADAM. Yes, yes. *(To intercom:)* Linda, would you please bring in the applicant's résumé?

LINDA. *(To intercom:)* Absolutely, sir! Right away!

ADAM. So, what kind of hours are you looking for?

BOB. Well, I was thinking I would just work about ten hours a week. Me and my girlfriend go out a lot, and I usually can't find the time to, y'know, work.

ADAM. *(Not too thrilled:)* Ah...

BOB. Maybe I can bump it up to eleven, but I'd have to run it by Francine.

ADAM. Well, to tell you the truth, I don't think we have any use for an employee with such inflexibility. I'm sorry.

(BOB hangs his head, realizing his failure. ADAM takes the résumé from LINDA.)

But let's finish up the interview, just to make it official. *(Skimming the résumé:)* Let's see... You have no work experience...no references... you attended... Idaho State? No way...

BOB. You've heard of it?

ADAM. *Heard* of it? I was starting quarterback for the Fightin' Spuds!

BOB. I played tight end!

ADAM. You're kidding me! Hey, were you – ? Nah, forget it.

BOB. What?

ADAM. Nah... It was only for an elite few on the team –

BOB. What is it? I think I may know what you're getting at.

(A beat. The following recitation builds to an excited shout.)

Less thinkin' –

ADAM. And more drinkin' –

ADAM & BOB. *Gets the ladies winkin'!*

ADAM. I can't believe you were in Kappa Kappa Zeta!

BOB. I can't believe *you* were in Kappa Kappa Zeta!

ADAM. Did they make you do the thing with the alpaca, and the chocolate sauce, and the – ?

BOB. *(Overlapping:)* – and the calzone? *Yes!*

ADAM. You're pulling my leg!

BOB. Oh! Oh! Were you a member of the No Pants council?

ADAM. Don't tell me *you* were!

BOB. Chairman of the Board.

ADAM. Me, too!

BOB. Man... *I knew* I'd seen your face before somewhere. There were pictures of you all over the walls at the house! *(A moment of realization.)* Wait a minute! You're the guy behind the the biggest prank in Zeta history!

ADAM. My reputation precedes me.

BOB. How on Earth did you fill an entire Ford F-150 with mustard?

ADAM. Trade secrets, my son.

BOB. You're a *legend!*

ADAM. Thanks! This is great! Hey – you know what? I had interviews lined up for the rest of the day. Forget *that!* You're hired!

(ADAM and BOB shake hands. While their hands are still clasped, there is a moment as they share a knowing look. They then slowly begin a complicated secret handshake that gets faster and wilder until its end. Blackout.)

Scene 2

(As CINDY enters, LINDA – not as ecstatic before, but still very happy – rises and shakes CINDY’s hand. LINDA takes CINDY’s résumé and motions her toward the office.)

BOB. Please, come in. Have a seat.

CINDY. Thank you.

BOB. Hard candy?

CINDY. Yes. Thank you.

BOB. So, why do you wish to work here at Banff Enterprises?

CINDY. Given that I am vastly overqualified this position, the real question should be: how could Banff Enterprises afford *not* to hire me?

BOB. *Really, now?* Well we’ll just have to see about that. *(To intercom:)* Linda, would you please bring in the applicant’s résumé?

LINDA. *(To intercom:)* Yes, sir! One moment, please!

BOB. “Vastly overqualified,” you say. How many degrees do you have?

CINDY. Eleven.

BOB. Satisfactory. Where did you attend school?

CINDY. Highlights include Princeton undergrad, Harvard Law, and for fun, Stanford Med.

(BOB grumbles as he takes the résumé from LINDA.)

BOB. Says here you’re fluent in 47 languages. Is that so?

CINDY. Yes, sir.

BOB. *Parlez-vous français?*

CINDY. *Bien sûr.*

BOB. *Sprechen Sie Deutsche?*

CINDY. *Ja.*

BOB. *(In Hebrew:)* Aht m'dah-BEH-ret eev-REET?

CINDY. BEH-takh.

BOB. *(In Chinese:)* Nee HWAY shwo ZHONGwen mah?

CINDY. Wo HWAY.

BOB. *Oday ouyay eakspay igpay atinlay?*

CINDY. *Ertainlycay oday.*

(BOB picks up a random office supply and taps it on the desk to simulate Morse code; CINDY tuses another object and taps out her reply. BOB produces a pair of signal flags and begins semaphoring; he hands them to CINDY, who confidently signals her answer. BOB barks like a dog; CINDY woofs in return. The confrontation rapidly builds until the two are leaning over the desk, nose to nose.)

BOB. *Kab-kab forloofit streckbort?*

(CINDY reflexively opens her mouth to respond, but cannot. BOB spins away.)

Ah-hah!

CINDY. What kind of language is that?

BOB. *That, for your information, is Biblical Southeastern Pidgin Wake-a-mish. I suppose you're not that bright, after all. Thank you for your time.*

(BOB sits down and writes. CINDY starts to exit in a huff.)

CINDY. *(Under her breath:)* *Tu madre es una vaca gorda...*

BOB. What was that?

CINDY. Nothing.

BOB. No, what language were you speaking?

CINDY. Spanish. I was saying something in Spanish.

BOB. *(Bewildered:)* Spaahhneesh?

CINDY. Yeah, Spanish.

BOB. *(Switching gears:)* Oh wait a minute; I see what you're trying to pull. So tell me, where is this so-called "Spanish" of yours spoken?

CINDY. *(In disbelief:)* Um, Latin America...?

BOB. Nice try. In Latin America they speak a little language called Latin.

CINDY. That's...patently false.

BOB. *Is it?*

CINDY. Okay, they speak Spanish in *Spain*.

BOB. Spain? And where in your imagination might one find this "Spain"?

(CINDY points to the globe or map.)

CINDY. *(Pointing to the globe or map:)* Here.

BOB. *(Genuinely surprised:)* Huh! Spain! Hiding right there next to Andorra. Who knew?

Well, we at Banff Enterprises would be downright *stupid* to reject someone with such terrific geography skills. You're hired!

(BOB shakes CINDY's hand. BOB casually leans his head toward CINDY.)

Oh, and by the way...

(In rapid-fire Xhosa, clicking the tongue against the upper palette:) N'di-[click]-ondo zow-cuckoo [click]-andoosela ama-[click]-anda [click]-aban.

(CINDY gasps and slaps BOB's face – hard. Blackout.)

Scene 3

(DAVE enters. LINDA doesn't rise at his entrance, but still she smiles as she shakes DAVE's hand and takes his résumé. LINDA gestures toward the office.)

CINDY. Please, come in. Have a seat.

DAVE. Thanks.

CINDY. Hard candy?

DAVE. Okay.

CINDY. So, why do you wish to work here at Banff Enterprises?

DAVE. Well, I was recently fired—I mean, I recently *quit*—my last job, and I thought this would be a great place for a fresh start.

CINDY. I see... *(To intercom:)* Linda, would you please bring in the applicant's résumé?

LINDA. *(To intercom:)* Yes, ma'am.

CINDY. So, what kind of work experience do you have?

DAVE. Well, I babysat for three years...

CINDY. Ah...

(DAVE, seeing her unimpressed reaction, responds by pulling out a twenty-dollar bill and passing it over the desk to CINDY.)

But I *am* good with numbers...

CINDY. *(Examining and pocketing the bill:)* I see. Could you please... elaborate?

(DAVE is confused. CINDY nods toward his wallet.)

Elaborate?

DAVE. *(Figuring it out, then passing over another bill:)* Ohhh! I'm very good with numbers.

CINDY. Excellent.

(CINDY takes the résumé from LINDA.)

Let's see...It says here you worked for three years at a Pizza Palace.

DAVE. *(Passing more money:)* Yeah...

CINDY. Manager?

DAVE. *(Passing his wallet:)* Assistant dish-washer...

CINDY. How unfortunate.

(CINDY removes the cash from the wallet and pockets it. She continues to subtly beckon for more bribes.)

And how many hours were you hoping to work?

(DAVE, starting to dislike his situation a tad, takes out his checkbook and begins writing.)

DAVE. Uh, probably about thirty a week.

CINDY. Thirty? Wouldn't you rather work, say...*five hundred* hours?

DAVE. *(Confused:)* Five hundred?

CINDY. Yes. *(Indicating checkbook:)* Five hundred.

(A beat. DAVE looks at the checkbook and then reluctantly writes the amount down.)

DAVE. Five hundred...

(DAVE gives CINDY the check. During the following dialogue, CINDY takes a credit card out of the wallet and swipes it through a card reader.)

CINDY. Wonderful. Flexibility is an indispensable quality in an employee.

(CINDY produces a receipt from the credit card machine.)

You see, this corporation is in dire need of a hard-working, devoted staff – sign here –

(DAVE signs the receipt.)

– that can handle a difficult, strenuous working environment.

(DAVE extends the receipt to CINDY.)

You must understand – the yellow copy's yours – this job *can't* be taken lightly.

(DAVE hands CINDY the white half of the receipt.)

DAVE. Of course not.

CINDY. Good. (Pointing to her wrist:) Oh, do you happen to have the time?

DAVE. Yes. It's a quarter of –

(DAVE looks up and sees CINDY's intent. DAVE takes off his gold watch and hands it over.)

– a quarter of ten...

CINDY. Thanks. So...what sort of salary are you looking for?

DAVE. I'm not sure yet. Maybe somewhere around –

CINDY. Is it hot in here?

DAVE. (Loosening his tie:) I guess it's pretty warm.

(DAVE then sees what CINDY's after. DAVE removes his tie and hands it over. CINDY keeps the gold tie clip and throws the tie in the wastebasket.)

CINDY. I thought so. It's always too hot in here. Maintenance should've fixed the problem weeks ago. I don't understand what's holding them up.

(A pause as DAVE looks at CINDY in confusion.)

The maintenance guys should really *buckle* down on that.

(DAVE is still lost.)

They wear nice belts.

(DAVE hands over his belt.)

CINDY. Great. Well, this interview has been quite informative. You are obviously a qualified applicant. Your wife would be proud.

DAVE. How did you know I—

(DAVE trails off, realizing what CINDY wants.)

CINDY. I'm sorry?

DAVE. (Handing over his wedding ring:) Nothing...

CINDY. Okay, well, I believe I've made my decision.

DAVE. You have? And?

CINDY. I'm happy to say that you would make a wonderful addition to our work force.

DAVE. (Jumping out of his chair in delight:) All right!!

(Without a belt, Dave's pants immediately fall to the ground, revealing a pair of boxer shorts.)

CINDY. But we could never employ anyone who dresses so inappropriately.

DAVE. Please! I need this job! What more could I possibly have to offer?!

(CINDY holds up Dave's open wallet and points to a picture.)

CINDY. How close are you to your first-born?

(Blackout.)

Scene 4

(EMILY's speech is quick, powerful, and never hesitant, even when interrupted. EMILY thrusts her résumé at LINDA and heads straight into the inner office. DAVE opens his mouth to speak, but EMILY beats him to it.)

EMILY. Please, have a seat.

DAVE. (Confused:) Thanks.

EMILY. Hard candy?

DAVE. Okay...

EMILY. So, why do you wish for me to work here at Banff Enterprises?

DAVE. Wait a minute...

EMILY. Outstanding! *(To intercom:)* Linda, would you please bring in my résumé?

(LINDA is too baffled to respond. EMILY plows ahead.)

So you may wonder if I have any work experience. Well, yes, I do. But, let me give it to you straight: between you, me, and the wall, I don't think the formality of this interview is going to make your decision.

(EMILY has crossed to LINDA, who's been watching from the doorway. EMILY immediately snatches her résumé.)

Wow! I *really* like what I'm seeing here. It's obvious you're going to hire me and that's that. I've got the experience, the moxy, and I can tell by the look in your eyes that you know I'll be an invaluable addition to your staff. So—whaddaya say?

DAVE. I—

EMILY. This is the chance of a lifetime!

DAVE. But—

EMILY. I'll start at 200 plus benefits and we'll work our way from there.

DAVE. But I don't think—

EMILY. You drive a hard bargain. I'll take 250, but I won't go any higher.

DAVE. But—

EMILY. Sounds reasonable to me.

(EMILY shakes DAVE's hand vigorously.)

I'm hired!

(A pause, as DAVE realizes what just happened.)

DAVE. Wait a minute! You're the applicant! You can't do that!

EMILY. I can't do what?

DAVE. Say you're hired.

EMILY. Say what?

DAVE. You're hired.

EMILY. I am? Fantastic!

(Blackout.)

Scene 5

(By this point, LINDA is losing interest in her job. Whereas in earlier scenes she appeared bustling and industrious, she now spends a good deal of her time sulking. FRED is an incredibly good-looking man, either a well-dressed GQ type or a Chippendale dancer with an oiled chest. He has a deep and provocative voice, maybe with a foreign accent. As FRED holds his résumé out to LINDA, her eyes move over his entire body, enchanted with every inch. Finally, LINDA takes the paper and lets it dangle from her hand while her eyes follow FRED into the office. EMILY is busy writing and doesn't see FRED at first.)

EMILY. Please, come in. Have a seat.

FRED. Thank you very much.

EMILY. Hard candy?

(FRED sits on the desk.)

FRED. Yes. Please.

EMILY. *(Finally looking up:)* So, why do you —

(EMILY grabs Fred's tie or collar and pulls him close. Blackout.)

Scene 6

(GAIL is a very strange person, with an insane yet soothing quality to her voice. GAIL enters in her weird way and extends her résumé toward LINDA. Very much tired of doing this, LINDA takes the résumé and drops it on the desk. GAIL enters the office.)

FRED. Please come in. Have a seat.

GAIL. Yehhhhhhs.

FRED. Hard candy?

GAIL. Yehhhhhhs.

FRED. So, why do you wish to work here at Banff Enterprises?

GAIL. I wish not only to work here, but for you to relax your senses.

FRED. I don't quite understand you.

GAIL. Once you begin to understand, you will understand. Understand?

(FRED stares at GAIL, confused. As FRED speaks into the intercom, GAIL steals around to his side of the desk.)

FRED. *(To intercom:)* Linda, would you please bring in the applicant's résumé?

LINDA. *(To intercom:)* Yeah...

GAIL. What have we here?

(In a glaringly fake move, GAIL pulls a pocket watch from FRED's "ear." GAIL then dangles the watch between FRED's eyes.)

Look at the watch move back and forth.

FRED. What are you doing?

GAIL. You're getting sleepy.

FRED. Okay –

GAIL. You will do exactly what I command.

FRED. This is absurd.

(LINDA has entered smoking a cigarette at some point during the interview. She stops well before reaching Fred's desk and drops the résumé, not caring in the least, and returns to her desk.)

GAIL. The moment I snap my fingers, you will extend your right arm toward the woman across from you.

FRED. Okay, I'm calling security.

GAIL. When a hand grasps yours, you will shake it vertically and say the words "You are hired" to the woman.

FRED. *(To intercom:)* Linda?

GAIL. *(Snapping fingers:)* Now!

(FRED's head instantly drops to his chest. He slowly raises his head, eyes glassy and unseeing. FRED slowly extends his right arm toward an ecstatic GAIL, and they shake hands.)

FRED. You...are...an idiot!

(FRED *laughs triumphantly.*)

GAIL. (*Still frantically snapping fingers.*) Now! Now!

FRED. Give it up, lady. And get out of my office.

GAIL. Ah, screw it—Plan B... (*To intercom, in FRED's voice:*) Linda—I crave your tender touch.

(LINDA *jumps up, runs in, and attacks FRED with kisses in a mad, passionate embrace.*)

FRED. Linda—no! I'm a married man!

GAIL. (*Whipping out a camera.*) Smile, sucker!

(*Blackout.*)

Scene 7

(HARRY *is a veteran, whospeaks in an extremely forceful and Southern-accented voice, standing at attention with eyes forward. He extends his résumé toward LINDA, who simply nods her head toward the desk. HARRY puts his résumé on the desk and enters the office.*)

GAIL. Please, come in. Have a seat.

HARRY. No thank you, sir! I would rather stand. Standing develops proper posture, thereby making an employee ready for anything, sir!

GAIL. Okay. Hard candy?

HARRY. No, thank you, sir! I only consume dried meat, sir!

GAIL. I see. So, why do you wish to work here at Banff Enterprises?

HARRY. My life's mission is incomplete without assisting mankind in every possible situation, sir!

GAIL. Okay. (*To intercom:*) Linda, would you please bring in the applicant's résumé?

(LINDA *throws a paper airplane into the office. GAIL picks it up and unfolds it.*)

And what kind of hours are you looking for?

HARRY. I will toil hour by hour, day by day, week by week, without breaks if necessary. It is my duty to serve you whenever my service is needed, sir!

GAIL. How about salary?

HARRY. If you choose to pay for my services, that is your prerogative, sir! I will accept any pay you decide to give, but I will be ready to serve you completely free of charge if that is your decision, sir!

GAIL. Let's see... You attended West Point, then the army for eight years, then completed your doctorate at MIT. Is that so?

HARRY. Yes, sir! There is no fraudulent material included in my résumé, sir!

GAIL. This is quite impressive. Let me get this straight, if I may: You are willing to work non-stop, without pay, for as long as I choose?

HARRY. Your wish is my command, sir!

(A beat, as GAIL thinks it over.)

GAIL. Unfortunately, I don't think you're a good fit for this company. I'm terribly sorry.

(HARRY's ramrod stance momentarily falters, but he quickly regains his composure.)

HARRY. I accept your decision with the utmost dignity, sir!

GAIL. There is a small chance we may find an opening for you later.

HARRY. I will be willing to stand here until that day arrives, sir!

GAIL. If you insist. *(To intercom:)* Linda, would you please send in the next applicant?

(IRA – an obvious slacker – enters. Having no résumé, he passes a disinterested LINDA and wanders into Gail's office.)

Please, come in. Have a seat.

IRA. 'Sup.

(GAIL and IRA sit.)

GAIL. Hard candy?

IRA. Oh yeah.

(IRA grabs the bowl and begins pocketing handfuls of candy.)

GAIL. So, why do you wish to work here at Banff Enterprises?

IRA. Oh, okay. I was wondering if I could get a job 'cause I wanted some money so I could throw a party in my garage.

GAIL. My goodness...

IRA. What? Is that not cool?

GAIL. On the contrary! It is “cool,” indeed! Our figures have shown that this company desperately needs to cater to a younger demographic. Your youthful, small-minded, apathetic worthlessness is exactly what we’ve been waiting for. Welcome aboard!

(GAIL jubilantly shakes IRA’s hand. A pause, as IRA stares blankly, completely unaware that he has succeeded. Meanwhile, HARRY fumes, eyes still locked forward.)

You’re hired?

(A pause, as IRA is still staring at GAIL, clueless.)

You got the job.

IRA. *(Suddenly getting it:)* Sweet!

(Blackout.)

Scene 8

(LINDA has by now given up even the appearance of work, and stares off into space. HARRY is still standing in the same spot, waiting.)

(IRA opens and closes random desk drawers, moves the candy bowl around, repeatedly straightens stacks of papers, pushes the intercom button, and so on. It becomes clear that he has no clue what he’s supposed to be doing.)

(After this continues for a while, and IRA is on his feet at the desk doing something worthless, HARRY has slowly, quietly, and coldly made his way directly in front of IRA’s face. A moment passes as it dawns on IRA that HARRY is right next to him. IRA looks up at HARRY, then gives HARRY a weak wave. HARRY pauses, then says simply and matter-of-factly...)

HARRY. I will end you.

(A moment as IRA – expressionless and motionless – absorbs this news.)

IRA. Hard candy?

(Blackout.)

Scene 9

(JILL – a timid young woman – enters to find LINDA fast asleep. After JILL awkwardly tries to get LINDA’s attention, LINDA eventually raises her head. JILL extends the résumé toward LINDA. LINDA suddenly grabs the résumé with her teeth. JILL, startled and scared, backs away into the inner office.)

HARRY. (*Sharply:*) Come in!

(JILL jumps in fear.)

Have a seat!

JILL. Thank you.

HARRY. Hard candy!

JILL. Um, sure.

HARRY. Why do you wish to work here at Banff Enterprises?

JILL. (*Softly:*) Well... I...saw your ad in the newspaper and –

HARRY. Will you speak up?! I can’t hear a word you’re saying!

JILL. Sorry.

HARRY. And don’t apologize! Contrition is for the spineless.

JILL. I’m sor –

HARRY. Are you listening to a word I’m saying?!

JILL. S – ... Yes sir...

HARRY. (*To intercom:*) Linda, send in the applicant’s résumé.

(LINDA loudly rips the résumé in half.)

Now: How flexible are you with hours? We’re looking for a hard-working, full-time employee, ready to work plenty of overtime.

JILL. Well, I have school during the week...and church on Sundays... I was thinking...maybe...Saturday mornings from nine to twelve?

HARRY. Just Saturdays?

JILL. From nine to twelve. In the afternoon I have to –

HARRY. (*Dictating as he writes:*) “No flexibility whatsoever.”

JILL. I may be able to work some Fridays.

HARRY. (*To intercom:*) Linda, where is that résumé I asked for?

(LINDA mumbles something incoherent into the intercom before going back to sleep.)

Oh, I see...you *have* no résumé.

JILL. But I gave it to the—

HARRY. That's fine! We'll just spend more of my valuable time getting information that could have been relayed to me in mere *seconds!*

JILL. But I—

HARRY. Moving on. Why do you feel you are suitable for this position?

JILL. Well, I work well with people, I make good grades—

HARRY. —you want money to splurge at Bath and Body Works...

JILL. What?

HARRY. *Fess up!* You don't really want to work here for the job experience! I—

JILL. That's not true! I want the experience. I need to learn how to—

HARRY. Are you telling me you don't care about the money?

JILL. Well, money always helps ...

HARRY. (*Writing:*) That's all I needed to hear.

JILL. But—

HARRY. While we're on the topic of money, and since this interview should be ending any moment now, I have one last question for you: What kind of compensation were you hoping for?

JILL. (*Worried:*) Well, I was thinking...maybe...around—

HARRY. (*Very quickly:*) *Spit it out!*

JILL. (*Very quickly:*) Minimum wage!

(A moment as HARRY stares at JILL.)

HARRY. (*Chuckling softly:*) Five dollars an hour...five dollars an hour...

(After a moment, JILL joins HARRY with her own nervous—albeit forced—light laughter. Suddenly, HARRY blows up.)

Minimum wage?! Who do you think I am...to pay you...minimum wage? You come barging in here, acting like you own the place, asking for minimum wage?!

**THIS PLAY IS
NOT OVER!**

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