

Waiting

Characters

MALLERY: Around 18 years old. Represents those who want to fit in with society and be the success that it expects them to be, but struggles to put in the hard work and step out of their comfort zone to do so.

IT: The enemy of The Opportunities. Represents the societal voice that claims hard work and hunting for opportunities isn't necessary; that they will come to you. Never actually appears in the play.

THE OPPORTUNITIES

STEVE: The leader of the group. Represents the societal desire to be successful in wealth and career. Calm and reserved.

MICHELLE: Newest member. Represents the desire to be healthy in all determinants of health, predominantly mental, physical and social health. Easy worked up and extroverted.

THERESA: Long-time colleague of STEVE. Represents society's desire to

care for others. Evident in her actions to others. Maternal.

VOICE-OVERS

- ANNOUNCER:** Voices the station announcements. No symbolic meaning.
- STATION GUARD:** Voices when Train 42 is ready to be boarded. No symbolic meaning.
- FRIEND #1-3:** Represent those in life who have stepped out of their comfort zone and found opportunities to make themselves successful.
- ADULT:** Encourages MALLERY. No symbolic meaning.

MALLERY enters as lights gradually come up. As they do, the beeping sound of a train station announcement is heard.

ANNOUNCER (*voice-over*): Will all passengers travelling on Train 42 to The Future please make their way to Platform 1?

Carrying luggage, MALLERY makes her way to a bench situated centre stage. She places her luggage next to it and sits down, apprehensively, to wait.

THERESA (*voice-over*): Mallery's here. Who would have thought? She looks so expectant. What do you think she's doing here?

STEVE (*voice-over*): Hopefully waiting for us. We must talk to her, and this time, persuade her. She can't afford to miss out again. The loss is too great.

MICHELLE (*voice-over*): You know her?

STEVE (*voice-over*): We visited her once. One of those special house calls.

THERESA (*voice-over*): But she said no.

MICHELLE (*voice-over*): Oh. Well, don't worry. We'll get her this time. Do you want me to go first and like show her all my health stuff?

THERESA (*voice-over*): No -

STEVE (*voice-over*): It might work Theresa. Give Mallery a different perspective. Ok, Michelle, you're up first. But remember, Mallery's probably aware that we're here. Don't make it known that you're with us straight away. We wouldn't want any resentment towards Theresa and I to cloud her judgement.

MICHELLE enters, sporting exercise tights and shirt.

MICHELLE: Hi! Are you wanting to board Train 42?

MALLERY (*confused*): Uh, no. I'm just...waiting. What's Train 42?

MICHELLE: It's a train that takes people into the future. It helps them achieve what they want to in life.

MALLERY (*suspicious*): Who are you then?

MICHELLE: I'm one of the Opportunities. We go to stations and pick up people who could do something great with their life. Sometimes we make house calls but - (*catching herself*) Do you want to board Train 42?

MALLERY (*in realisation*): No thanks.

THERESA (*voice-over*): Ugh. She knows it's us. Do you want me to go out?

STEVE (*voice-over*): May as well.

THERESA enters, wearing a humanitarian aid uniform.

MALLERY: I knew it was you. Your new colleague really gave it away. Look, my mind hasn't changed in the past five years. I'm not coming with you.

THERESA: Still want to do things the easy way, huh?

MALLERY: Yep.

THERESA: I know that's what you think you want, Mallery, but have you

really considered the doors that will open for you if you do?

Silence.

THERESA: What are you doing here anyway? We're the only train departing today.

MALLERY: Waiting.

MICHELLE: For what?

MALLERY (*uncomfortable*): It.

MICHELLE gasps. She and THERESA look at each other in fear. This is their worst nightmare come true.

MICHELLE: Are you serious? You-you-you do realise how...evil he is?

THERESA: What happened? What did he say? Why did you choose him?

MALLERY (*defensively*): I liked his options better. They suited me.

MICHELLE: Excuse me?

THERESA: Can you please explain?

MALLERY: Simple. You came to me offering the long way to achievement;
It came offering the short and easy way. It wasn't that hard.

MICHELLE: But...you can't do that! Shortcuts don't do anything. I can't
believe you're this stupid!

THERESA: Calm down.

STEVE (*voice-over*): What have you done, Mallery?

STEVE enters, wearing a business suit.

STEVE: It's just a conman. He's all talk.

MALLERY: So, you're still here too? Well, I guess the world always
needs business advice.

STEVE: Don't you?

MALLERY: No, not really. It's just too challen...it's just not my thing.

STEVE: You haven't changed, have you.

A flashback. Lights fade to black. Spotlight on a younger MALLERY. In the dark, young voices speak. Now timid and frightened, MALLERY trembles and repeatedly shakes her head at the voices' requests.

FRIEND #1: Jump! Don't be a chicken. You said you wanted to do it.

FRIEND #2: Come on, Mallery. The tree's not that high.

FRIEND #3: If I jumped, you can too.

ADULT: You can do it, Mallery! Take a brave step!

Flashback ends. Stage gradually lightens. MALLERY'S downtrodden, but trying not to show it.

THERESA: You're like many of the people we see, Mallery. You crave the big stuff, to do what everyone else is doing. And yet, are just too scared to try something new to get there.

MALLERY starts to interrupt.

MICHELLE: But life just doesn't work like that.

STEVE: Nothing is achieved by waiting for It.

MALLERY: See, that's where your perfectly rehearsed speech is wrong. It, he understands me. He knows I don't want pain.

MICHELLE: Are you serious? Pain makes you grow. Feel the burn girl.

STEVE: Mallery, humans are designed to grow.

THERESA: Steve's right. What will we achieve if we don't step out?

MALLERY: No, you don't understand. I have achieved nothing by doing that. I broke my arm, I got bad grades, I never won a race, I was teased in front of my whole class. There's a reason I'm uncomfortable with these things: it's because I can't do them.

The beeping of the train announcement.

ANNOUNCER (*voice-over*): Train 24 arriving in seven minutes.

MICHELLE: Train 24? That's It's train!

STEVE: He's coming.

THE OPPORTUNITIES stare at each other with varying degrees of fear and then huddle together away from MALLERY.

MICHELLE (*to STEVE*): Why is he coming? You said that he never comes here. That he never actually picks people up.

THERESA: He did once. Steve, remember the Colloway kid? He was so intent on coming with us, but It swiped him up and used the kid as propaganda.

STEVE: So you're saying -

THERESA: That It is after Mallery. He wants her as another con artist.
Look, we've known for some time that It's power and influence has been fading - hard work is becoming the trend.

MICHELLE: So, obviously he wants to show people that his path to success is better than our path.

THERESA: That hard work is a lie.

MICHELLE: We have to get her on our side.

STEVE: Humour us, Mallery. Let us pitch. Consider others you may know. Look where Train 42 got them.

A flashforward. Lights snap to black. Spotlight on MALLERY. The voices, now older, speak from the dark. MALLERY listens to their excited voices in despair.

FRIEND #3: Guess what? Two years ago I began freelancing and have begun designing for regular clients.

FRIEND #2: Can you believe it? Last year I started a group at uni to reduce our carbon footprint and yesterday was interviewed on the news!

FRIEND #1: Get this: I self-published a book and just won an award for it.

MICHELLE: Um, no, sorry, that's my department.

MICHELLE bounces center stage to 80s fitness music.

MICHELLE: Do you ever feel like a failure at life? Do you ever feel like the world has set you a standard you can't fulfill? Then it's time to join me on Train 42. I can help you get that healthier body, mind and soul that you are expected to have! I have fitness regimes, dietary plans and mindfulness exercises that will make you the success the world wants to see.

STEVE: Pitch something that's realistic Michelle.

STEVE strides to MICHELLE'S position with fanfare-style music.

STEVE: Mallery, of course you want to be successful. But, unlike Michelle here, I can get you the success that's stable. Look at your health: it fluctuates constantly. In contrast, look at those in business suits. They escalate - promotions, top-floor offices, higher salaries - everything that will push

you higher and higher up the corporate ladder. Will you
work with me?

The OPPORTUNITIES form a line DS.

ALL: Will you work with us?

*The performance ends. Everyone is back at the station. The OPPORTUNITIES turn to look at
MALLERY.*

MALLERY (*unsure*): I don't know.

ANNOUNCER (*voice-over*): Train 42 departing in two minutes.

STEVE: You need to make a decision.

ANNOUNCER (*voice-over*): Train 24 arriving in three minutes.

MALLERY: Why do you keep trying? Why do you care so much
anyway? I said no the first time.

STEVE: We keep trying because we know you have potential. We

know you have the ability to work hard to reach your goals.

MALLERY: That's not what I heard you saying before. You just want me so It doesn't take me. You just want another number to put on your list.

THERESA: Mallery -

MALLERY: Why would be so bad anyway? Why is it such a big deal that It wants me?

STEVE (*sighing*): It sees the same things in you that we see in you. But, he wants to give you immediate success. He wants to use you as propaganda; to regain support so he can persuade everyone that this is how the world works.

MICHELLE: But you know that's not how the world works.

THERESA: Mallery, success is relative and subjective. The word is defined differently by every individual. But what is certain about it is that long-term success - the best

success - comes from hard work. If you want to please society, Mallery, do life this way - they'll love it.

ANNOUNCER (*voice-over*): Train 42 departing.

Train 42 toots.

STATION GUARD (*voice-over*): A-a-all aboard!

MICHELLE: Guys, we have to go.

STEVE: Propaganda or acceptance. It's your choice.

THERESA: Mallery?

THE OPPORTUNITIES begin hurrying offstage.

MALLERY (*calling out*): Ok, ok, I'll come.

MALLERY gathers her luggage and follows THE OPPORTUNITIES. As MALLERY is about to exit, she stops. She stares back at the bench, and then offstage, with fear in her eyes. Changing

