

Real Close to Broadway!

A Full-Length Comedy

by
Dan D'Amario

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Midville Community Theatre desperately needs to find a winner from its playwriting contest to fund their upcoming season. The judging committee, composed of blustery Big Earl; the Mayor, an overworked chairwoman, and two elderly, but still flirty sisters, must whittle the entries down to three. But the Mayor tells Big Earl in confidence he's learned one entry was really written by Neil Simon using a pseudonym. They've got to choose that play to put their little Texas theatre on the map!

The other two selected playwrights, Johnnie Cranler, a tough guy from New York City, and Martin Mishkie, a nerd from Wisconsin, arrive to see their plays performed. The Mayor and Big Earl try to sway the other judges to vote for the play by the absent "Nelson Simmons," but soon the Mayor has different ideas. His daughter, Juleelee, who's starring in all three plays, sees she can achieve her dream of going to Broadway if she hooks up with the playwright from New York City. Unfortunately, she has Johnnie and Martin confused. Chaos ensues when nepotism and desperation clash as the Midville Community Theatre tries to stay open another year!

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

4 m, 4 w, 1 child

BITSY BANNISTER: Chairperson of the Midville Community Theatre Competition. A longtime volunteer who keeps everything organized and moving smoothly.

BIG EARL WATERS: Director of the Midville Community Theatre. Big and loud with cowboy boots and hat. Concerned more with the “big picture.”

JONATHAN CRANLER: New York playwright with a big-city attitude and ego.

MARTIN MISHKIE: First-time playwright from Wisconsin. He is bit naïve, awkward, and nerdy.

LILLIE CARLSSON: Elderly sister and volunteer play reader.

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MAYOR FABIOSKY: Mayor of Midville and leading fundraiser.

JULEELEE FABIOSKY: Leading lady for most of the plays performed; daughter of the Mayor.

LITTLE GIRL: Around 10-years-old, with a big voice.

EXTRAS as audience.

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SETTING

Current day, small town in Texas.

SET

Theatre rehearsal/performance room. Table and moveable chairs required. A curtain divides the front stage from the back. In the second act, the back of the stage becomes Midville's front/performance area and the real front becomes backstage. Act II, Scene 2, requires a small ice cream table and chair set.

SYNOPSIS

Act I:

Scene 1: Giving Scripts (and Warnings!) to the Judges

Scene 2: A Secret Revealed, a Plan Hatched

Scene 3: Big Earl Fights for the Secret Play

Scene 4: Juleelee Dreams of New York City!

Scene 5: Two Playwrights Descend

Scene 6: If Plan A Doesn't Work, Go to Plan B

Act II:

Scene 1: An Actress for All Ages

Scene 2: Ice Cream Dreams

Scene 3: Changing Directions, Choosing a Winner!

ACT I
Scene 1

(AT RISE: Theatre rehearsal room. A table and chairs are setup. BITSY walks out to front center stage and addresses the audience.)

BITSY: Welcome to Midville Community Theatre. There are more than 7,000 community theatres in the United States and community theatres involve more participants, present more performances of more productions and play to more people than any performing art in the country. We are critical to the cultural life of the communities of which we are a part. Your local community theatre typically performs top-shelf Broadway plays, new works from up-and-coming playwrights and provides a host of other activities such as classes in the performing arts, introduction to the theatre for children and apprentice positions for aspiring technicians, directors and administrators.

The backbone of any community theatre is its volunteers. They spend countless hours working both in front of and behind the curtain. Volunteers perform tasks such as screening play submissions, creating sets, making costumes, acting, directing, taking tickets and working the concession stands.

Community theatre survives on patrons who attend the performances and donors – both private and corporate. These are our customers and we pledge to serve them with the highest level of artistic ability and integrity ... until this year.

I should explain. You see, we've been having some financial challenges the past few years, and we really needed to find a hit play that we could produce quickly and would bring in enough money to fund the remainder of our season. That's why we have our annual playwriting competition. It gives new plays a chance to be discovered and gives us a chance to find a diamond in the rough. Of

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course, no one could have imagined ... well, it's easier to show you.

(SHE starts to walk away, then stops and faces the audience again.)

BITSY: *(Continued.)* This is not a normal occurrence so, please, don't hold this against us.

(BITSY walks over and sits at the table, looking through a box of manuscript entries. BIG EARL enters with a slight limp.)

BIG EARL: Hoooooeweeeee! Must be 125 in the shade! Even the cactus are wearing sunglasses. Sorry I'm late – had to run an errand for the little lady. Everything ready for the meeting?

BITSY: Yep, Big Earl. Got all the entries right here.

BIG EARL: How many did we get?

BITSY: About 40.

BIG EARL: Forty entries?! That's all? We had more than that last year, didn't we?

BITSY: Yes, Big Earl, 57.

BIG EARL: Fifty-seven last year and the best of the bunch was that piece of pasture plaster ... what was it called?

BITSY: "Cry For Help – A Mime's Story." It wasn't that bad.

BIG EARL: Wasn't that bad?! It had no speaking parts! It cost next to nothing to produce and we still lost money on it. How the heck did that pile of mime dung win anyway?

BITSY: You remember the playwright who flew in for the weekend? He stayed with the Carlsson sisters

BIG EARL: Ah, yes ... and their two votes were the difference. We can't let that happen again this year. We've got to find a commercial hit in that stack of 40!

BITSY: I'd be happy with one that's got a decent plot and interesting characters.

BIG EARL: You don't understand, Bitsy. We need to pack the main stage for at least 8 weeks. We can't generate the donations we need to stay afloat without a big hit.

BITSY: Is it really that bad, Big Earl?

BIG EARL: It's like drilling for oil in El Paso.

End of Freeview

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