

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



The Rise and Fall of the Bargainmart King

by Kate Rice

EXTRACT

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CAST

MANAGEMENT:	Angelica Jones, General Manager Ruth the Ruthless Bob Brown Loulou, staff trainer
TRAINEES:	Kelly Sam Candi
CHECKOUT CHICKS:	Cornelia Caitlin Maria Lucretia (plus other staff)
SPECIALISTS:	Chrysanthemum, deli Butch, butcher Aunty, deli (plus other staff)
SHELF STACKERS:	Rebel Beefcake Terry (plus other staff)
SHOPPERS:	Muriel, nice old lady Clive, Muriel's husband Alex, shoplifter Leo, feral guy Jess Rutherford, executive Harmony, age 3 Madeleine, her mother Beth, pregnant (plus other shoppers)
OUTSIDERS:	Journalist Police sergeant Other police

SETTING: The Bargainmart Supermarket

TIME: Now

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE – THE INTERVIEW

Kelly appears, alone, sitting in a chair in the middle of the interview room. The light is in her eyes; she can't see her interviewers.

KELLY: I don't know. Um. Because of the money? No. Well, yes, but that's not the only reason. I guess I'd like this job because I want to learn about responsibility. I'd like to contribute to a team environment. And – I'm a people person, I'd really like to work with people. I've always said that, right since I was little. I mean – not that I want to do this job forever – I haven't decided what I want to do when I leave school yet – but it'll be something with – um – people. But not in a supermarket. Not that it's not a really good thing to do, it is, and I mean I'll probably be studying for about five years or so yet so...

She gets no response.

Did I mention that I really like this particular supermarket? I think I'd like this one best even if it wasn't the closest one to my house. I shop here all the time and I really like the – um – layout. It's very – convenient. I like how you can get everything you need here. That makes me happy. I'm a happy person.

She squints into the light.

Sorry what was the question again?

Ruth's voice booms out over the public address.

RUTH (O/S): Stand up.

Kelly does so.

RUTH (O/S): Turn around.

She does.

Ruth and Bob and Angelica Jones can be heard whispering to each other.

RUTH (O/S): All right you can start immediately.

KELLY: Really? Wow. That's fantastic. Thank you so much, you won't regret taking me on, and I really think that –

RUTH (O/S): Don't.

KELLY: Pardon?

RUTH (O/S): Think. Don't think.

KELLY: Sorry, I'm not sure what you –

RUTH (O/S): We're not interested in what you think.

KELLY: Oh.

BOB (O/S): Don't get us wrong, it's a great thing, I do it myself. On my own time, you understand.

KELLY: So I've got the job then?

BOB (O/S): Next.

KELLY: Do I have the job?

RUTH (O/S): Yes, you've got the job. What do you want, a trophy or something?

KELLY: I was only asking –

ANGELICA (O/S): What we mean to say, Kelly, is that we pay you to work. Anything you say or do outside of your duties is of no interest to us and is a waste of our money. We will replace you if we are not satisfied. Please keep this in mind. You are completely expendable. Thank you.

Kelly walks off in disbelief.

SCENE TWO – SUPERMARKET

DANCE – SHOPPING

Fluoro lights come up on the supermarket. Beautiful music bursts from the loudspeakers as shoppers glide around the aisles, checkout chicks smile, stackers stack, deli staff serve.

*Spotlight on two shoppers leaning in for the same tomato –
Loud rock music break: the shoppers fight over the tomato, jousting with their trolleys
The muzak resumes, the shoppers let go, smile, reach for different ones, and go on shopping*

*Spotlight on the checkout chicks moving in time – smile, scan, pack, smile, scan, pack
Loud rock music break: they give their shoppers the finger and spit in the shopping bag
The muzak resumes, they hold the shopping bags out to their customers and smile*

*Spotlight on the stackers – stacking, stacking, stacking in time, Ruth the Ruthless walks past them and they stack faster
Loud rock music break: they hold Ruth, everyone punches her in the stomach, they let her go
The muzak resumes, the stackers return to stacking*

*Spotlight on the Management as Ruth the Ruthless joins Angelica Jones and Bob, they survey their domain with satisfaction
Majestic music break: all staff and customers turn and bow to Management.*

DANCE ENDS

SCENE THREE – TRAINING

Sam, Candi and Kelly wear brand new Bargainmart uniforms. Candi and Kelly wear black mini-skirts, nice white blouses and ties. Sam wears black pants, shirt and tie. Loulou leads them onto the Supermarket floor.

The checkout chicks are scanning, the shoppers are shopping, the stackers are stacking.

LOULOU: Okay. Paying attention everybody this means you I'm not doing this for my benefit you know. Here are the checkouts. This is checkout one. Checkout one is directly opposite aisle one and checkout two is directly opposite aisle two.

Candi is taking notes.

LOULOU: Okay. Test. What's opposite checkout five.

Candi's hand shoots up.

CANDI: Aisle five!

LOULOU: You're good. Trick question. Where's checkout six.

There are only five checkouts. Candi is stumped. Sam and Kelly look at each other.

LOULOU: Come on, you might have to know this.

KELLY: There isn't a checkout six.

LOULOU: Lesson one: there are only five checkouts. Write that down. Okay. Over here we have the deli section, the bakery, fruit and veg. Butchery is over there at the back.

CANDI: Sorry, where is it exactly?

LOULOU: Don't worry if you don't remember it all straight off, it can take years.

Old couple enter with a shopping basket.

MURIEL: Excuse me, where are the toothpicks?

Loulou stares at her blankly. Decides to ignore the question.

LOULOU: Here is a customer. Remember at all times that the customer is paramount.

MURIEL: But where are the –

CLIVE: She doesn't know, love.

MURIEL: Well I was only asking.

CLIVE: I told you they're in party accessories.

MURIEL: But toothpicks aren't –

Clive is already walking away.

CLIVE: In with the silly hats and what-not.

Muriel follows him.

LOULOU: Thank you madam, enjoy your shop. Lesson two: Customer service.

SAM: *(to Kelly)* She can't be serious.

CANDI: Shhhh.

LOULOU: Trick question. What's the most important thing?

CANDI: Customers.

KELLY: Job satisfaction.

SAM: Getting paid.

LOULOU: Yes, you see, they're all very good answers but they don't pay me seven-fifty an hour for nothing. The answer is: Management. When Management profits, we all profit.

KELLY: Only not financially.

LOULOU: Talking up the back there, you've got something to contribute?

KELLY: Well, Management profits financially but we only ever get paid the same.

LOULOU: As I said, when Management profits, we all profit. Everyone clear on that?

Loulou leads on.

CANDI: Can't you just listen? You might learn something.

SAM: It's not rocket science.

CANDI: It's a global chain worth a whole lot more money than you'll ever earn put together.

KELLY: It's only a job.

CANDI: It's a formula that works and it's very impressive.

KELLY: Okay, I'm impressed.

CANDI: Like to see you try running it.

Loulou takes them to the checkout where Alex, a backpacker, is looking at chewing gum.

LOULOU: And finally, the pride of the Bargainmart team, our customer service interface operatives.

The checkout chicks turn as one to smile at the new recruits.

CHECKOUT CHICKS: Welcome to Bargainmart.

While their backs are turned, Alex takes some chewing gum and puts it in her pocket. She shoulders her way out past Kelly. Alex speaks in her native language.

ALEX: {'Scuse me.}

She reaches the checkout. She is about to walk out when –

WOOP WOOP WOOP WOOP. Sirens go off, red lights flash. The sound of doors crashing down and locking. The checkout chicks bob down behind their registers. Loulou grabs Kelly, Candi and Sam who are totally bewildered and gets them to bob down too. A searchlight sweeps the checkout area and focuses on Alex. She tries to make a break for it but there is nowhere to go.

Angelica Jones' voice booms out over the public address.

ANGELICA (O/S): Put the stolen goods on the floor. Place your hands behind your head and move towards the wall.

ALEX: {What?}

Angelica Jones appears from the Manager's office, flanked by Ruth the Ruthless and Bob Brown.

ALEX (CONT.): {Hey, what did I do?}

Bob comes forward, takes the chewing gum out of Alex's pocket and returns it to Angelica.

ALEX (CONT.): {Well so what, I mean, I've only been in this crappy country for four days, I've already had my wallet stolen and the coffee is making me sick, I tell you –}

Angelica fixes her with a steely stare.

ANGELICA: Desist.

ALEX: {You wanna talk about fascism?}

She replaces it on the display.

ANGELICA (CONT.): This is *my* Deluxe Juicyfruit Gum, with a powerful punch of flavour. Shoplifting will not be tolerated.

Angelica goes to the touchpad and de-activates the lockdown. The red lights go off, the siren sounds once more, sound of the doors clanging open. Two police officers come in.

SERGEANT: Arrest her, Ms Jones?

ANGELICA: Arrest her, thank you Sergeant.

KELLY: But maybe she didn't do it.

Everyone turns to look at Kelly.

ANGELICA: I beg your pardon?

KELLY: Well – she doesn't speak English. Maybe it was an accident.

ANGELICA: Who are you?

KELLY: Kelly. Recruited yesterday, Miss Jones.

ANGELICA: Drop and give me twenty.

KELLY: Sorry?

RUTH: You heard her.

KELLY: You mean – twenty – push-ups?

BOB: That is, if you want this job.

KELLY: Of course I want the job, I need a job, but – push-ups? In front of everyone?

BOB: We don't employ insubordinates.

ANGELICA: I expect total allegiance.

Kelly looks around. Everyone is staring at her. She drops to the ground.