

GROCERY SHOPPING AT THE HARDWARE STORE

By Bradley Walton

Copyright © 2010 by Bradley Walton, All rights reserved.

ISBN 1-60003-571-X

CAUTION: Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that this Work is subject to a royalty. This Work is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America and all countries with which the United States has reciprocal copyright relations, whether through bilateral or multilateral treaties or otherwise, and including, but not limited to, all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, the Universal Copyright Convention and the Berne Convention.

RIGHTS RESERVED: All rights to this Work are strictly reserved, including professional and amateur stage performance rights. Also reserved are: motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, video or sound recording, all forms of mechanical or electronic reproduction, such as CD-ROM, CD-I, DVD, information and storage retrieval systems and photocopying, and the rights of translation into non-English languages.

PERFORMANCE RIGHTS AND ROYALTY PAYMENTS: All amateur and stock performance rights to this Work are controlled exclusively by Brooklyn Publishers, LLC. No amateur or stock production groups or individuals may perform this play without securing license and royalty arrangements in advance from Brooklyn Publishers, LLC. Questions concerning other rights should be addressed to Brooklyn Publishers, LLC. Royalty fees are subject to change without notice. Professional and stock fees will be set upon application in accordance with your producing circumstances. Any licensing requests and inquiries relating to amateur and stock (professional) performance rights should be addressed to Brooklyn Publishers, LLC.

Royalty of the required amount must be paid, whether the play is presented for charity or profit and whether or not admission is charged.

AUTHOR CREDIT: All groups or individuals receiving permission to produce this play must give the author(s) credit in any and all advertisement and publicity relating to the production of this play. The author's billing must appear directly below the title on a separate line where no other written matter appears. The name of the author(s) must be at least 50% as large as the title of the play. No person or entity may receive larger or more prominent credit than that which is given to the author(s).

PUBLISHER CREDIT: Whenever this play is produced, all programs, advertisements, flyers or other printed material must include the following notice:

Produced by special arrangement with Brooklyn Publishers, LLC

COPYING: Any unauthorized copying of this Work or excerpts from this Work is strictly forbidden by law. No part of this Work may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, by any means now known or yet to be invented, including photocopying or scanning, without prior permission from Brooklyn Publishers, LLC.

AUTHOR NOTES

I was in a grocery store when the thought popped into my head—what if somebody tried to do their grocery shopping in a store that utterly, obviously would not sell groceries? What would a conversation between that customer and a store employee be like? The idea stuck in my head, and it turned in this script.

Do Not Copy

GROCERY SHOPPING AT THE HARDWARE STORE

by
Bradley Walton

CHARACTERS: The CUSTOMER and the SALES CLERK. Both roles are gender neutral.

PROPERTIES: A piece of paper, which may be mimed for competition.

AT RISE: *The CUSTOMER approaches the SALES CLERK on a bare stage.*

CUSTOMER: Excuse me?

CLERK: May I help you?

CUSTOMER: Could you please tell me where I could find your grocery section?

CLERK: Groceries? If you mean the candy and soft drinks, those are by the cash registers at the front of the store.

CUSTOMER: No, I meant real food. You know...milk, vegetables, meat...

CLERK: I'm sorry, but we don't carry those things.

CUSTOMER: Really?

CLERK: Yes.

CUSTOMER: Why not?

CLERK: This is a hardware store.

CUSTOMER: *(Very plain and matter-of-fact.)* I know.

(Beat.)

CLERK: Good. *(Uncomfortable pause. The CUSTOMER stares pleasantly at the CLERK.)* Is there anything else I can help you with?

CUSTOMER: Where would I find the eggs?

CLERK: I'm sorry, but we don't carry those, either.

CUSTOMER: Huh.

CLERK: We're a hardware store. We sell tools. And lumber. And electrical supplies.

CUSTOMER: It's a very big store.

CLERK: Yes, it is.

CUSTOMER: Are you sure you don't have milk around here somewhere? Because I mean, it really is a big store.

CLERK: It is indeed a very big store. But no. No milk. Not unless there's some in the refrigerator in the break room or something.

CUSTOMER: But that milk wouldn't be for sale.

CLERK: No, it wouldn't.

CUSTOMER: Where did the milk that might be in the break room come from?

CLERK: Probably a grocery store.

CUSTOMER: Not here?

Grocery Shopping at the Hardware Store - Page 4

CLERK: No.

CUSTOMER: You're positive?

CLERK: Yes. Listen, there's a big grocery store right across the road. They carry groceries there. I'm sure they have milk. Is there anything else I can help you with?

CUSTOMER: Mashed potato mix.

CLERK: We don't carry that, either. This is a hardware store.

CUSTOMER: I know. You said that already.

CLERK: Why don't you want to shop for groceries at the grocery store?

CUSTOMER: Because I'm already here. And this is such a nice store. I really can't believe that there isn't a deli counter somewhere.

CLERK: No. Sorry. No deli counter.

CUSTOMER: And breads and chips and salads and coffee and fruit snacks.

CLERK: No.

CUSTOMER: Because people get hungry when they work.

CLERK: You're right, they do.

CUSTOMER: And if you really know your market, then surely you'd anticipate that.

CLERK: We've got the candy bars at the front.

CUSTOMER: No. More than candy bars. Your customers would require greater sustenance to do their work...to use the tools and the siding and the paint and all the other things that they buy here. Especially for the really big projects that take months or years. If they don't get that sustenance, they'll die. And then they wouldn't be able to shop here anymore.

CLERK: That's true, they wouldn't.

CUSTOMER: You'd have failed them.

CLERK: Well, not really, because we were never trying to actually provide food for them in the first place.

CUSTOMER: But they need food for their bodies to be able to engage in the use of their home improvement products!

CLERK: I understand that. But we don't sell food.

CUSTOMER: I refuse to believe that.

CLERK: Which is becoming more and more apparent with each passing second.

CUSTOMER: It would be like selling cars but not gasoline. (*Update fuel reference as necessary.*)

CLERK: Actually, car dealerships don't generally sell gasoline.

CUSTOMER: Sure they do.

CLERK: No, they don't.

CUSTOMER: It's okay not to want to admit you're wrong. I understand. Don't worry, I won't tell anyone.

CLERK: What?

CUSTOMER: It'll be our little secret.

CLERK: What secret?

CUSTOMER: Just like the grocery section.

CLERK: What are you talking about?

CUSTOMER: I know you have one.

Grocery Shopping at the Hardware Store - Page 5

CLERK: We do not have a grocery section!

CUSTOMER: This is the age of convenience. Of the mega store. The idea of a retailer selling only one type of merchandise is just so antiquated.

CLERK: We sell all kinds of merchandise here.

CUSTOMER: So you do have a grocery section.

CLERK: No! We have a vast selection of home improvement items.

CUSTOMER: How vast?

CLERK: Huge. Beyond huge. Totally freaking enormous. We have 153 different hammers. 216 different kinds of toilet seats. 84 different kinds of spackle. I haven't had time to count the different light bulbs yet, but I can promise you...it's a bunch.

CUSTOMER: That's a lot of merchandise.

CLERK: It is.

CUSTOMER: How long have you worked here?

CLERK: Two years.

CUSTOMER: And you still haven't had a chance to count the light bulbs?

CLERK: I spend a lot of time helping customers.

CUSTOMER: So you don't know everything there is to know about this store?

CLERK: No, but I know a lot.

CUSTOMER: But not everything.

CLERK: Not absolutely everything, no. No one could.

CUSTOMER: So there could be a grocery section somewhere that you don't know about.

CLERK: If there was, I would know about it.

CUSTOMER: How do you know that you'd know about it?

CLERK: I'd have seen it by now! I've worked here two years!

CUSTOMER: But by your own admission, you can't keep up with all the merchandise yourself.

CLERK: The store's not that big!

CUSTOMER: "Beyond huge." Those were your exact words.

CLERK: There's a difference between counting light bulbs and having never seen an entire department.

CUSTOMER: How is it different?

CLERK: It's obvious! It just is!

CUSTOMER: Explain it to me.

CLERK: You don't know?

CUSTOMER: I know. I want to know if you know.

CLERK: If you know, then what difference does it make if you know that I know?

CUSTOMER: Because I want you to understand your margin for human error.

CLERK: I am not wrong about this store not having a grocery department. I have walked from one end of this store to the other hundreds, if not thousands of times, and I have never seen a single food item except for the ones we carry up at the cash registers.

CUSTOMER: Never?

CLERK: Never.

Grocery Shopping at the Hardware Store - Page 6

CUSTOMER: You've never found an empty cheese stick wrapper tucked behind a box of nails?

CLERK: No.

CUSTOMER: Because I did. Just last week. In this store.

CLERK: That doesn't count.

CUSTOMER: Sure it does.

CLERK: Somebody was eating in the store and left the wrapper there because they were too lazy to find a trash can.

CUSTOMER: Obviously.

CLERK: But that doesn't mean they bought the cheese stick here.

CUSTOMER: How do you know?

CLERK: Because we don't sell cheese sticks.

CUSTOMER: And how do you know you don't sell cheese sticks?

CLERK: Because I've never seen them here.

CUSTOMER: You need to understand, just because you haven't seen something, that doesn't mean it isn't here. The cheese stick wrapper is a prime example. It was definitely here, even though you never saw it.

CLERK: You're talking about one wrapper that somebody hid. I'm talking about a whole display of cheese sticks.

CUSTOMER: Which is where that empty wrapper must have originated.

CLERK: But not in this store.

CUSTOMER: Do you really believe that someone would have bought the cheese stick somewhere else and then gone to the trouble of bringing it here just to eat it? That they picked it up at a...a grocery store and said, "Hey, this looks good. I think I'll go eat this at the hardware store?"

CLERK: No, I don't think that at all.

CUSTOMER: So you admit that it came from here!

CLERK: No!

CUSTOMER: Oh, come on!

CLERK: I don't think it was a planned thing to bring it here, to this specific store. I think they just ate it wherever they happened to be, and that was here.

CUSTOMER: But if that was true, then they would have eaten it at the grocery store! Because the grocery store is where they would have happened to be if they'd gotten it there. Did you ever think about that?

CLERK: Individually wrapped cheese sticks are meant to be portable snacks. That's the whole point of them.

CUSTOMER: And that explains how the wrapper made its way to the nail aisle instead of the cheese aisle, wherever that is.

CLERK: There is no cheese aisle in this store!

CUSTOMER: You really shouldn't take that tone of voice with your customers. They might get offended and leave.

CLERK: Leave! Please! Don't ever come back! I don't care! I don't want you to spend your money here! I never want to see you again!

CUSTOMER: Wow. That is just...wow.

CLERK: What?

CUSTOMER: Your fear of the unknown. It's like nothing I've ever seen before.

CLERK: Whatta you mean, my fear of the unknown? I'm not afraid of the unknown, and *you're* the one who's like nothing I've ever seen before!

CUSTOMER: I'm forcing you to confront the reality that you've never acknowledged, and you're lashing out in frustration.

CLERK: Oh, I'm frustrated all right.

CUSTOMER: Your poor little mind must be about ready to break.

CLERK: Yes. It is. So please go away.

CUSTOMER: I still need milk and eggs.

CLERK: If I get you milk and eggs, will you leave?

CUSTOMER: So you *do* have a grocery section.

***Thank you for reading this free excerpt from GROCERY SHOPPING AT THE
HARDWARE STORE by Bradley Walton. For performance rights and/or a
complete copy of the script, please contact us at:***

Brooklyn Publishers, LLC

P.O. Box 248 • Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52406

Toll Free: 1-888-473-8521 • Fax (319) 368-8011

www.brookpub.com