

TITLE OF PLAY

1

or
TITLE OF PLAY, CENTERED

CHARACTORS:

RHYS, an Artistic Director in his 40s or 50s

KATHLEEN, a woman of a certain age, a reader of plays

GAIL, an excellent contest moderator

*Lights up on RHYS, KATHLEEN, and GAIL,
drinking their beverages of choice at an
outdoor café table on a beautiful summer
evening as night begins to fall.*

GAIL

We need a New Plays from the Heartland style sheet. Who wants to write it?

KATHLEEN

I'll write it.

RHYS

(overlapping) I'll write it.

KATHLEEN

Sure, you write it.

RHYS

No, you write it.

KATHLEEN

No, no, you go ahead.

RHYS

No, you write it.

GAIL

(over her Scotch) Well, I hope we get better dialogue than this.

KATHLEEN

We will, we will. The writers handle their content in a variety of creative ways. If only they'd follow the guidelines!

RHYS

So there are guidelines?

KATHLEEN

Oh, yes, at the website!

RHYS

But the writers don't follow them?

GAIL

Not all of them. I have to remove the author's name from a lot of submissions, and if they submit a PDF I can't do that, and the entry has to be disqualified.

RHYS

But there's no actual style sheet?

KATHLEEN

There's a wonderful style sheet for the 10-Minute play contest, and it would be good to model our New Plays from the Heartland style sheet on that.

RHYS

What does it say?

KATHLEEN

It *shows* how to center character names, indent stage directions and put them in italics, or in parentheses within a speech. It says to provide at least a one-inch margin on all sides. A slightly larger margin on the left, of one and a quarter inches, would make it easier to punch holes in scripts for the actors.

RHYS

So writers don't read guidelines?

GAIL

Go figure.

KATHLEEN

Courier as a font, point size 12, for readability. Dire consequences for tiny fonts and flagrant abuse of the page and character limits. I need more wine.

RHYS

What about page numbers?

KATHLEEN

Yes, please! *(lifting her glass and looking around)*

RHYS

What about length?

KATHLEEN

Well, the guidelines give a time length of 30 to 45 minutes and suggest that the playwrights read their work aloud to test that, but if they submit at the last minute, as some do, it's usually quite clear that they've not timed the play and sometimes not even proofread it.

She looks despairingly at her empty wine glass. The poetic sky darkens almost imperceptibly.

RHYS

Does the New Plays committee give those last-minute plays and sloppily presented plays the benefit of the doubt?

GAIL

The way we are giving this waiter the benefit of the doubt?

KATHLEEN

Yes. We are looking for a good play, a good plot, good characters, and all around good writing from Midwestern playwrights. And we know that these are new plays, in need of development! But good plays deserve a good presentation, and only six plays are chosen as finalists, to move on to the judge. The playwrights owe it to their own work to submit it in the best shape possible, and to make easy to read!

Suddenly a waiter appears, one who wasn't in the list of characters at the beginning of the play, even though the setting is a restaurant, suggesting a last-minute deus ex machina and/or last-minute submission and a lack of proofreading. He has champagne! And three champagne flutes on a tray! He resembles a young Mike Dobbins...

GAIL

(through tears) A toast! To the Mike Dobbins Memorial New Plays from the Heartland!

CURTAIN