

EXTRACT

# THE RELUCTANT SHOPPER

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Bruce Hoogendoorn

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THE RELUCTANT SHOPPER

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**NOTE ON THE SCRIPT**

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**Cast**

Barry: Late forties or early fifties

Sam: Late twenties

Katrina: Thirties

Debbie: Thirties

Lisa: Mid-twenties

Female shop assistant

Man

**Doubling**

*The play is to be performed by four actors*

Debbie, Katrina and the Shop Assistant are to be played by the same actor.

Barry and the Man are to be played by the same actor.

**Scene 1**

KATRINA and BARRY sit across from each other at a desk. A pile of files sit on the desk.

KATRINA: Barry, the economy is in trouble.

BARRY: You can say that again.

KATRINA: Our members are suffering. Especially our smaller ones.

BARRY: Yeah, some of mine are on the verge of going under.

KATRINA: We can't afford to let that happen.

BARRY: Well, if the bloody government would hand out some cash to people there wouldn't be a problem.

KATRINA: We can't rely on the government any more. We've lobbied them to death, but they refuse to take their hands out of their pockets.

BARRY: Probably having a tug. It's all they're bloody good for.

KATRINA: So we have no choice but to take the matter into our own hands.

BARRY: And do what?

KATRINA: Appeal to the community spirit in those people who are in a position to help.

BARRY: How do you mean?

KATRINA: Not everyone is struggling, and yet they're not pulling their weight.

BARRY: Tight arses.

KATRINA: We've investigated some of these people and found they may be open to persuasion.

BARRY: Sorry, Katrina, you've lost me.

KATRINA: They could come round to our way of thinking. This person I think will be able to help us.

*She hands the top file to him.*

BARRY: *(reading)* Sam Weston.

KATRINA: Yes, little Sammy Weston. The grandson of Dave Cane.

BARRY: Is that right?

KATRINA: Only thirty and yet he's paid off his house, has two jobs, no debt and is sitting on a pile of cash his grandfather left him. All in term deposits or high interest accounts.

BARRY: No shares?

KATRINA: No, so he's managed to avoid the hit everyone else has taken.

BARRY: So, what do I do? – Tell him it's what his grandfather would have wanted?

KATRINA: There's no need. Look in the file under employment.

*BARRY flicks through it.*

BARRY: What about it?

KATRINA: Read the note.

*BARRY does.*

BARRY: Oh, I see. The greedy little bugger.

KATRINA: Yes, he's a very naughty boy. I should think that all you need to do is mention this to him and he'll suddenly embrace our philosophy.

BARRY: *(pause)* So this is what it's come to?

KATRINA: Desperate times call for desperate measures.

*BARRY shakes his head.*

KATRINA: You are up to it, aren't you?

BARRY: Of course I am. I'd do anything for my members

KATRINA: I'm sure they will be very grateful to you.

BARRY: Yeah.

*She stands and offers her hand*

KATRINA: Good luck.

*He shakes it.*

BARRY: Thanks.

*BARRY exits with the file. Lights fade out.*

## Scene 2

SAM stands next to a book carousel in a bookshop browsing. He is dressed in neat, cheap clothes. He rotates it slowly and then picks up a book and starts to read. BARRY suddenly appears from behind the carousel, startling SAM.

BARRY: Can I help you?

SAM: Ah, no thanks, just browsing.

Barry. Of course. Lots of people doing that these days. But not doing much buying.

SAM: Well, times are tough.

BARRY: True. And made tougher by those who can afford to buy, not buying.

SAM: Well, you've got to be careful. You never know when things could come crashing down.

BARRY: And that's exactly why things do come crashing down. People hang onto their cash and suddenly shops like this start to disappear. The way things are going there won't be any bookstores left.

SAM: No.

BARRY: Of course there's online shopping, but that money mostly goes overseas.

SAM: Well, if it's cheaper, you can't blame people buying from them.

BARRY: True again. But in the long-term the savings you make online become very expensive for your country. It's like a domino effect. This shop closes, so the owners and employees have no jobs, and no more money to spend, so some other business goes under, then another, and so forth. You wouldn't like to see that, would you?

SAM: *(pause)* Is this some sort of new sales technique you're using? Because if it is, it's not working.

BARRY: It's not a technique. I'm just passing the time of day.

SAM: Well, it's been nice talking to you, but if you'd excuse me I'd like to continue browsing.

BARRY: No.

SAM: What?

BARRY: I won't excuse you. What you're doing is inexcusable.

SAM: Right, if you don't leave me alone I'm going to complain to your manager.

BARRY: Feel free, but it won't do you any good.

*Pause. They stare at each other.*

SAM: Well, let's see then, shall we?

*SAM puts the book back and starts to walk away.*

BARRY: It won't do any good because I don't work here.

*SAM stops.*

SAM: What?

BARRY: I don't work here.

SAM: But you offered to help.

BARRY: I'm a helpful guy. Concerned about my fellow citizens. Unlike you.

*SAM shakes his head and turns to leave.*

BARRY: Sam, wait! You forgot your book.

*SAM stops, shocked.*

SAM: How do you know my name?

BARRY: You introduced yourself, didn't you?

SAM: No, I didn't.

BARRY: Must have been a lucky guess then.

*Pause.*

SAM: What's going on here?

BARRY: Nothing. Just worried you forgot to buy your book.

SAM: What do you want?

BARRY: I want you to buy this book. It's a Tim Winton. An Aussie legend. You can't go wrong with him. Go on, you'll love it.

*BARRY holds the book out to him. SAM stares at it, then suddenly hurries out.*

*BARRY smiles, then opens the book and reads a few lines and nods in approval. He exits with the book.*

**Scene 3**

*A DVD rental shop. SAM is putting DVDs back on a shelf.*

BARRY *enters and stands behind SAM.*

BARRY: So, what's the latest release?

SAM *turns.*

SAM: Well, we've got – you!

BARRY: Sammy! What a coincidence! You work here?

SAM: What do you want?

BARRY: Must be great working here. Get all your DVDs for free. Must save you a fortune in entertainment costs.

SAM: If you don't leave, I'm going to call the police.

BARRY: Good idea. Then you can turn yourself in.

SAM: What?

*Pause.*

BARRY: How long you been working here, Sam?

SAM: That's none of your –

BARRY: How long?

*Pause.*

SAM: A few months.

BARRY: A few months. You call five years a few months?

SAM: *(pause)* How did you know that?

BARRY: Sorry, Sammy, that's an industry secret. I can't tell anyone. Actually, that's not true. I could tell the tax office.

*Pause.*

SAM: Oh shit, you're here to blackmail me, aren't you?

BARRY: Oh, Sammy, don't be so paranoid. I'm not out for myself. I don't want to put your tax-free income into my own pockets. I have something entirely different in mind.

SAM: What's that?

BARRY: Sorry, this isn't the place to discuss it. We'll do that tonight. I'll be at your place at ten o'clock. Make sure you're there.

SAM: Who the Hell are you?

BARRY: Don't be so impatient. All will be revealed tonight.

SAM: But I have something on.

BARRY: No you don't. You never have anything on.

*BARRY starts to leave, then stops.*

BARRY: Oh! I forgot. This is for you.

*He gives him the book.*

BARRY: To apologise for getting off on the wrong foot with you. See you tonight.

*BARRY exits. SAM stares at the book.*

*Blackout.*

#### Scene 4

SAM is in his lounge room, pacing up and down, checking his watch. The room has only an old, ratty couch in it. Suddenly there is a knock at the door.

SAM: Shit!

*He starts to exit and then stops, hoping there will be no more knocks.*

*There is another knock. He does not move.*

BARRY: (off) Sammy, don't be silly. I know you're in there. Come on, let me in. It's freezing out here.

*SAM gives up and exits. A moment later he reenters followed by BARRY.*

BARRY: Thanks for that. I was getting the shakes. (he looks around the room) So this is your home, eh? Bit austere isn't it? No paintings, no ornaments, no photos. It looks like you've just moved in, but you've lived here for years, haven't you?

SAM: I'm not answering any questions until you tell me who you are.

BARRY: What, no small talk? No friendly banter? Just straight down to business?

*Silence.*

BARRY: All right, have it your way. Here...

*He hands him a business card. SAM reads.*

SAM: Barry Tillman. Membership Services. The Business Council!

BARRY: That's right.

SAM: The Business Council?

BARRY: We represent most of the businesses in this town and believe me they need representation right now. People just won't spend. And to make it worse, the government won't do anything to encourage them to get their wallets out.

SAM: So, what's that got to do with me?

BARRY: Oh come on, don't play dumb. You've got money to burn. We want you to get your wallet out and start spending!

SAM: (pause) Is this some sort of a joke?

BARRY: You've paid off your house, you've got two jobs, and you're sitting on a million bucks. Some of that money could be out circulating in the community providing a much needed boost to the retail sector. You alone could save a number of businesses.

SAM: Save them? How much money do you want me to spend?

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