

A Community Target
a new documentary play by Robert Motum

Commissioned by Outside the March and Why Not Theatre through the *Forward March* initiative.
Further support provided by the Stratford Festival's Playwrights Retreat.
World Premiere: November 2018, Toronto; with Outside the March and Convergence Theatre.

Considerations for Staging and Casting

A Community Target features four contained scenes – framed by an Opening and Closing sequence. The four scenes (The Toy Department, Electronics, Home Furnishings, and the Stationery Section) can be performed in any order. In our 2018 production, all four scenes occurred simultaneously – on repeat – in different parts of the theatre. Our audience (split into four groups) were invited to explore the building and witness, in any order, these four vignettes. The audience reunited for the closing sequence. Certainly, the play can be read-through and staged as-is; but also offers this creative flexibility.

While our immersive setting required a cast of 20+ performers, the play can be staged with only 5.

All of the characters are based on real people; many of whom were interviewed for this project. Most of the text is sourced verbatim from these conversations.

Actor One

Robert – the playwright

Actor Two

Harrison – held a funeral for Target Canada

#2 – a number of Target Team Members including: Andrew, Edina, Michael, and CEO Brian Cornell

Ron – a manager from Target’s former head office

Tony Fisher – Target Canada’s first President

Peter Mansbridge – former anchor of *The National*

Actor Three

#3 – a number of Target Team Members, including: Yuki, Jon, Lauren, Craig, and Ash

Tara – Corporate Security at Target’s former head office

Jane – an actor in a Target training video

Erin – Senior Partner of Transportation Planning at Target’s former head office

Sharon – a lawyer who represented Target employees during the insolvency proceedings

Actor Four

#4 – a number of Target Team Members, including: Debrah, Aroon, and Moe

Anna – Supply Chain management at Target’s former head office

Shannon – a university student and Target cashier

Loretta – a Canadian shopper

Keeley Rogers – reporter for CityNews

Molly Snyder – former Director of Communications for the Target Corporation

Actor Five

#5 – a number of Target Team Members, including: Claire, Fred, and Bob

Manager – a manager at a new Target store

Ian Hanomansing – journalist and Reporter for *The National*

Jim Sanderson – operates a retail real-estate company

Customer – one of Target’s final customers

The Greeters
Opening Sequence

Throughout this sequence, the cast portray over 20 characters in rapid succession.

The cast enter in a mournful procession. Bagpipes. Music fades.

ROBERT

So, let me get this straight. You held a funeral for Target?

HARRISON

Yeah, at the Stockyards location. Like this felt like something big. You know? So, we got a bunch of friends together. I rented a priest's outfit; wrote a eulogy. 'Target we hardly knew thee...' Shit like that. Found a bagpiper. We all dressed in black; had a bit of a procession. A friend ordered pizza. It really drew quite a crowd. Made Global News...

ROBERT

Did you have a casket?

HARRISON

Nah, hard to find one big enough really. OH- my girlfriend at the time dressed up as a protester... like full-on Westboro Baptist Church style... uhm, the sign was... GOD HATES MOCK FUNERALS. Cause we felt... maybe this is a little sacrilegious.

Lighting Shift.

ROBERT

Hi nice to meet you; I'm Robert. Thanks for agreeing to do this. I'm so glad that we were able to make this work. Can I grab you a coffee?

2

Sure.

3

Just black?

4

No thanks.

2

So, you're making a movie?

ROBERT

A play actually.

3&4

About Target?

ROBERT

Yup.

2

That's...

5

...different.

ROBERT

Think of it as a documentary. I not really sure what the story is yet... but that's why I'm here... interviewing you. I just want to hear about your experiences.

4

Well ok...

3

I'm not really sure what I have to say...

2

Oh, I've got some shit to tellll

ROBERT

Are you ok with me recording our conversation?

3

Uh. I guess.

2

Will you use my real name?

ROBERT

Only if you're comfortable with me doing so.

2

Hell yeah, I am.

3

Just- if my current employer found out I was doing this...

4

I mean, I guess Target can't do anything now, right?

2

That's Karakowski. K-A-R-A-K-

ROBERT

Great. April 28 2016. I'm here with Claire. Claire, you said that you had worked at the Cloverdale Mall location?

5

Mhm, I was a greeter. Mainly. Well, not a 'greeter' per se. Like Target didn't really call us greeters. We were like 'Brand Attendants'. But like... we did a lot of greeting.

ROBERT

March 19 2016. Andrew, you were at the...

2

Five Points Mall location. Oshawa. I could see it from my house.

3

So, I worked in the back of Conestoga – uh, Waterloo – in the stock room. Unloading trucks. Opening boxes. Scanning the product. Logging it. Stacking it in the proper area... you know, lots of lifting and stuff.

4

I was a cashier, briefly. I was hired a month before Target announced that we'd be closing...so... I don't know... I guess I finished my training?

ROBERT

And which location were you at?

5

Guelph.

4

Winnipeg

2

St. John's

3

Oh, I was at the head office.

ROBERT

March 12 2016. And we're recording. Edina, what drew you to Target?

2

I'd been to Targets in the States and, I don't know they always had a bit of this mystical quality about them.

ROBERT

Mystical?

2

Yeah. Like cool Walmart.

ROBERT

March 14 2016; I'm here with Lauren. Lauren, can you take me through some of your daily responsibilities?

3

Oh you know, stocking shelves, stickering, helping guests, collecting carts, building the plan-o-ramas...

2

Ugh, plan-o-ramas

ROBERT

Plan-o-ramas?

3

Like the displays; the signage.

5

Like those huge TARGET LOVES CANADA signs. I stole one of those at the end...

2&3

TARGET LOVES CANADA

5

...It's currently my bed's headboard.

2

My Target, Centerpoint, had two floors; so, we had this weird escalator thing for shopping carts. And I was literally hired to stand all day and watch the shopping carts going up it... so, I guess... I don't know, they didn't jam?

4

I was a Team Leader

2

It was like being a ride operator for Wonderland's lamest ride.

4

Which isn't as high up as a manager... probably more like a supervisor...

2

Literally hours of babysitting shopping carts.

4

Target had all this great lingo for the staff.

5

See, we were all 'Team Members'.

4

And customers were 'guests'...

2

Sometimes I'd lead the aerobics and morning stretches, you know – get everyone warmed up for the day.

5

Store helpers were 'brand attendants'.

2

Ok everybody – plant your feet.

5

Then you had Assistant Team Leads...

2

Arms up

5

Executive Team Leads

2

We're going to start with small, concentric circles...

5

Team Leads

2

That's it...

5

District Team Leads

2

Good, Jeremy

5

That's it. But they all had acronyms. BA, ATL, ETL, TL.

2

But despite all these titles, it was all very democratic... 'cause of the... the team.

5

And we had a suggestion box.

ROBERT

February 6 2016. Craig, tell me how you're connected to the Target story.

3

Listen. The media will tell you that the first items purchased from a Target in Canada were a DVD of Disney's Tarzan and a Michael Bolton album. But that's fake. A cover up. Fake news. I was the first customer.

ROBERT

In Canada?

3

Yeah. I bought a Snickers bar. First through the cash. The Tarzan guy was just the first dude outside.

ROBERT

January 29 2016. Shannon, were you surprised by the announcement? Did you see the writing on the wall?

4

Not really. I mean, there were rumours in the media...

2

But we all thought-

5

We assumed-

4

That this was part of Target's plan

3

That these were just 'growing pains'.

2

That was the corporate line. That the problems -

3

Obviously there were problems

5

Massive problems

2

-were expected.

3

And we were correcting them

5

They went too big, too fast... but we were catching up.

3

At least it felt like we were catching up.

2

We were stocking shelves... slowly.

4

I mean, when the news says: 'Target loses one billion in three months'... you know it's not going well

5

There were rumours that they'd close some underperforming stores...

4

But we were always told that our store was a top seller

2

Corporate told us that our store had the best sales

3

Apparently, we were in like the top three stores for sales in the country

ALL (except ROBERT)

We were number 1

3

Number 1

2

So surely, we wouldn't be closing...

4

We thought that they'd maybe leave Quebec

2

And then boom. You're sitting in grade 10 science class and your friend shows you a news article that says 'you're out of a job'.

3

My fiancé yelled the news to me through the shower door...

4

Yup, I was on my way to work... heard it on the radio-

2

My boss was on the phone to head office all day... he never got through to anyone. No one had answers.

4

Then, we had customers flooding in asking where the liquidation sales were at... like chill, we just lost our jobs.

ROBERT

Thursday, January 15, 2015 8:31 AM

From Brian Cornell, CEO Target Corporation

To All Target Team Members

5

So, I found out; about 8:30 when an email was sent to my inbox. I sat down at my desk; one of my colleagues was like,

3

Ron you need to read this email.

5

I didn't really think anything of it. Then I open the email and it says...

2

This morning we announced that, following a comprehensive review of all potential options, we have made the difficult decision to discontinue operations in Canada. We are currently awaiting final Court approval to begin the wind-down process later today.

5

'We are discontinuing our operations in Canada' and I read that first line. And I just stood up... as in like... I didn't know what else to do. I was like, do I stand? Should I stand up? Should I start packing up and leaving?

2

As you know, the Target Canada Team has made considerable progress over the past several months, including improvements to holiday season in-stocks and overall operations. Unfortunately, even with these improvements, we are unable to project a path that will lead to profitability until at least 2021.

5

And then I sat down and read the rest of the email and I was just like shaking... like I don't... what do I do? Did we all just lose our jobs?

2

There is no question that there will be a lot of public attention and scrutiny around this decision. And as hard as it is to share this news with all of you, this is the kind of choice we have to make if we want to transform our business for future growth – hard, but right for the long-term health of the company.

5

Fuck...

2

Sincerely, Brian

The Toy Department

the circus.

TARA

When the hiring for the new Canadian head office was complete; and the building itself was finished; Target threw headquarters a bitching party. Some of the big designers from our brands were there. There was food, music, alcohol, prizes. They had a ‘poutine bar’! Maybe a bit stereotypical for Americans to serve poutine at a Canadian party...but, hell, I love poutine. You could get your photo taken with the Target dog – you know that... uhm, what is it, not a pit bull, it’s like Don Cherry’s dog... some terrier thing. And they painted the uh- bullseye logo around its eye. And this poor thing sat on a pedestal for an hour while half-drunk newly-minted employees took selfies with it. Oh. And then they brought out... Mr. Michael Bubl .

BUBLE (*underscored by jazz*)

How’s everyone doing tonight? Does Target know how to throw a party or what? I don’t think I’ve ever seen so much red in one room before. It feels very Canadian! It is so exciting to be here at your launch; I’ve been looking forward to Target coming north since I heard the announcement. It’s surely an exciting time for the company; and I think you’re gonna take it to the sky...

Sings

Come fly with me, let’s fly, let’s fly away

If you can use some exotic booze

there’s a bar in far Bombay

Come fly with my, let’s fly, let’s fly away

TARA

And the building that we were standing in; brand new; built from the ground up. I want you to picture in your mind Google’s offices. You know, super open concept – like

my desk was right beside my bosses'; million dollar paintings hung on the walls, there was a games room, lounge, cafeteria, a gift shop – where, by the way, you could purchase stuffed animal versions of that dog in 30 different outfits – work out facilities... you name it. And the people. Whew, Target hired very pretty people. My colleague and I had a running joke that in addition to your resume you had to submit a headshot to work at the head office. Put a bunch of pretty people in a room together for 8 hours a day, and well... I don't know where you want to take this play, but it could have quite the steamy soap-opera plotline. Don't include this in your show, but on this one business trip to Vancouver, I had to share a hotel room with...

She keeps talking, muffled by music.

BUBLE

*Come fly with me, let's float down to Peru
In llama-land there's a one-man band
And he'll toot his flute for you
Come fly with me, let's take off in the blue*

TARA

... and after that it was always a little awkward seeing him. It gave a new meaning to Target's corporate motto of 'fast, fun, and friendly'.

BUBLE

Pack up let's fly away!

To keep this party going; I'll hand it over to the big man himself – Tony Fisher!

ROBERT

Tony refused to speak on the record for this play, despite my multiple attempts... so, here is an account of what he probably said:

TONY

Really, thank you for coming out everybody. A little about myself, I'm Tony Fisher, the President of Target Canada. Thank you, yes. I've been a Target Team member since January of '99. I started out as a Business Analyst – where are the BAs in the room? From there I moved into a Buyer position, then a manager, a senior buyer, director of planning, divisional manager, vice-president, and then, well here we are. I am honoured to be leading Target's first international expansion! No matter how long you've been working in retail; or what position you occupy in the chain, you play an integral part. Work hard and you will progress in this company. We promote from within. You could very well be standing up here someday. You just have to believe in the Target culture – in the Target brand – in the Target dream. Opening 128 stores in the next two years is not going to be easy. It's going to be an incredible challenge; one that few retailers have the guts to face. But this Target family doesn't shy away from a challenge! Those guys in blue over at Walmart-

TARA

Boooo!

TONY

They did it back in '92 – and our roll out is going to be even smoother. The execs in Minneapolis say 'Go Big or Go Home'! And tonight, as with every following day, month, and year – Target Canada is going big! We've told our future customers to Expect More, and together, as a team, we will deliver on that promise. Because I bleed Target red! What do you bleed?!

SHANNON

Target red!

TONY

TARGET LOVES CANADA!

SHANNON

CANADA LOVES TARGET!

Alright – cut to: the first day in the store – picture this. It's pretty empty. Like there are a few shelves; some boxes; signage. All of the new employees were just kind of standing around, waiting for someone to tell us what we were to be doing... and then boom, suddenly, the store manager – team leader, sorry – comes riding in on one of those walker chairs... the electric scooter things? And she has a big Target cape on, and she's chucking Target buttons at us, and pens, and everyone was just going bat-shit because this was our job now. We were getting paid to do this. And then she handed out our...

MANAGER

... standard issue Target walkie-talkies. It's important that you keep these on your person at all times. We have 100,000 square feet of space, so this is how we keep in contact with each other. For those of you who are sales staff – Shannon, I think that's you – your device has an extra feature. In every department there are these big red HELP buttons for our guests... well if someone pushes one, your walkie-talkie will alert you that a guest there requires assistance. Only thing... it can be a bit finicky. We're working to correct it... but right now the buttons aren't quite set up properly. So, when your walkie-talkie says 'GUEST ASSISTANCE NEEDED IN... ELECTRONICS' for example, the guest is really waiting for you over in Housewares... and Housewares is really Make-up... and Make-up I think is Produce... and Produce is actually Swimwear or Menswear or something. You'll get it.

WALKIE-TALKIE

Guest assistance needed in SECOND FLOOR SHOE DEPARTMENT

SHANNON

We didn't have a second floor.

ROBERT

They barely had a shoe department.

MANAGER

Before we can start training you out on the sales floor today, we have to go through a couple videos. Uhm, these were originally made for the US stores, so some items aren't relevant. Like, anytime Minneapolis mentioned, think Mississauga; and uhm, anytime the US is... well, you get it-

'Videos' happen live.

JANE

Hi there! I'm Jane and I'm so glad that you've decided to join our Target family! We like to do things a little differently at Target, and soon you'll discover that this isn't just another 'retail job'. First, take a look at your nametag, you'll notice that it says TEAM MEMBER; here, you aren't simply another cog in the machine, you're an integral part of the Target Team; an integral part of our family. One of our goals here at Target is help you become the best you that you can be. Every team member is encouraged to innovate, contribute ideas, and discover new solutions.

As America's second largest retailer, we stay ahead in today's ultra-competitive retail market by challenging ourselves to become more efficient and by providing our guests with the best shopping experience possible. You'll notice that I said 'guests'; at Target we don't have customers. Our first job as Target team members is to make our guests feel welcome in our stores. In doing so, just remember FAST. FUN. AND FRIENDLY. The pace is fast, the atmosphere is fun, and the people are friendly.

Please pause the video to teach your new team members your store cheer.

'Video' pauses

MANAGER

Right, so the head office suggests that each store invent their own cheer... Cheryl in Housewares came up with ours. It's just something we do to kick off the start of a shift. Uhm, so it goes...

STORE 3-2-2-5

GOTTA HIT THAT BULLSEYE

FAST. FUN. FRIENDLY.

GOOO TEAM!

And, like, at the end we usually put our hands in and... cheer for the ...GOOO team bit... anyways...

Video resumes.

JANE

Great cheering team members! This is just one part of trying to deliver a positive, energetic atmosphere across our Target locations. In addition to cheers, aerobics, and team huddles, we encourage employee recognition and rewards. To show you how this recognition can work, here's my colleague Chad.

CHAD

Hey Jane! Hey everyone!

JANE

Now, in your evening team huddles, your manager-on-duty will hand out slips of paper. We invite you to write positive reports about your fellow staff members. Like so,

CHAD *(pretends to write)*

Jane, this afternoon I saw you assisting a guest in the patio section. They were looking for two matching chairs, but only one was left in stock. You called another Cleveland location and they had it in stock. Good work!

JANE

It can be as simple as that. But it shows your fellow employees that even their small actions are valued. This could be a great time to tell your new co-workers how well they're doing. Managers, please pause the video and distribute recognition slips.

MANAGER

I think you get it; we'll just keep going.

CHAD

Isn't it great to hear that you're already making an impact on your store's team? And those recognition slips – they can become Target bucks!

ROBERT

Oh, right. Ok, uhm, Target Bucks were part of the reward system... they're just Monopoly dollars signed by the manager... but you could use them in the store.

JANE

At Target we take safety very seriously. Upon completion of this video, each of you will be required to take our standard health and safety test. It's easy if you pay attention!

CHAD

Depending on your State, your staff may have to contend with the 'open carrying' of firearms in your store. This can be a complex issue; and if your guests have the legal right to bring a holstered weapon into your store, they are permitted to do so. However-

MANAGER

Let's just fast forward through this...

Video resumes

JANE

...team members have the right to join unions...

CHAD

...but they also have the right not to join unions; experience has shown us that after learning the facts, Target team members agree that union representation is not in their best interest. Ultimately, what works best for Target and our team members is the ability to meet challenges, resolve issues, and grow the business together without the interference of a union, or a third party. Target celebrates the successes of team members; and we promise you a rewarding, safe, world-class retail career.

JANE

Thanks everyone for following along! I, Chad, and everyone here at Target wish you success as you begin your new position.

Please pause the video to pass out the cups of red Kool-Aid and recite the pledge.

MANAGER

If everyone would stand; place your right hand over your heart; and repeat after me;
I pledge allegiance

EVERYONE

I pledge allegiance

MANAGER

to the Bullseye

EVERYONE

to the Bullseye

MANAGER

of this American subsidiary

EVERYONE

of this American subsidiary

MANAGER

and to the Corporation for which it stands

EVERYONE

and to the Corporation for which it stands

MANAGER

One company

EVERYONE

One company

MANAGER

Under dog.

ROBERT

Ok, so I made that last part up... but Target's beginning was a bit of a circus...

SHANNON

An amusement park

TARA

like corporate summer camp

SHANNON

The cheers, the aerobics

TARA

The retreats

SHANNON

The celebrity endorsements

TARA

I'll admit it – I drank my share of the corporate Kool-Aid.

SHANNON

It's the most fun I've ever had at a job

TARA

Those Bullseye stuffed animal dogs? I bought 30 of them.

SHANNON

Great job for a 16-year-old

TARA

They all came in different outfits... they decorated my desk.

SHANNON

It's the best job I've ever had.

TARA

I don't really know what to do with them now...

EVERYONE

The best job I've ever had.

MANAGER

And that concludes our training.

The Electronics Section
the technical problems

ERIN

So, I was a Senior Partner in Transportation Planning. My scope really had to do with shipping products from the vendors to our three distribution centres. So, I'd be in contact with our vendors and make sure that the product made it to Target's warehouses from China, or the US, or wherever. It's a massive undertaking.

ROBERT

You were responsible for this on a national scale? Moving product across the country?

ERIN

Yup, I'd frequently be shipping items from St. John's to Vancouver. As soon as the product arrived in Canada, me and my team were tracking it... or attempting to.

ROBERT

Attempting to?

ERIN

Well, I'm sure you've done some research... you're aware of the 'empty shelves'?

Well, it's true. Target was never fully stocked. It wasn't because we didn't have the product... if anything we had too much product; but we simply couldn't track it. Imagine- you go to your local Target and you try to buy a backpack, but the rack is empty. But then, if you were taking a trip up to, say, a store in Barrie, their entire backroom is full of backpacks, because for some reason they were all sent to that one store. Most of it boiled down to software issues.

ROBERT

Software?

ERIN

Yeah... maybe not the dramatic twist you were hoping for... but Target was testing out a new inventory tracking software... and nobody quite understood how to use it. So, everyone did things slightly differently, or didn't input the proper information. And then there were bugs in the program itself. For instance, it didn't recognize French characters... good luck Quebec.

ROBERT

I figured that we could spend the next twelve pages of this play depicting the problems at Target, or

ERIN

a game

RON

What went wrong – in sixty seconds.

SHANNON

Target hella overpaid for Zellers leases at 1.8 Billion Dollars

ERIN

Basically, to make sure that Walmart wouldn't outbid them...

SHANNON

They spent another BILLION turning Zellers red to Target red

RON

Some stores cost upwards of 15 million to renovate

ERIN

Because they overpaid, they rushed the launch schedule

SHANNON

Wait. We have to translate shit into French?

RON

They hired hundreds of inexperienced product buyers and analysts

SHANNON

Most of us were right out of school

ERIN

They bought a shit-ton of advertising and over-inflated Canadian's expectations

SHANNON

TARGET LOVES CANADA

RON

Installed inventory software that no one had ever used before

SHANNON

'I don't think anyone at headquarters could tell you how the software worked'

ERIN

(That's a direct quote from a VP in Minneapolis)

RON

They bought way too much product – but then lost track of said product because no one understood the software

SHANNON

Our store received a shipment of 500 hockey sticks... we were meant to get 50.

ERIN

Since they misplaced the products, stores opened with a bunch of empty shelves

RON

Because of that, they got a ton of bad press. EMPTY SHELVES AT EMPTY TABLES – real headline for you theatre people there-

SHANNON

Despite these screw ups, they continued opening stores before they had the time to properly address the issues

RON

Lost nearly one billion dollars in their first year

SHANNON

Announced that they're pulling out of Canada; putting 17,600 Canadians out of work

ERIN

Plus 3000 employees in the US whose work was directly related to Canada

SHANNON

Not to mention hundreds of third-party suppliers and distributors

RON

You think those contractors got severances?

SHANNON

All in... 7 Billion in losses; and over 22,000 lost jobs

ERIN

In less than two years.

RON

And they sold most of their leases to Walmart anyway... dirt cheap.

Pause

ROBERT

Which begs the question... why? Why did it play out like this? Why didn't anyone stand up along the way and question what they were doing?

ERIN

Everyone's going to give you a different answer... but I think its part of Target's 'go big or go home' attitude. The corporate culture, the brand is everything to Target. And if you work there, you buy into it... you believe it. Especially at the head office. Being 'on brand' meant perfection; on point; on fleek.

RON

And Target specifically hired very big personalities... like they wouldn't hire someone who seemed more subdued.

ERIN

Very 'Type A' personalities; super driven; a lot of energy... maybe a little... controlling at times.

RON

What? Us... no...

ERIN

It's a culture that seems to work great in the States... and maybe they've had the time to properly cultivate it... but in Canada it was-

RON

Here's the American mould, you guys wiggle your way in.

ERIN

Which isn't exactly what Canadians want to hear.

RON

Day one, my boss made it clear that failure wasn't an option.

ERIN

Failure wasn't 'on brand'.

RON

Target doesn't fail. You can't afford to fail when you're the second largest retailer in North America.

ERIN

And having that stress... being in that pressure cooker wasn't healthy for anyone. Something had to give-

RON

(explosion noise)

ERIN

There were nights that I'd be up until 3am responding to emails... I wasn't sleeping. I wasn't eating. I really thought that I was going to have a heart attack. Either I'd go... or Target would.

RON

I remember.
Though, corporate would see this all differently...

ERIN

Ron, we were Corporate...

RON

Yeah, well like- Corporate-r Corporate – the executives.
Like the excuses they gave when they announced we'd be closing...

ROBERT

Cut to: January 15, 2015

ERIN

I was a little late getting to work, but when I got to the office there were security guards positioned at every entrance. I asked them what the deal was... but we were sort of herded towards this 'town hall' meeting.

RON

So I'm sitting at my desk and my boss came over and was like, 'well, we got a meeting' - a Town Hall meeting... and I was like well that's strange, Town Halls are usually scheduled months in advance. On my way down, I asked my boss, did you know about this? What's happening? Do I have a job? He didn't know.

ERIN

Waiting for the meeting to start, I asked my manager what I should be doing – and she just said, 'work on your resume'.

RON

So, we go down to the meeting; and uh, then the president gets up there - and he is crying - he is sobbing. I literally pinched myself... like how could this be happening? And then he tells us that we're discontinuing operations and I'm just sitting there like sweating and freaking out. At this point I hadn't told my wife - so she didn't know; And at this point, I'm thinking about my daughter who is 7 months old... who I've got to be able to afford for day care for in a few months.

ERIN

And at this point, I'm in shock. I'm three months pregnant, what... what just happened to my maternity leave?

RON

...and all that's running through my head while this guy is up there crying trying to tell me that everybody is out of their jobs.

ERIN

That 17,600 of us were out of our jobs.

ROBERT

And what'd he say?

ERIN

Oh, you could hear the rhetoric in the speech-

RON

He placed the blame on the Canadian consumer. He blamed the customer for the reason why we were discontinuing operations in Canada. And I thought to myself, is it really the customer to blame? WE FUCKED IT UP. IT'S OUR FAULT.

ERIN

The whole speech was completely surreal. It felt like a dream.

RON

You never hear an organization ever blaming the customer... the customer does what they want to do... that's why we're here. We're here for the customer. And he's sitting here saying, 'you know the Canadian consumer didn't really get on board with -uh- with what Target Canada wanted to do and they obviously didn't want us here'. These aren't exact paraphrases... but mainly to the effect that the customer is the reason why this all went sideways.

ROBERT

So, if you don't like this play, it's your fault - you're wrong. You really need to get on board with -uh- what we're trying to do here.

ERIN

It was a weird moment; like one of those, uhm, moments where everything just kinda goes quiet... and you're not fully there. Your body doesn't quite know how to process the information you're hearing and you just sorta... leave it... your body... for a second. As if I could see myself – from above – sitting in this crowd of people. Not that I like died or anything (laughs). The room just... stood still. I remember thinking, focus Erin... focus. You know, I wanted to understand... why.

SHANNON

Surreal is a word that I keep coming back to. I remember the final moments of our store, Robert. Absolutely surreal. Everything had been sold off. All of the shelves, the freezers, cashier stations, the lighting fixtures. Only one item was left – a cardboard box – sitting dead centre, in the middle of the store. It had all of these last remaining clothing pieces in it... just whatever was left. And we - all the employees were gathered around the box – in a large circle – watching a few customers rummage through the clothes. And we're

just waiting, you know, just waiting for them to leave. And then this one customer asks 'is this all you have?'... as if we were hiding something in this huge empty space, right? Like 'oh duh! Let me check in the back?!' I don't know; one of us nodded, and the three women left. Then we locked the doors, and got into a huddle, and just... held each other for a short while.

ERIN

I remember this co-worker went around and took individual pictures of all of us – of every employee... because she 'didn't want to forget her family'. And, uh, that always kinda chokes me up a bit. 'Cause that's genuinely what it felt like... losing a family.

Pause.

OH – and somebody wrote a poem. It'd be great if you could get a copy of that.

HOME FURNISHINGS

The human impact.

ROBERT

A few months into this project, Ron (a former employee from Target's head office) was gracious enough to invite several of his old colleagues over to his house for a group interview. We made sure there was plenty of alcohol.

Thank you everyone for coming out. Ron, our host for the evening, has kindly agreed to lead to this interview so that I can simply observe... so I'll pass it over to him.

RON

Alright, well, welcome to my living room. It's so great to see you two. Anna, I don't think we've seen each other since... like the end of everything, eh?

ANNA

Yeah, I guess not.

RON

You were out of there pretty fast-

ANNA

Oh yeah. I mean, once they announced we were closing... there's not much need for a manager of Supply Chain Planning, right? I think I was there for another two days and my boss was just like...yeah, don't bother.

ERIN

That was a strange thing. Still seeing Target stores open and liquidating for months... and we were all just...

RON

Watching Netflix...

ANNA

Writing resumes

ERIN

Wondering what was next.

Pause.

ERIN

It's a lovely home you have here Ron.

RON

It's pretty ridiculous - we actually bought this place because it was in walking distance of a Target. Good discounts for diapers and whatnot, right?

ERIN

Ugh, I miss the discounts.

RON

Yeah, uhm, well, I won't get into it too much now, but we almost lost it, eh? Like two months into a mortgage – Steph wasn't working – we have a two-year-old – and I lose my job. It's just...uh... I've never felt such... fear. Right? My mind goes to, uh, that Jim Carrey movie... uhm

ERIN

Fun with Dick and Jane

RON

Yeah! And I was like, well fuck, that's gonna be me – like robbing banks or some shit – like I guess this is my life now. I did everything right... all along the way, you know? Right school; right co-op placement; good starting job; progressive experience; played by the rules... then...

ANNA

Shit happens.

RON

Shit happens.

ERIN

It changes ya.

RON

Yeah.

Well, that's a damn good interview question. Uh, let's start with- how were you changed- how did the experience of working at Target change you?

ANNA

Right.

ERIN

Mmm- well-

I don't know- you go-

ANNA

Hmm, well, it was an absolutely insane two years. We had this joke at head office that Target years were like dog years... like one year worked at Target is equivalent to seven years' experience at SEARS or wherever. So even though, you know, we only worked like two years, we had to deal with like fourteen years' worth of problems. Which like yeah- that was stressful as shit; but I am so much stronger for having gone through that- I really do feel that I can walk into any job and pull it off. Like, even if I have to learn some of the position; even if shit's going awry; I know that I'll be the calm, level-headed one figuring out the problem. Target gave that to me.

ERIN

Like let's take SEARS – someone has been doing my job at SEARS for the last thirty years, right? There's a history to that position. People should know how that job is to be done. There are procedures. Now, all of us at Target were originating our jobs. You might call us the original Broadway cast recording... So, it was an incredible challenge; lots of sleepless nights; lots of panicked moments; but an opportunity that I'll probably never have again.

Pause.

RON

Yeah... I'm not sure I can put such a positive spin on the whole experience...

This isn't something I've told anybody. I mean, Steph knows – she saw it, she lived it with me. But uh. So, like that couch; the one you're on. Uhm, I lost my job on a Thursday. I didn't get off that couch until the next Wednesday.

I was so depressed. Like, this job was who I was. It's where I found my, I don't know, my worth. I was so focused on the zeros of my paycheque – *not that there were ever very many but* – but like on that feeling of needing to progress... to constantly be promoted.

And then, yeah, so, on that Wednesday. I was there, on that couch, and my daughter was lying on my chest. And uhm, I just looked at her, you know, rising up and down on my breath. I don't know what you'd call it... not an epiphany... but it stands out in my mind as this really profound moment, you know? And I just started crying. I knew I had to swallow my pride, and find something to do... for her.

So, I got off the couch, opened my laptop, and started sending emails. They weren't easy things to write... I've never been one to ask for anything.

ANNA

We all had to do that in different ways.

Pause

ERIN

You went back to Canadian Tire, right Ron?

RON

I went back there begging on my hands and knees.

ANNA

The thing is, we weren't the only ones doing it. I had twelve people on my team at Target— that's twelve of us all doing the same type of job, out there looking for the same type of work in Toronto. It was competitive. I lost friendships. It sucked.

RON

But I do wonder if I didn't have that connection to go back to... where would I be? Like, I consider myself one of the lucky ones.

ERIN

Job market's not an easy place at the moment.

ANNA

Understatement.

ERIN

Before Target I worked for Sears... which isn't hiring at the moment. And before Sears, Zellers. Maybe I'm cursed. Maybe I'm the reason behind these collapses (*laughs*). Maybe retail's just changing. Either way, I had nowhere to go back to.

ANNA

I feel ya. When I left Walmart, I, well, let's just say... I burnt some bridges.

ERIN

And when Target closed, I was three months pregnant. At the time, I thought... I could hide this. I could go for interviews and just not say anything and if I get a job, I get a maternity leave, right? But I couldn't. I'm too honest.

ANNA

My friend Matt; he moved out to Newfoundland to run Target's Eastern division... two months before the shutdown. He bought a house. He has a mortgage. He can't afford to come back... but he can't afford to stay.

RON

Yeah. If you send someone to god-forsaken Newfoundland – you bring them back.

Pause.

ROBERT

You know, my local mall in Oshawa... Target was its only anchor store. It's still empty... and now they're talking about bulldozing the place to make way for storage units. Some shops have been in there for... 30 years.

ERIN

It doesn't just affect us employees.

ROBERT

But people who relied on Target's foot traffic. Small mom and pop shops.

RON

In some small towns – especially in Quebec or places out east – their Target was their general store.

ROBERT

I guess, I'm just wondering – how much this shook up Canada's retail ecology. Like, what does that future look like?

ANNA

Well, you had Best Buy close a bunch of FutureShops; Sears; Sony, Mexx, Jacob, Smart Set...

ERIN

HMV, Payless, American Apparel, Toys R Us ... Zellers... and that's just in the last four years.

ROBERT

And Target alone left about 505 acres of retail space. That's huge. I mean, I'm not arguing for more big-box stores... but that empty space impacts communities. You know... urban blight... and whatever.

RON

We just have to accept that we'll all be working for Amazon someday... packing boxes or some shit. I mean, they're larger than Walmart now.

Alright. Question for the room – for the audience. You’re all consumers... customers... guests. Do you shop at box-stores?

A pause, as they wait for the audience to respond. In the 2018 production this question consistently spurred meaningful discussion.

ERIN

The way I look at Walmart; sure, it’s a big American company – but it employs thousands of Canadians, right? My neighbour is a cashier at Walmart. Walmart took on thousands of ex-Target employees-

RON

Wait. Is this play pro-commercial retail?

ROBERT

No-
Well- I...

RON

I don’t know if I want to be a part of that...

ERIN

RON, YOU WORK IN COMMERCIAL RETAIL

RON

But it’s complicated -

ROBERT

Well then,
What do the three of you want to see represented in this play?

ANNA

Hmm. I guess; I feel like we’ve said a lot of bad... but it wasn’t all... that.

ERIN

I know a lot of my friends were more upset to be losing Target than to be losing a job... so, that says something.

ANNA

So maybe, in the hurricane of shit that Target was, in the play there’s a nice moment or two...

RON

Yeah, maybe it was ok... sometimes. Don’t quote me on that.

ERIN

I walked by an empty Target recently. I can tell you where all the lighting fixtures came from. I can tell you about the week that I spent arguing with a distributor over email trying to get a shipment of shopping carts across the border. I can tell you which company made the Target sign; how much each of those giant red balls out front cost to move... I thought, this store was here because of my team. For those two years, we did the impossible. And if Target hadn't... betrayed us, we'd still be doing it.

RON

If I had to sum it up. The whole experience changed my perspective a lot on things - it made me appreciate - or desire comfort over achievement... security over achievement. I want to be somewhere where I'm able to work there for a fucking long time... it made me go for that. My co-worker right now, we have the same position, he's in his 50s – if that's me in 20 years... I'll take it. Like if you're at Canadian Tire, you're there because you want to be a manager, then you want to be a Director, then a Vice President and it made me realize that I don't give a shit about that. I don't give a shit about being promoted. I just want to feel that I can add value to an organization, be able to pay my bills, and look after my family. Do I give a shit about the title that comes along with that...no. You can call me HEADBULLSHITTER. I DON'T FUCKING CARE. It's this – it's my family – that's important.

Pause.

Whew. That felt good. That sounded good, yeah?

ROBERT

Yeah, wow. That's incredible.

RON

This... this feels like a scene.

The Stationery Section

Canada's retail ecology – as seen through the media.

MANSBRIDGE

A huge deal is reshaping the country's retail landscape tonight. Target stores are coming to Canada. The US retail giant is taking over up to 220 Zellers locations at a cost of \$1.8 Billion and then it's spending an additional billion dollars to renovate and expand from there. What does this mean for the Canadian consumer? Ian Hanomansing is south of the border tonight to see what all this fuss is about.

HANOMANSING

There's something about Target that seems to turn customers into fans. Several people I've spoken with this evening have driven down here from Vancouver. They tell me it's worth the trip for the prices and the unique brands. Loretta here, is from north of the border; What would you tell Canadians who are maybe unfamiliar with Target?

LORETTA

Oh, I just love it. You can't beat Tarjay! Definitely there is more selection here definitely... definitely there are more labels. Like this – eleven dollars – can't beat it.

HANOMANSING

It seems like everyone we've spoken to have bought into Target's message on price and quality. That faux French pronunciation... Tarjay... is a tongue and cheek reference to how this discount store sells designer goods. But then Loretta and I started talking about her former career at Canadian Airlines and how she felt about the passing of another iconic national brand – Zellers.

LORETTA

Oh, you know, I don't know. Changes happen. Definitely. Change is inevitable. I hope Target hires the employees... I have friends there. Walmart did that I think, when they took over Woolco all those years ago eh? No one wants to lose their job. And ya see it eh? The retail market's a-changing.

HANOMANSING

It is true that while several thousand Zellers and HBC employees will be let go; Target has plans to create up to 20,000 new Canadian jobs over the next two years.

Well Peter, it will be interesting to see how Target will keep its rock bottom pricing, and uniquely American brands when it opens north of the border. You can be sure stores like Walmart, Sears, and Canadian Tire are all keeping a close eye... on the Bullseye. Ian Hanomansing, CBC News, Bellingham Washington.

Transition. ROBERT takes the place of MANSBRIDGE.

ROBERT

Good evening. We start tonight with the story that everyone has been talking about. Target, the major American retailer, announcing that they are discontinuing operations in Canada and shuttering all 133 of their locations. We have lots of coverage on this industry shake up; but first, we go live to Keeley Rogers with the impact of today's announcement. Keeley-

KEELEY

Thanks Robert. It is hard to sum up the atmosphere in some of the Target stores today. I was actually just inside one and saw several groups of employees all talking about their futures and the uncertainty of the road ahead. While employees aren't speaking to the press; I spoke to several Target customers to hear their reactions to the news.

KEELEY interviews audience members for their 'reactions'.

Target is the anchor store – the big draw for many malls. Take a look here at the Stockyards, it takes up half the parking lot. Over here, you have smaller stores... now people are asking, what happens to them? With 133 stores closing, many believe that some former Targets will remain empty for years to come. Live from the Stockyards – I'm Keeley Rogers.

ROBERT

Thanks, Keeley, for that reaction. Customers might be interested to know that Target's liquidation starts on Monday. The company expects that the wind down process will take 3-4 months. In a small bit of good news for workers – they will get paid. Most for 16 weeks through a trust fund Target set up – run by a lawyer, Sharon Phillips, at arms length. We have Sharon in studio with us today-

SHARON

Thank you for having me.

ROBERT

Sharon take me through this employee trust fund.

SHARON

Well, Target Corporation set aside about 60 million dollars to ensure that their Canadian employees would be paid through the liquidation process. This particular approach is unprecedented. It's never happened before. So, it's good. We can tell people that they can expect a regular paycheque for a period of time.

ROBERT

And what usually happens to employees in insolvency cases such as this?

SHARON

Often the employees are the last to be paid; and many times, don't end up seeing any money at all.

ROBERT

A few of my colleagues have pointed out that Target's former CEO, Gregg Steinhafle, recently received a severance package valued at 61 million. In other words, more than the 17,600 Canadians combined.

SHARON

That might be true, but Target didn't have to put aside any money for their employees. It will make for a smoother exit from Canada. In many of these cases, the employees are left fighting for scraps.

ROBERT

Right. So, it's something. Definitely respectable on the part of Target. I'd like to bring Jim Sanderson into this conversation. Jim is the founder and CEO of a Toronto-based company which sources commercial real estate for retail companies. Tim- what do you make of today's news?

JIM

Target's venture is definitely a unique story. I was just starting out in this field when Walmart bought Woolco back in the 90s; so, I think that we expected them to follow a similar rollout model. But I've never seen any company collapse so quickly. I imagine the industry will feel the aftershocks of this decision for years. There aren't too many stores out there willing to fill a 100,000 square foot facility.

SHARON

And any American companies are going to be hesitant to head north.

JIM

And maybe that's a good thing. At least they'll be cautious.

ROBERT

I'm wondering, after having seen just how poorly Target executed their entrance into Canada, what sort of government oversight is there for companies that want to enter the Canadian market?

SHARON

Well, uhm, yes, I see what you mean.
The answer to that is basically none.

ROBERT

Surely, for a company like Target, that employed 17,600 Canadians – they must have some hurdles to jump over?

SHARON

I know what you're getting at... no, I don't believe there was any sort of federal oversight in regards to Target's acquisition of Zellers' properties.

JIM

It really falls on the company itself to execute their entrance strategy properly...

SHARON

Other than that, they have to follow the basics laid out in Provincial Employment Standards Acts. That's sick time, overtime, hourly wages, workers compensation...

JIM

Maybe some local Business Association ordinances.

ROBERT

So an American company can buy out acres of retail space and hire thousands of employees without anyone in government signing off on it?

SHARON

I don't think Industry Canada was involved with this, no.

JIM

The biggest hurdles for Target were likely at the municipal level. For instance, many municipalities have bylaws regarding parking lot size...

ROBERT

Parking lot size?

JIM

Mhm, entrances, exits, accessible parking, speedbumps... though, any Zellers would have already had to conform to these, so that work was probably already done.

ROBERT

They didn't have to present a comprehensive plan about their strategy?

SHARON

Well... the belief is that too much government oversight can be disruptive to the process.

JIM

On paper, this looked as though the second largest retailer in North America was going to create close to 20,000 Canadian jobs. And more competition is good for the market... But yes, opening 133 stores in a year was ambitious.

SHARON

Yes, when an acquisition is going to affect this number of Canadians... there should probably be some sort of third-party oversight. Whether or not that's the government... I don't know.

It's estimated that 200,000 retail jobs have been lost in North America since 2015. And well, firms like ours have never been busier. So, for better or worse – there is a shift happening in our retail ecology... but consumers have the opportunity to drive where that change goes.

JIM

It's not just Target. Overall there's a trend away from large shopping centres. Malls are dying out. We're in the midst of the largest retail shake up in the last century. Some of it is Amazon-

SHARON

Online shopping-

JIM

The economy-

SHARON

Millennials

JIM

Millennials.

ROBERT

Millennials?

JIM

Well, they- you- they seem to prefer experiences... over things.

Pause.

Must be helping your industry, Robert?

SHARON

And maybe that's good. Lots of people don't like malls – that's fine. But nevertheless, we should take notice of the shift.

JIM

People's livelihoods are affected. Whether it's a box-store, or the small mom-and-pop shop that relied on the foot traffic of the larger store.

SHARON

It affects communities.

JIM

At the moment, I'm working with the East York Town Centre. That Target fed and clothed thousands of local low-income residents. Like that area was just Target – and a dozen apartment buildings. Sometimes it's not feasible to trip to another part of town for groceries, right? You can hate commercial retail; but vacant space doesn't do anybody any good.

ROBERT

Let's leave it there. Thanks Sharon. Tim.

MANSBRIDGE resumes the place.

MANSBRIDGE

Iconic Canadian department store, SEARS, announced today that its 60 years in Canada are coming to an end. It's the Christmas wish-book catalogue that many of us remember best, but SEARS stores have been coast-to-coast since the 50s; and now more than 12,000 full and part time employees are out of a job. 18,000 more retirees are also left wondering what will happen – after being told there's no money to cover their full pension and benefits.

THE PATIO SECTION

Closing Sequence.

MOLLY

Robert,

I am the director of Target's Communications team and have heard from a few of my colleagues that they've been contacted by you about the play you are developing. While I believe they have gotten back to you directly, declining to participate, I wanted to see if we might find a few minutes to talk about your plans and timing. I am very interested to hear your... intentions with this play.

Regards,

Molly.

ROBERT

Hi Molly,

I am always more than happy to talk about my work. Can I ask what you are interested in knowing? Looking forward to chatting.

All the best,

Robert.

MOLLY

Robert. Any chance we could talk today? M.

ROBERT

Molly, I could make this afternoon work; let me know...R-

MOLLY

I'm just going to jump right in here, Robert; we've come to learn about the movie you're creating.

ROBERT

Yes, it's a play actually.

MOLLY

Right. The play. Well we're just interested in hearing about what your ideas are with it – why – why are you writing about Target?

ROBERT

Of course. Uhm, well I suppose it can best be described as a documentary... I'm not trying to demonize your corporation or companies in general or anything. If anything, there might even be some odd moments in my piece where, since you're hearing from real employees, it might humanize – give a face – to a corporation...

MOLLY *clearly jotting notes*

Mmhmm.

ROBERT

Actually, do you mind if I record this meeting?

MOLLY

There's no need to, is there?

Now, I've heard that you've spoken to some former Target employees?

ROBERT

About 50 at this point, yes.

Pause.

Many people from various positions in stores; but also former employees from the head office...

MOLLY

Mhmm.

Any managers? Directors? Executives?

ROBERT

A few... yes.

MOLLY

Can you share with me whom?

ROBERT

I'm afraid I can't.
Pause.

MOLLY

What about their positions?

ROBERT

I don't really feel comfortable saying. Of course, many spoke on condition of anonymity...

MOLLY

Mhmm... right.
Any former CEOs?

ROBERT

I've reached out to them-

MOLLY

Hmm.
These interviews; they're all recorded?

ROBERT

Yes. And transcribed.

MOLLY

Pause.

Are any of these people who would have been in on the discussions around leaving Canada?

ROBERT

I don't think any of them were decision makers... they found out on the 15th when everybody else did.

MOLLY

Hmm. Ok, ok, that's good.
What's your timeline with this piece? When will it be presented?

ROBERT

Well, I'm still writing it. So, I'm not sure.

MOLLY

Right. Hmm.
And will the piece tour? ...Or is it just one show? How many seats-

ROBERT

-That I couldn't tell you...

MOLLY

Well, let's perhaps keep an open dialogue going Robert. I'd like to be kept up to date on any major developments in your piece.

ROBERT

There are a few people that I'd like to speak to at Target – I do have some specific questions... about some of the more contentious points... perhaps...

MOLLY

Can you share those?

ROBERT

Sure...

I guess the main one is that a few employees from head office have recalled that in Mark Schindele's goodbye speech on January 15, 2015, he seemed to place blame on the Canadian consumer for Target's failure in Canada. I had reached out to him for comment; however, he declined. I'm just wondering how a corporation, publicly or privately, can blame their customers...?

MOLLY

Hmm... and do you think that the way that appears in your play reads as more of a negative statement about Target Corporation or about Mark himself?

ROBERT

Well, probably both. But I mean, he represents Target.

MOLLY

I see.

Pause.

Ok Robert, let me take this back to my team; I'll talk to Mark, and I'll see what I can do.

ROBERT

..thank you. If it is possible, I'd be interested in seeing a copy of Mark's speech – you know, to discredit the negative reports...

MOLLY

I'm afraid that's all the time I have. Do keep in touch Robert.

Dial tone.

ROBERT

That was all I heard from Molly and from Target. We never established that 'open dialogue'. It's not like I didn't try...

3

Former CEO Mark Schindele...

2

(demoted to Senior Vice President after the 'Target Canada' fiasco)

ROBERT

responded to my request for an interview with a simple 'No thank you'.

3

Former CEO Aaron Alt

2

(now in charge of a cosmetics company)

ROBERT

said that 'it would be awkward for me to comment at this time'.

3

Former CEO Tony Fisher (now the President of a sports apparel business)

ROBERT

blocked me on LinkedIn. And former CEO Gregg Steinhafel

2

(who was apparently able to retire with his 61-million-dollar severance)

ROBERT

and current Target CEO Brian Cornell both 'saw' my messages, but did not respond.

5

You know something Robert- I cried the day they announced we'd be closing

4

A lot of us cried

5

But I wasn't upset about losing a job... or nervous about where my next paycheque would come from. I was sad to be losing Target.

2

I know a lot of people who were more upset to be losing Target than to be losing a job... so that tells ya something.

4

It really was a weird big old family.

5

Maybe it was the cheers...

3

Or the fact we all went through hell together – and back

4

Liquidation's a great bonding experience...

5

but in the end, that's genuinely what it felt like

2

Losing a family.

3

But we look out for each other.

4

My old manager – he opened a 'Farm Boy' – and he took 30 of us with him. We're a tight community.

5

Robert, not in my 36 years of work have I ever experienced that level of employee relations. We had 120 employees at the store, and I'm sure if you showed me a face – I'd still be able to tell you every person's name.

3

I met my boyfriend at Target. The boy from Electronics. Three years later and we're still together.

2

Our relationship outlived the company.

5

And, you know, Target wasn't exactly the retirement I was expecting... I thought I'd be somewhere hot. My friends said, 'Bob what are you doing applying to Target?

4

Spend time at the cottage.

5

Go back to Florida

4

Work on your backswing

5

But I just like to be useful. Better than sitting around the house, you know. And I thought, maybe I'd be a positive influence on some of the younger ones here.

3

A lot of us still keep in touch

2

Lunches, baby showers

3

Birthdays

5

Every so often I host a Target-themed potluck. See, I stole a lot of the signage and equipment from the old store... so the parties are very 'on brand'. We use one of those old help buttons as a dinner bell. It screams GUEST ASSISTANCE NEEDED IN... and everyone comes running for food.

4

Last April, leading up to the year anniversary of our Cambridge store closing, I called a few old co-workers to see if they wanted to meet for drinks to sorta... cheers the anniversary, you know? Anyways those friends called their friends...

5

...and, well don't you know, one of those friends called me. And I thought- this is going to be a bigger party than our local East Side Mario's can handle.

4

So Bob got in touch and asked if we could do an outdoor barbeque thing down near the river instead. I said, yeah... if you're planning it...

5

Called up the old manager Dan, great guy; and he spread the word to the rest of the Cambridge employees... I guess he still had contact information for most of them – you know through Facebook or whatever.

4

Then Dan called around to the other local Targets – Waterloo, Guelph, I think even one or two in Toronto. All in, we had a group of over 100 employees 'attending' on the Facebook page.

5

And well, I guess I had sorta suggested that I'd get the burgers and hot dogs and what not... but 100 people!? I was looking at this thing on Facebook and now I've got to feed 100 people!? But seeing everyone come together like this... it's worth it-

2

Fire's on!

As the following stories are told; the action unfolds around the audience. Chairs are placed in a circle; a 'fire' is lit; someone strums a guitar; and marshmallows are given to audience members.

3

Ok- this is may be one of the coolest things I've been a part of. And I know everything I've told you has been super cool already... but we're at the barbeque; you know, eating, sharing stories, listening to Bob talk about golf; and as it starts to get dark... and the sun sets over the river... we light a campfire. Then someone from the Waterloo store busts out a guitar, and someone else breaks out the marshmallows.

2

And I remember looking around the circle and thinking just how strange it was that all of us were there because of fucking TARGET; because of a silly big-box store that paid most of us minimum wage and ended up screwing us all over. Like, I wasn't picturing *this* when I applied to work there... and I thought... maybe, somewhere along the way, they did something right.

4

Yeah, the moment around the campfire was nice and all- but what came after was hilarious. Most people came wearing their Target shirts, of course. Or they brought them. And so, when this fire got big enough, people started chucking their shirts into the flames-

3

It was like... therapeutic. Like some sort of cleansing ritual

5

Oh god that smells like sour milk... who worked the milk fridges?

2

It was like... shedding the Target. It had a nice finality about it.

Performers continue to add their shirts to the fire; the guitar strums. ROBERT joins the circle. Eventually, three actors approach the 'fire' box and rummage through the shirts. A shift. Guitar stops.

The fire pit has become the final box of random clothes. Everyone, in a circle around the centre action, watches as these 'customers' rummage through the red shirts.

CUSTOMER

Is this all you have?

A couple 'employees' nod. The three customers leave the circle. Silence.

4

I... I wrote a poem that I'd like to share. It's not like Shakespeare or- but, ok-

*'On brand', here we stand
We're the last liquidation
The victims of failing
Commercialization*

*And after these months
An odd moment for sure
For we could not expect
What we've had to endure*

*It's been faster than fun
and yet, friendlier still
Hang on to the memories
For I surely will*

*I want you to know
That I'd do this again
Cause thanks to this circus
I've a hundred new friends*

*But this isn't goodbye
Please don't be dismayed
A short: see you later
To the cast of Tarjay*

SHANNON moves around the space, asking both performers and audience members if she can take her picture. The viral video cover of Semisonic's Closing Time sung by Target Canada employees plays. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kVvKF4bOIKIs>)

-END-

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