Never Give Up

A short Comedy

by James Hutchison
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Production & Award History

2016

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What the Dickens!
Even Scrooge Was Given a Second Chance

Two Act Comedy, 6M, 3F, Multiple Sets, 100 minutes

Marty Fisher has doubts and fears about getting married and staying in Pine Ridge with his fiancée Tami Cooper and so he’s been focusing on directing the Pine Tree Players Production of *A Christmas Carol* instead of helping his fiancée plan their wedding. On opening night when his Uncle, who’s playing Scrooge, turns up drunk, half the cast gets food poisoning, and Marty gets caught kissing his stage manager Samantha both the production and Marty’s relationship with Tami are on thin ice. As the curtain rises and the show lurches forward Marty will do all he can to save his show while trying to salvage his relationship with Tami.

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Elvis is Dead

10 Minute Comedy, 2M, 1F, Single Set, 10 minutes

Time travellers Dr. Fred Bunson and Commander Robert Frump have travelled back in time to retrieve a lost book and save the universe. With no library card and the book already signed out things look dim for our intrepid time travellers until librarian Sally Knowlton comes to the rescue.

The Blood of a Thousand Chickens!
What would you sacrifice for your people?

10 Minute Comedy, 5M, 1F, Single Set, 10 Minutes

Phallus, the son of Oedipus and Jocasta, the King and Queen of Thebes, wants to marry Clitoris. Unknown to Phallus, Clitoris is actually his sister and Oedipus and Jocasta believe that their son’s love for Clitoris is why the Kingdom was cursed by a pox and now faces a terrible drought and possible starvation. To save the people from the wrath of Zeus, Oedipus must offer the Gods the blood of a thousand chickens and maybe even the life of his own son.
CAST of CHARACTERS

Nigel Davenport A Playwright

Todd Sparks Artistic Director Short Cuts Festival

SETTING

A Theatre

TIME

The present

STORY OF THE PLAY

Nigel Davenport is a playwright who has been entering the Short Cuts Playwriting Festival for years. He’s never won, in spite of submitting hundreds of plays. When Nigel gets a call from Artistic Director Todd Sparks, he thinks his luck has finally changed, until he meets with Todd and Todd tells him that they’d like him to stop submitting to the Festival because he’s a terrible playwright. In fact, three members of this year’s reading committee resigned, two were treated for depression and one tried to commit suicide all because of Nigel’s plays. But instead of giving up this only inspires Nigel to try harder and figure out how to write an award winning play that will win the festival.
For Mom and Dad
NEVER GIVE UP

SCENE i: LOCATION

Setting: A theatre stage.

At Rise: TODD has a huge stack of short ten minute plays all printed out and stacked on a table on the stage.

TODD: That’s the lot then, eh! Five hundred submissions. Five hundred horrible, boring, atrocious plays all from the same dull, boring, and unimaginative mind of Nigel Davenport. Good God. What sort of a creature is he I wonder? What sort of mind comes up with this drudge?

TODD continues to look through the plays as NIGEL DAVENPORT appears from behind the curtain. NIGEL is clearly an odd character and socially awkward. He wears glasses a tweed coat and corduroy pants.

NIGEL: Excuse me? Hello?

TODD: Yes.


TODD: Ah Mr. Davenport. I am so glad you came. I was just looking at your submissions for this year’s festival.

NIGEL: Oh please don’t call me Mr. Davenport. You must call me Nigel.

TODD: Yes – well, Todd Sparks.

NIGEL: I was quite thrilled when I got your call – I must say. I thought – finally Nigel all your hard work has paid off – you’ve finally won the Short Cuts Festival of New Plays.

TODD: Yes…well –

NIGEL: This is the seventh year I’ve entered your little festival. I guess this just proves that persistence pays off.

TODD: Does it.
NIGEL: Oh, yes. I said to myself, Nigel, this year you’re going to win. Nothing is going to stop you.

TODD: Mr. Davenport.

NIGEL: Nigel.

TODD: Nigel. Before you get too excited about things I’m afraid I have some rather bad news.

NIGEL: Oh dear, bad news? Did someone die?

TODD: Why would you think someone died?

NIGEL: You said you’d had some bad news. I thought maybe someone you knew had died. That would be bad news, wouldn’t it?

TODD: Yes, it would.

NIGEL: And I can sympathize with you – let me tell you. I just lost my mom.

TODD: Oh, I’m sorry when did that happen?

NIGEL: About twenty minutes ago.

TODD: Twenty minutes ago!

NIGEL: Yes. Sorry, I know I shouldn’t burden you with my personal troubles but well…my mom…she uh…she died while I was on the bus on my way here to see you – you see.

TODD: We could have postponed the meeting.

NIGEL: Oh, she wouldn’t hear of it.

TODD: No?

NIGEL: No. I was at the hospital earlier. My mom likes her cup of tea in the morning and I like to be there to make it for her. So, I made her a cup of tea and told her that you had called and wanted me to pop round this morning.
TODD: Yes, but I didn’t know your mother was dying. You should have stayed.

NIGEL: That’s what I said. I told her that being with her was far more important – it being so close to the end and all – but you know what she told me?

TODD: What?

NIGEL: She said, “No, you go and see this Mr. Todd Sparks – he wouldn’t have called and wanted to see you unless he had good news. I believe in you son. I believe in your dream. You’ve got talent. You can make something of yourself.” My mom always believed in me. Nobody else did. But she did. I told her that whatever play you chose to produce I’d dedicate it to her. She died a happy woman – knowing that I think.

TODD: I’m so sorry.

NIGEL: Only just got off the phone with the nurse.

TODD: My sympathies.

NIGEL: Thanks.

Beat

NIGEL: So, what play did you pick then?

TODD: Oh, well you submitted so many.

NIGEL: Hundreds.

TODD: Five hundred and six. An impressive number.

NIGEL: I would have submitted more but I ran out of time.

TODD: You know submitting more doesn’t increase your chances of being produced. We only produce one play per playwright. That’s why we ask you to send us only your best work.

NIGEL: These are my best.

TODD: Are they?
NIGEL: Oh yes, I tossed out twice this number. This is the cream of the crop.

TODD: Of course quantity doesn’t always equal quality.

NIGEL: I know that. So which play did you like? Norman makes his mom a cup of tea?

TODD: Um...no.

NIGEL: Norman goes to the movies.

TODD: Uh, no.

NIGEL: Norman does his ironing.

TODD: Nigel don’t you think your plays are a little…

NIGEL: A little short – well this is a short play festival isn’t it?

TODD: No I meant a little too…oh I don’t know…real.

NIGEL: Isn’t that what theatre is supposed to be? Real?

TODD: Well yes, I suppose, but things can be a little too real.

NIGEL: I’m not sure I know what you mean.

TODD: Well take your play, Norman makes his mum a cup of tea.

NIGEL: I love that play.

TODD: Do you.

NIGEL: My mom loved it too.

TODD: Did she?

NIGEL: The idea came to me while I was making my mom a cup of tea.

TODD: Did it.
NIGEL: True story.

TODD: Is it.

NIGEL: Oh yes. All my plays are based on fact. Based on my life. I don’t use my real name in the plays of course that would be silly. But every play I’ve ever written has been based on a true story.

TODD: Yes, but just because something is true doesn’t make it dramatic.

NIGEL: Of course not.

TODD: You need conflict, goals, a theme.

NIGEL: Precisely.

TODD: And…um…well…you’re plays don’t seem to have much conflict.

NIGEL: Well that’s my style. I go for realism. There’s a lot of subtext in what I write.

TODD: Is there.

NIGEL: Oh, yes.

TODD: Really?

NIGEL: Most definitely. Take this one for example.

   *NIGEL grabs a script off the top of the pile.*

NIGEL: Norman waits for a bus. Do you know what it’s about?

TODD: Norman waiting for a bus.

NIGEL: On the surface.

TODD: And below the surface.

NIGEL: It’s really about Norman standing at the bus thinking about how empty his life is. How he’s never been able to meet a woman. How at the age of thirty seven he’s still a virgin. There he
stands – alone in the world – with no one to love him but his mom. So, what’s he going to do? Get a job? Go after his dream. Talk to the red headed girl with the tiny tits that lives across the street from him. If only he could. If only he could talk to the freckled faced beauty that lives next door. But he doesn’t, because he’s too afraid. Afraid that she’ll reject him and the pain of that rejection would be too much. It would shatter him. Drive him over the edge. Make him do something rash like cover himself in gasoline and set himself a-fire allowing the torment of the flames to extinguish the pain in his heart.

TODD: I see.

NIGEL: Subtext.

TODD: Yes, Nigel, but on the page all you’ve written is: Norman waits for a bus. He looks at the sky. He checks his watch. He sighs. He laughs. He chuckles. He sighs. He cries. He sits. He waits for a bus.

NIGEL: And your point?

TODD: Your subtext might be a little too subtle.

NIGEL: Oh I see. Well, monologues are so awkward on stage don’t you think. Now if I was writing a novel it would be easy but I’m not. My love is for the theatre.

TODD: Even so Nigel, there’s no way a reader or an audience would understand the story you’ve told me from the script you’ve written.

NIGEL: Didn’t you like any of my plays?

TODD: None that I read.

NIGEL: Then why did you ask me to drop by?

TODD: Because the reading committee wanted me to ask you to – I’m sorry – to stop submitting to the festival.

NIGEL: Stop submitting.

TODD: Yes.

NIGEL: But why? I pay my entry fees.
TODD: Yes, and we very much appreciate the money but you’re – how can I put this – you’re a terrible playwright, Nigel. Just awful.

NIGEL: I don’t think I’m as bad as all that, am I?

TODD: Three members of the reading committee resigned this year because of your plays. Two members of the committee were treated for depression. And one member attempted suicide.

NIGEL: Because of my plays.

TODD: They were a contributing factor.

NIGEL: I don’t believe it.

TODD: I’m sorry if it hurts to hear the truth but if you’re going to be a writer then you have to develop a tough skin. You have to be able to take criticism and your plays are to be blunt – awful.

NIGEL: You didn’t like any of them?

TODD: No.

NIGEL: You didn’t like Norman takes a bath.

TODD: He takes a bath.

NIGEL: But in the nude. Full frontal male nudity. Isn’t that interesting?

TODD: It’s been done and we’re a dinner theatre so having people’s private parts dangling about can be a little unappetising.

NIGEL: I see. So that was too daring.

TODD: It was a guy in a tub. Taking a bath.

NIGEL: But what about the subtext?

TODD: Did the subtext involve a freckle faced girl with small tits?
NIGEL: No it involved a plump blond with a huge rack.

TODD: Nigel, some people might find your attitude towards women a little sexist.

NIGEL: I don’t mean to be. I just happen to be a breast man.

TODD: So, do we understand each other?

NIGEL: What if I entered fewer plays? Say two or three hundred.

TODD: You’re wasting your time. Maybe your talents lie elsewhere?

NIGEL: But it was my mom’s dying wish that I should win the Short Cuts Playwriting Festival so that I could be one step closer to my dream of having a world premiere on Broadway. I can’t stop. I have to prove to her and the world that her son isn’t a loser. And so, no matter what anyone or any reading committee says I’m not going to give up. If anything, I’m going to try harder.

TODD: Even harder.

NIGEL: Oh yes.

TODD: Oh dear well ha, ha, ha, ha, that’s the spirit. I’m so glad to see it. It proves my point.

NIGEL: Your point.

TODD: I had to make sure you were the right man.

NIGEL: The right man?

TODD: Yes, the right playwright deserving of our most prestigious award.

NIGEL: What award?

TODD: Um well, as Festival Director I’m proud to award you a special juried prize – new this year – and you would be the first recipient of The Noel Coward Short Cut Playwriting Festival’s Most Promising Playwright award.

NIGEL: The Noel Coward award.
TODD: Yes.

NIGEL: But you said you didn’t like my plays.

TODD: That’s before I knew about the subtext.

NIGEL: Of course. Makes all the difference.

TODD: Certainly does.

NIGEL: So, I’m a winner.

TODD: Yes, you are.

NIGEL: The Noel Coward Short Cut Playwriting Festival’s Most Promising Playwright Award. Do I get a plaque?

TODD: Of course. And it comes with a 100 dollar prize.

NIGEL: Oh could life get any better. I can use that money to enter the festival next year.

TODD: Well not quite – there is one condition.

NIGEL: A condition?

TODD: Yes, you see unfortunately you can only win the festival once.

NIGEL: What sort of crazy rule is that?

TODD: We have to make room for new playwrights and new work, do we not? Other’s whose mother’s believe in them. We have to give other people a chance.

NIGEL: Oh, how disappointing.

TODD: Don’t be too disappointed. You could always invite that freckle faced girl from next door to the opening night production of your play – *Norman Makes His Mom a Cup of Tea*.

NIGEL: That’s an idea.

TODD: Isn’t it.
NIGEL: Of course, there’s nothing stopping me from entering under an alias, is there.

TODD: Ha, ha, ha…please don’t.

NIGEL: No, that would be dishonest, and I think a playwright needs to be honest in his writing and in his life.

TODD: Absolutely.

NIGEL: Thank you Todd. This is wonderful. I’ll send you an invitation to my mom’s funeral, if that’s alright.

TODD: You don’t have to.

NIGEL: Oh I want to. You should meet her. In fact, I think I’ll write a play about it.

TODD: About your mom’s funeral?

NIGEL: Yes.

TODD: Are you going to call it, *Norman Goes to a Funeral*?

NIGEL: I think I will. And maybe it’s time I wrote a full length play. How does that sound?

TODD: A full length play.

NIGEL: Yes, maybe you could read it sometime.

TODD: Oh – uh yes – I can hardly wait. Lucky me.

END SCENE