

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



# The Sheltered Workshop

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by Jeremy Johnson

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EXTRACT

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### Characters

Deb	(Secretary)
Amy	(Head Program Manager)
Dakin	(Administration Assistant)
Grant	(Project Liaison Officer)
Lionel	(Artistic Director)
Lyle	(Artistic Director)
Dick	(Minister for the Arts)
Nathan	(His advisor)

### Setting

The Sheltered Workshop is set in the Funding Department of a State Government Office. The building is late 19<sup>th</sup> Century. It houses in part a warren of cubicles sectioned by gray carpet divides (Cubicle Land) where employees sit looking into computer monitors, downloading and filing. The tops of their heads are glimpsed: Dummies/mannequins. We also see posters and calendars pertaining to youth orientated events of cultural significance pinned to walls. (Smiling faces of social worthiness smeared in paint) There is a receptionist desk and a water cooler in front of a broom cupboard. There are two entrances: One leading to the lifts and another to the stairs. There is a conference area downstage. Smaller space: AMY WINKLEBOTTOM's office containing her desk, cabinets and cupboards.

## Scene 1

DEB, DAKIN, and GRANT are downstage having a conference chaired by AMY, the new General Programming Manager. She is a Middlesex gal by way of Perth and more recently Brisbane. GRANT is from Melbourne, a former student at RMIT and habitué of the coffee shops along Brunswick Street. He is always on the lookout for the next breakthrough moment. They sit on blue plastic chairs. DEB is a black-haired pierced goth girl who chews gum transcribing. DAKIN is the department's ambitious Assistant in his mid 20's. Everything is lit by fluros, though that should be indicated rather than actualized.

AMY

The Minister says it should be nothing flash.

GRANT

What about rotting flesh?

AMY

Nothing flash, Grant. The Trust isn't expecting us to make a song and dance about this.

GRANT

Oh no, just a lot of royal ass kissing for half an hour.

AMY

The Minister will simply introduce the Prince of Wales who will then make a short speech and hand the cheque to Lyle.

GRANT

A big, fake cheque because the royal hand never goes into the royal pocket for filthy lucre.

DEB

Like Deal or No Deal!

(Beat)

AMY

Anyway, the Minister will then ask everyone to join the Prince for morning tea and refreshments.

DEB

I'm happy to do sandwiches.

AMY

Thanks Deb.

GRANT

I'm happy to assassinate the cunt!

AMY

Yes, Grant. We all know how you feel about the monarchy.

GRANT

Yeah??? - If you know how I feel about the monarchy, Amy, then you know I won't be showing up tomorrow till well after the Royal motorcade has rolled on to the Hyatt for the Royal trade lunch.

AMY

If that's your choice.

GRANT

Glad I have an option.

AMY

I'm the last person you would call a monarchist, Grant. We all have enough on our plates at the moment, and it will be a whole lot easier if we just accept it's a terrific opportunity for cultural symbiosis.

GRANT

*(Pause. Silently scribbling on a pad.)*

Well is that it for the meeting.

AMY

10:23 and I declare the meeting adjourned.

GRANT

So ...

AMY

Grant.

GRANT

Rock and roll, Amy. It speaks to the soul.

AMY

Dakin, help me out here please.

DEB

Earth Works! Earth Beat! It's even confusing to me.

DAKIN

Earthbeat has done the UK. They did the Edinburgh Festival. It doesn't worry me who goes. They're both great companies.

AMY

Earth Works have applied twice already for a touring subsidy and have earned a small sponsorship deal from Flatgas for their creative edgy work. There is no more cultural or social agenda more relevant today in this country than Immigration, Indigenous issues and environmental concerns.

GRANT

And who better to tell that to the world than the indigenous people.

AMY

I agree one hundred percent, Grant - There's a strong Aborigine component within the Earth Works troupe. But they are not the only Australians who care about these issues.

*(GRANT gets up ready to leave)*

GRANT

By *Other Australians* I guess you mean you.

AMY

*(Exercising great patience)*

I have spoken with Lionel-

GRANT

So have I.

AMY

Sit down and let me finish! He and members of Earth Beat will be here tomorrow for a show of support with bells on. They are very busy with touring engagements most of next year as it is. Have massive sponsorship deals themselves in Cologne and Singapore. There are no hard feelings.

GRANT

I'm sorry. Is this a kennel?

AMY

No.

GRANT

Then don't order people to sit down like fucking dogs.

*(He Exits and disappears to his cubicle.)*

*(Awkward Pause.)*

DEB

I was thinking since we don't have a huge budget.

AMY

Yes Deb.

DEB

I would just buy some cooked chickens and coleslaw and make chicken and coleslaw sandwiches.

AMY

Thanks Deb.

DAKIN

Yeah. Also we had better get the coffee machine sent up from downstairs.

AMY

Oh?

DEB

We need a Hydroboil installed.

AMY

Not enough time.

DAKIN

The element busted on our urn this morning.

DEB

I filled it up too then and had to empty it again.

DAKIN

We only have the kettle.

AMY

Can you take care of that then, Dakin? Plastic cups and instant coffee are fine for the Royal visit. We don't want to be seen wasting taxpayers money.

*Blackout*

## SCENE II

DAKIN and GRANT at Grant's desk.

GRANT

Fucking cunt prince Fuck! We have to get rid of that pommy bitch. "I'm the last person you would call a monarchist, Grant." Groveling slag! - I want her toe tagged in the morgue by lunchtime.

DAKIN

Dunno if that's likely. She's greasing a climb up the ministerial ladder pretty quick.

GRANT

Cow! All that kissy, kissy French *moi-moi* with Nathan! Wanker! Opera, ballet, opera, ballet, opera, ballet (*Gives a finger in AMY's direction*) What a colossal waste of money! He knows nothing.

DAKIN

But knows everyone.

GRANT

(*Penetrating pause*)

What about you, Dakin? You boycotting tomorrow?

DAKIN

No. I care so little I'm doing all I can do to help.

GRANT

We have less than a day to make sure Amy falls so flat on her face she can iron sheets with it.

DAKIN

I got no problem with morons, Moroni!

GRANT

No doubt about it. You are one little smartass! But talking diplomacy, whoah, Dakin, you are born to Kissinger ass, mate. Keep it up. Disagree with me on practically everything! In fact never agree with me at meetings. That will boost Amy's confidence meaning she will get careless and fuck up quicker. Amy thinks you're buddy, buddy with her. Good. Encourage her to baste her vanity in the half-baked brulee of high art. Just report back what she's planning and saying. Got it!

DAKIN

Yeah, she's scared of you.

GRANT

You think so?

DAKIN

Oh yeah.

*(GRANT leans back comfortable hearing this.)*

GRANT

Where do you see yourself in five years, Dakin?

DAKIN

Well... I'd like to see more programs done for kids. Give them an ... opportunity?

GRANT

Very smart. Kids. There's a lot of money in Art's education.

DAKIN

And more stuff about stereotyping in sexual politics -like what it's like to be ... errr different ... in the community.

GRANT

Totally, totally! Minority issues, yeah, this is what I'm talking about. That's why it so sucks that Earth Beat - a bunch of private school drop kicks with no street cred get all this money. Lyle Lovitt's dad is an Appeals Court Judge for christsake! Why are we giving them money?

DAKIN

Yeah no you're right.

GRANT

Where did you grow up?

DAKIN

Yagooha.

GRANT

Carlton with the wogs. Whose job you want?

DAKIN

Here?

GRANT

This department.

DAKIN

Pretty much anything like working with talent that recognizes the hard core issue stuff that tells it like it is.

GRANT

My language, you are speaking, bro! Project Admin. How are you with numbers?

DAKIN

In my brain?

GRANT

Get rid of Amy, mate. She is out to screw not just us, but the entire cultural landscape of our country. Turn our performing arts into a Euro/British Arts council branch office.

DAKIN

*(Imitating a plantation slave)*

Thems what white folks calls a leg-end!

*(They laugh at Dakin's wit.)*

GRANT

*(Soberly)*

God, that woman has to be stopped! An asthma attack at a convenient moment... ?

DAKIN

She has a puffer.

GRANT

But can she find it?

DAKIN

It's always in her purse.

GRANT

Always?

DAKIN

You do it!