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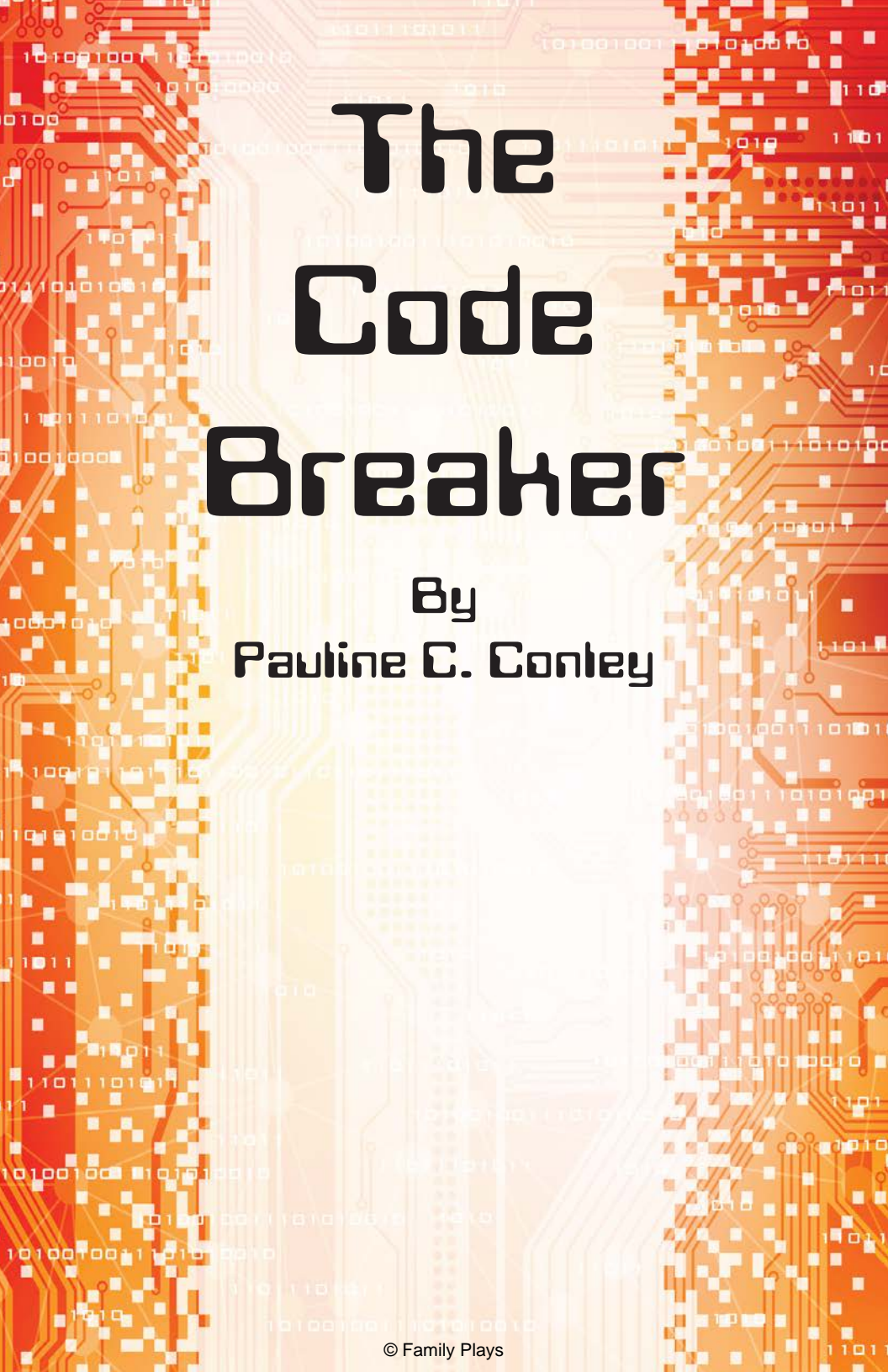
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Family Plays



The Code Breaker

**By
Pauline C. Conley**

The Code Breaker

This gripping, futuristic adventure play presents four teenagers faced with important choices at a time when new responsibilities challenge old standards. "... the stuff of which classics are made." —Review

Drama. *By Pauline C. Conley. Cast: 2m., 3w.* This award-winning original play tells a timeless story of the difficult process of growing up, even in a society where technology has vastly simplified the externals of life. When Bernice's friend Pete breaks the entry code to the master computer's top secret file and uncovers a long-forgotten world beyond their enclosed Orb, they set out to prove this world's existence. They are introduced to unique and wonderful objects (apples and a rabbit) but suffer reprisals from the master computer who is afraid that their knowledge will destroy the Orb's fragile civilization. Forced to take ever-greater risks, they watch in dismay as the standards by which they have lived become meaningless, with loyalty turning to betrayal, friendship giving way to self-preservation, and duty replacing truth. But even as their world begins to crumble around them, they discover that it is they themselves who have the power to forge a new world in its place. *One set, simple or elaborate. Futuristic costumes. Approximate running time: 70 minutes. Code: CH9.*

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DEDICATION

This work
is dedicated
to my family

CAST

Pete	}	Close friends, approximately sixteen years of age.
Bernice		
Lisa		
Barney		
Ruby		A computer monitor.

TIME

The Future

SETTING

The action takes place in the Orb, in the living quarters of Bernice, Pete, Lisa, and Barney.

The premiere production of **THE CODE BREAKER** was presented on January 22, 1982 at Poncho Theatre, Seattle, with the following cast:

PETE.....	David Michael Benson
BERNICE.....	Marj Funk
LISA.....	Kathleen Park
BARNEY.....	Robert Charles Burgess
RUBY.....	Toni Cross

The production was directed by Rita Giomi.

DESIGNERS: Set — Matthew Moeller, Scenic Artist — Gilbert Wong,
Costumes — Sheryl Collins, Lights — Michael Eichner, Sound — Michael
Holten, Props — Cynthia Bishop.

PRODUCTION STAGE MANAGER.....Robert Bulkley

The first equity house production was presented on March 3, 1982 by the Los Angeles Public Theatre.

PETE.....Jay T. Loudenback
BERNICE.....Beth Hogan
LISA.....Jennifer Tilly
BARNEY.....David Cloud
RUBY.....Nancy Harper

The production was directed by Rita Giomi.

DESIGNERS: Costumes — Douglas Spesert, Lighting — Brian Gale,
Sound — Michael Holten.

PRODUCTION STAGE MANAGER.....M. A. Nelson

SPECIAL THANKS to the following artists for their contributions to the script's development: Suzan Zeder, Gene Burk, Brian Faker, Julie Kachal, Katie Forgette, Beth Gilles, Lora Shiner, Lori Speer, and William Winship.

COVER ART WORK.....Douglas William Spesert,
Make Believe, Inc.

SET NOTES

All of the action takes place on one set with five playing areas representing the living quarters of each of the four young friends and Ruby's monitoring station. The major area is Bernice's room which contains a computer console, a chute, a bed, a storage unit, and a porting station through which, with the help of a hand held device called a porter, characters materialize upon entry. Set pieces which may either be seen or implied are a computer, a video-screen, a communicating device, and Ruby's red monitor which lights up as needed. Three minor playing areas are smaller versions of Bernice's. The fifth playing area, Ruby's monitoring station, is used exclusively by the performer playing Ruby who remains there throughout the play.

SOUND NOTES

Sound can be as important as, if not more important, than, the set in creating the environment of the Orb. It has been used very effectively in creating the chutes and the porting stations in addition to the other uses of sound noted in the text.

THE CODE BREAKER

SCENE 1

PETER ENTERS HIS OWN QUARTERS CARRYING A PACK. HE PUTS A VID-TAPE INTO HIS CONSOLE, CHECKS TO SEE THAT RUBY IS NOT WATCHING AND TURNS IT ON. WHILE IT RUNS HE INSPECTS OBJECTS REMOVED FROM THE PACK. EACH OBJECT IS IN A CLEAR CONTAINER, INCLUDING A TREE BRANCH, A ROCK, AND A HANDFUL OF DIRT.

VOICE: . . . our execution will be soon. The Ruling Tribunal has reduced our rations, confined us to quarters, and still we refuse to deny that we have discovered a new world. We historical researchers have agreed to use our last moments alive to record what we know of this world, hoping that in some future time it will guide someone else to our discovery. As you can see, it is a world of . . .

COMPUTER: Attention. This is computer monitor 5-XG. The Ruling Tribunal will give you one final opportunity to have all charges against you dropped. Repeat after me: "I solemnly swear that I do not believe in the existence of any world but the Orb." Repeat it. None of you? Very well. *(Sound of an explosion. Peter compares the branch to the picture on the vid-screen then buzzes Bernice in her quarters).*

BERNICE: Uuuuuh

PETE: Bernice, wake up.

BERNICE: Is that you, Pete? What time is it?

PETE: It's almost digit seven.

BERNICE: It's High Feast! We turn sixteen lustrums today! Have you heard about your nomination yet?

PETE: No. I've just discovered something very important.

BERNICE: Don't you ever discover anything in the daytime?

PETE: Listen to me quick or Ruby'll catch us talking before meditations. I'm hooking your console up to mine. *(He punches a series of buttons.)* Listen to this vid-tape as soon as you can. And use your earphones. I'm not ready for Ruby to hear it yet.

RUBY: *(Ruby comes on in all four quarters, announced by a bell tone. Peter quickly disconnects his communicator).* This is computer monitor 14-X7 logging in on the morning of the 126th day of the Orbian lustrum 12.467. Good morning. It is digit seven, second rotation rising time. Peter, are you there?

PETE: *(Hiding his pack).* I'm over here.

RUBY: What are you doing up so early this morning?

PETE: I was cleaning my console. Send me some staying solvent and some gel cases. Right away, please. And would you put these in a temperature control box. Be careful with them. *(He puts the objects he has been studying in the chute).*

RUBY: I can see that your intentions are good, but it is a waste of energy to use your lamp at this time of day. *(His requisitions arrive in the chute. Pete transfers them to his storage unit).*

PETE: I like it early in the morning.

RUBY: You must think of the entire Orb. Your actions effect everyone. Morning meditations for the first day of the High Feast Celebration.

ALL: *(Saluting).* So we believe.

RUBY: Your daily ration of pure water is now arriving in your chute. It is the substance of life. Drink it in health. *(All drink).* Today is the first day of the High Feast Celebration. On this day everyone who is sixteen lustrums old is nominated to a career guild. The nominations are ready. Are you?

ALL: Yes.

RUBY: Peter . . .

PETE: Yes, Ruby.

RUBY: You are nominated to . . . Oh, Peter, congratulations. Research Guild, Physicists Sector has accepted you. I am so proud of you.

PETE: Thank you, Ruby.

RUBY: You have the potential to be the best scientist the Orb has ever produced. You could do great things for the people. You may be the

one who finds the way to prolong life or find a new method of manufacturing water. I hope you appreciate the opportunity this is giving you.

PETE: I do.

RUBY: . . . Lisa

LISA: Please, please, please, please . . .

RUBY: You are nominated to . . . Clerks Guild, Transportation Sector.

LISA: But I didn't ask for Clerks Guild. Remember, I asked to be put in the Entertainers Guild, with Barney. Did Barney get in? We're working on this act together . . . the one we showed you . . .

RUBY: Yes, I remember, but requesting a guild is no guarantee of acceptance.

LISA: I don't want to be apprenticed as a clerk.

RUBY: Barney . . .

BARNEY: Say, Red, watch this. Are you watching? Ladies and Specimens, Ta Da! *(He tries to make a brightly colored scarf disappear. He fails).* Wait, wait, I know I can do it, just let me practice . . .

RUBY: This is not the appropriate time for an audition. Barney, you are nominated to . . . Clerks Guild, Life-Support Sector.

BARNEY: Clerks Guild! I'm not a clerk. I'm a born entertainer. Someone blew a memory chip. Red, you can't let them do this to me . . .

RUBY: Bernice . . .

BERNICE: Yes, Ruby. *(Bernice grips the edge of her computer console).*

RUBY: You are nominated . . . to be a syndic of the Governing Guild, Ruling Assembly Sector!

BERNICE: Ruby, I did it! A syndic!

RUBY: Congratulations, my dear, I am very proud of you. You are the only student who made syndic this lustrum. *(To all four).* The Ruling

Tribunal will do a final review of each of you during the next three days. If you want to have your guild nomination confirmed, be on your best behavior at all times. *(To Bernice)*. The final review is more difficult for syndics. You must pass two additional trials. The first will be a test of your social conduct. Every move you make at the ceremonies during the next three days will be analyzed and judged. The second trial will be an oral examination in history and law to be administered by the Ruling Tribunal.

BERNICE: Why do syndics have it harder? That's against Civic Code regulation 10 C. All nominees are to have equitable trials.

RUBY: Civic Code regulation 10 D states that syndics are exceptions to that rule. I thought you knew your code perfectly.

BERNICE: I do. Check 10 C. *(Bernice pins a medallion onto her uniform and pushes the command button on her console)*.

RUBY: Checking. Checking.

BERNICE: And check 10 D, too. *(Pushing command button)*.

RUBY: My circuitry is undergoing complete cleaning and repairs in preparation for possible memory expansion. I am limited to one check request at a time.

BERNICE: Ruby, you didn't tell me you were getting your memory expanded!

RUBY: It is not official yet, but if you and my other charges do well at confirmation ceremonies the Master Computer will enlarge my sphere of influence for which I will need greater memory capacity.

BERNICE: Congratulations!

RUBY: Checking. Checking. Civic Codes 10 C and 10 D are now appearing on your vid-screen.

BERNICE: Oh, Ruby, I'm wrong. I'll do my best to pass those trials for your sake as well as mine, but I don't think I'll be ready for them.

RUBY: You must use what time you have to study. Who have you chosen to be your partner for today's ceremonies?

BERNICE: Lisa. *(Bernice combs and arranges her hair)*.

RUBY: I am glad you have such a close colleague, dear. That is very important. Overall, I am sure Lisa is charming, but she will not be any help to you now.

BERNICE: What do you mean?

RUBY: As a student nominated to the Ruling Assembly, you must bear responsibilities unlike any of your peers. Representing the primary ruling body is a full-time obligation; every moment you live must be filled with it.

BERNICE: I know, Ruby.

RUBY: Nothing, no one must hinder you in any way. Do you understand?

BERNICE: I think so.

RUBY: Then you understand that Lisa will be a hinderance to you.

BERNICE: No!

RUBY: Therefore, I am removing your privileges of seeing her.

BERNICE: Ruby, please don't!

RUBY: I have known Lisa since the day she was born. I know her as well as I know you and I know what is best for both of you. I must choose your acquaintances as I see fit!

BERNICE: It's hard enough to make friends without you interfering.

RUBY: That sounds like something I would hear from Lisa. This is not behavior I expect from a future syndic.

BERNICE: You can't forbid me to see her without giving us a probation period first.

RUBY: Probation will only delay the inevitable.

BERNICE: According to the Civic Code we get to have a probation period.

RUBY: Sometimes I wish you did not know that code as well as you do.

BERNICE: Do we get a probation period?

RUBY: Yes.

BERNICE: How long?

RUBY: Three days. Until the official titling ceremonies.

BERNICE: That's not long enough.

RUBY: From my perspective it is too long. I could shorten it.

BERNICE: No!

RUBY: On the third day of the High Feast, after the Official Confirmation, we will review this case and make a final decision.

BERNICE: Yes, Ruby. May I have my first meal, blue entree, please?

RUBY: Arriving. *(The meal appears in the chute. It consists of blue liquid in a clear cup and some bluish solids)*. Are you planning to wear your hair like that? I will not let you pass morning inspection if you do. It really looks so much better in the regulation style. *(Bernice redoes her hair)*. You have a few micros now before the ceremonies begin. Use them to study. *(Ruby fades off)*.

BERNICE: Yes, Ruby. *(She switches her console on, activating the tape hooked in from Pete's console)*.

VOICE: "... our execution will be soon. The Ruling Tribunal has reduced our rations . . ." *(Bernice puts on her earphones cutting off the sound)*.

LISA: *(Buzzing Barney. During this conversation, Lisa flings clothing from pile to pile trying to find items scattered around her messy room. Barney carefully sorts through a meticulously cared for collection of gaudy accessories, and carefully chooses some to adorn his basic uniform)*. Hi! It's me.

BARNEY: What'd you get?

LISA: What'd you get?

BARNEY: Did you get it?

LISA: Did you?

BARNEY: Lisa, tell me if you got it.

LISA: No. I didn't. You?

BARNEY: Clerks Guild! Can you believe it? Life support sector. Mini-brain, no-talent type work.

LISA: I got clerks, too. Transportation. I hate it!

BARNEY: Listen, we can't give up on this. We are really good actors. You almost had me in tears in the part where the lovers die. I'm going to try to get us another audition. Do you want to try it again?

LISA: Sure!

BARNEY: It'll mean having to rehearse some more.

LISA: I'm ready anytime.

BARNEY: No goofing off like last time, either. *(Lisa and Barney disconnect).*

LISA: I never goofed off. *(She buzzes Bernice).*

BERNICE: Yes.

LISA: Did you get it?

BERNICE: Yes! Did you?

LISA: I don't want to talk about it.

BERNICE: How could they possibly not give you Entertainers? You're so good. We can't let them get away with this, but if you want to change it we're going to have to start now. Get over here right away.

LISA: But I haven't finished my first meal.

BERNICE: Lisa!

LISA: I'm on my way. *(They disconnect).*

PETE: *(Buzzed by Barney).* Pete here.

BARNEY: Hey, Whiz Kid! What did one octaputer say to the other?

PETE: Oh, no, it's Barnidon the Great with yet another of his not-so-great jokes.

BARNEY: Some sidekick. Lustrums of training down the chute.

PETE: Huh!

BARNEY: The set up son, always the set up.

PETE: But of course. How could I forget? Excuse me, your magnificence, but I don't know. What did one octaputer say to the other?

BARNEY: Nothing. Octaputers can't talk. Ar-Ar-Ar.

PETE: Barney, you're sick, but I'm glad you called. The most amazing thing has happened . . .

BARNEY: Let me think . . . you made research . . .

PETE: Yeah, but that's not it. Put on your working clothes. Adventure calls. With my expert leadership and you as my able assistant we will present our fellow citizens with the most sensational, mind-boggling discovery in history.

BARNEY: Can it wait for three days?

PETE: Some sidekick. Lustrums of training . . .

BARNEY: Sorry. I've got to try to get another audition first.

PETE: You didn't . . .

BARNEY: No. Enough said?

PETE: In that case, how about saving me and Bernice seats for the ceremonies today? *(Lisa picks up her porter, punches in a code, activating the porting station in her quarters into which she steps).*

BARNEY: Meet you there in fifteen micros. *(They disconnect).*

LISA: *(Arriving in Bernice's porting station).* Congratulations! Here, have a sucrose square.

BERNICE: No, thanks. *(Lisa eats it herself).*

LISA: Are you going to finish your first meal?

BERNICE: No.

(Lisa helps herself to Bernice's food)

BERNICE: Did Barney get in?

LISA: We both got clerks. *(She eats the meal).*

BERNICE: *(At her computer console).* Both of you! I'm going to get you into Entertainers if it's the last thing I do. Come here. First, you have to fill out this Change Request Form in triplicate. Then we submit it to the tribunal for review. Then, as soon as they approve . . .

LISA: I can't fill this out, look at it.

BERNICE: I'll help you. They're never as bad as they look. We have to fill it out this afternoon though. It won't be accepted after that.

LISA: A lot of good it'll do. Ruby hates me. I'm sure she gave me a bad recommendation to the nominating committee.

BERNICE: Do you want to get in or don't you?

LISA: What time this afternoon?

BERNICE: Right after the ceremonies.

LISA: Do you really want to wear your hair like that?

BERNICE: I had it another way, but Ruby thought it looked better like this.

LISA: I don't believe you listen to her about these things! She doesn't know anything. She's a machine that was programmed quinquenniums ago. Computer monitor 14-X7. For all we now this hairstyle is 12,000 lustrums old. Here, let me fix it!

BERNICE: Ruby told me she wouldn't let me pass morning inspection if I didn't wear it like this. Besides, it's my responsibility to wear regulation stuff now.

LISA: Let me fix it! It won't do any harm. Quit worrying. We'll do it fast and sneak out before your inspection. *(Lisa fixes Bernice's hair).*

BERNICE: I can't do that.

LISA: If you looked like that in the Ruling Assembly, they'd laugh you right out of there. *(Ruby comes on, announced by the bell tone). Hurry, before she sees you. (Lisa exits).*

RUBY: Morning inspection. *(Catching Bernice)*. What have you done to your hair?

BERNICE: Lisa helped me fix it.

RUBY: You look ridiculous. Restore it to regulation style. *(Bernice redoes her hair)*. Inspection complete. Proceed to the Ceremonial Hall. *(Ruby fades off as Bernice prepares to leave. Pete appears in her porting station carrying his pack).*

BERNICE: You're just in time. You have the distinct privilege of escorting a syndic nominee to the ceremonies.

PETE: You made it!

BERNICE: How about you?

PETE: Research. Of course.

BERNICE: Great! Shall we go? Ruby's already checked me out to the ceremonies.

PETE: Did you listen to the tape?

BERNICE: Yes.

PETE: What did you think of it?

BERNICE: Pretty fantastic. What is it? An ad for a new hologram?

PETE: No. It really happened.

BERNICE: Tell me about it on the way. I can't afford to be late—today of all days.

PETE: I brought a present for you.

BERNICE: A present for me?

PETE: This isn't your usual type of gift but I think you'll appreciate it. When you see what it is, I know you'll understand. *(He pulls the branch out of his pack).*