

Never Give Up

Every mother thinks their kid's got talent.

A 10 Minute Comedy

By James Hutchison

Also available from www.jameshutchison.ca

What the Dickens! *Even Scrooge got a second chance.*

When Marty Fisher gets caught kissing his stage manager Samantha and the actor playing Scrooge shows up drunk Marty has to scramble to save the opening night production of a Christmas Carol and his engagement to his fiancée Tami.

Two Act Comedy, 6M, 3W, Multiple Sets, 120 minutes

A Christmas Carol – Two versions available -

When Scrooge's nephew Fred finds some letters Scrooge had written to his sister Fan a long time ago the past is unlocked, and Scrooge learns how his fear of poverty and pursuit of wealth have cost him a chance for love and genuine happiness.

CAST OF 10+ - Two Act Drama, 6M, 4W, Multiple Sets, 120 minutes

CAST OF 25+ - Two Act Drama, 15M, 10W, Multiple Sets, 120 minutes

Under the Mistletoe *Not every romantic evening goes as planned.*

Two couples in their late fifties, one long time friends and the other having just met, try to navigate the tricky road of love, sex and desire while spending a romantic night in the Christmas Themed Suites at the Prairie Dog Inn.

Two Act Romantic Comedy 1M, 1W or 2M, 2W Single Set, 120 minutes

Heart of Stone: A Jessica Quinn Mystery *Trusting the wrong person can be deadly.*

When Jessica Quinn uncovers the truth about her father's killer and the truth behind a woman claiming to be the long-lost daughter of her client Mary McConnell more than one person ends up dead.

Two Act Mystery, 7M, 3W, Multiple Sets, 120 minutes

Stories from Langford *Every town has its secrets.*

Six characters from Langford tell stories from their lives: stories about, jealousy, revenge, love and forgiveness.

Two Act Drama, 1M, 1W, Simple settings, 120 Minutes

Death and the Psychiatrist *Even Death Could Use a Friend*

Feeling depressed about having a job where no one likes him Death goes into therapy with Dr. Thompson in order to help him cope with his guilt.

One Act Comedy, 3M, or 2M, 1W, Single Set, 50 Minutes

Plus, other One Acts and 10 Minute Plays including The Blood of a Thousand Chickens, 500 bucks and a pack of smokes, and Elvis is Dead.

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Never Give Up premiered at the King's Shorts Ten Minute Play Festival in Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia, Canada in 2016. Since then the play has had several productions including The North Park Playwrights Festival in San Diego, California, The Seoul Players 6th Annual Ten Minute Play Festival in Seoul, South Korea, The Warner International Playwrights Festival in Torrington, Connecticut, USA, the Pint Sized Play Festival in Tenby, Wales, UK, The Acme Theatre Productions New Works Winter Festival in Maynard, Massachusetts, USA, and a month long run at the Edinburgh Fringe in 2018 as part of Bite-Size plays popular The Big Breakfast which presents 3 sets of 5 short plays running in rotation.

The Playwright

James Hutchison writes comedies, dramas, and mysteries. He also interviews other playwrights, actors, and directors about the business and creative aspects of theatre, film, and television. You can read his interviews on his blog and download his plays at www.jameshutchison.ca.

Never Give Up – Every mother thinks their kid's got talent.

A Comedy in Ten Minutes

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CAST of CHARACTERS

Nigel Davenport A Playwright

Todd Sparks Artistic Director Short Cuts Festival

The part of the Artistic Director can be cast as female and the name changed to Trudy.

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 committed 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.

SHORTER PLAY DESCRIPTION AND TAG LINE

Never Give Up

Every mother thinks their kid's got talent.

Even though he's an awful playwright Nigel Davenport is determined to win the Short Cuts Playwriting Festival one day and make his mother proud.

For Brad

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

Unbelievable. 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.

NIGEL

Nigel Davenport – playwright – how do you do.

TODD

Ah Mr. Davenport. 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

Um Nigel, before you get too excited about things, I'm afraid I have some rather bad news.

NIGEL

Oh dear, bad news? Why? Did someone die?

TODD

Why would you think someone died?

NIGEL

You said you had 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. I just lost my mom.

TODD

Oh dear, 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 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.

TODD

I'm so sorry. My sympathies.

NIGEL

Thanks. (Beat) So, what play did you pick?

TODD

Oh, well you submitted so many.

NIGEL

Five hundred and six. I would have submitted more but my mom was sick. 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. 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

All my plays are 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. You need conflict, goals, a theme. And your plays don't seem to have much conflict.

NIGEL

Well there's a lot of subtext in what I write. 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 perky nipples 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. 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 committed suicide.

NIGEL

Because of my plays.

TODD

There was a note.

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 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 perky nipples?

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

Oh, I'm sorry, 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. I'll submit a thousand.

TODD

Oh, dear well ha, ha, ha, ha, that's the spirit. I'm so glad to see it. It proves my point. I had to make sure you were the right man deserving of our most prestigious award.

NIGEL

What award?

TODD

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

So, I am a winner. 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 one-hundred-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. You see unfortunately you can only win the festival once and so you'd never be allowed to submit again.

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 mothers 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

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 PLAY