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Dramatic Publishing

EVERYDAY HEROES

By
LAURIE BROOKS



Dramatic Publishing
Woodstock, Illinois • England • Australia • New Zealand

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(EVERYDAY HEROES)

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For Joanna, Liz and Stephanie, three everyday heroes.

IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

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Everyday Heroes received its equity premiere at The Coterie Theatre, Kansas City, Mo., March 2, 2004.

CAST

Win Sam Cordes
Jo Judson Andi Meyer
Shawna. Angela Wildflower Polk
Kurt Richard Stubblefield
Cash McKenzie/Ms. Branch/Dr. Krakauer Heidi
VanMiddlesworth
Payton Powers/Raphael Jimenez. Sam Wright

PRODUCTION STAFF AND CREW

Director Jeff Church
Set Design Jason Harris
Costume Design Georgiana Londre
Lighting Design Art Kent
Sound Design David Kiehl
Stage Manager Amy Abels Owen

The Olympic Arts Festival, Kennedy Center Imagination Celebration of Salt Lake City, in partnership with the University of Utah's Department of Theatre, presented the world premiere of *Everyday Heroes*.

CAST

Win Chris Johnston
Kurt Tyler Johnson
Shawna Sheryl Nichols
Jo Judson Shana Wiersum
Payton Powers/Raphael Jimenez Eric McGraw
Cash McKenzie/Ms. Branch/Dr. Krakauer Shannon Hollinger

PRODUCTION STAFF AND CREW

Director Margo Andrews
Producer David Dynak
Assistant Director/Stage Manager Linda L. Brown
Set Design/Technical Director S. Glen Brown
Lighting Design Megan McCormick
Costume Design Brenda Van der Wiel
Sound Design Brian Burchett
Fight Choreography Paul Kiernan
Camera Operators Mario Mendez, Justin Morris,
Bethany Johnson

* * * *

Special thanks to Jeff Church, David Dynak, Margo Andrews, Janet Wolf, Elaine S. Harding, retired firefighter Glen Judson, Lieutenant Dave Schulman, Nassau County Police Department, Diane Lutz, and Elise and Jerry Lazar.

FROM THE PLAYWRIGHT:

The most compelling theatre raises questions rather than determines answers. Good theatre begins a dialogue that lingers long after the lights have dimmed on the action in the theatre space. If the questions are compelling enough, the debates that grow out of them can have a lasting effect, changing viewpoints and altering attitudes. No one knew this better than the Greeks, who developed a theatre that would instruct its people on how to conduct their lives through demonstrating the consequences of ill-chosen actions.

This play grew out of my desire to pursue three questions: What happens in the aftermath of heroism, if the hero harbors a terrible secret? How does the frequently distorted truth of the media become more valid than reality? What are the consequences of society's silencing of the emotional lives of young men? From these ideas, the character Win Lawrence emerged, a young man who finds himself lauded as a hero but knows his heroism is predicated on lies. Even as he becomes a media darling, he is torn between two equal forces—loyalty to his family and the insistent voice of his own conscience.

As Win explores his choices and makes his decisions, I hope his journey will raise questions for you—questions about the creation of truth and lies, loyalty and survival, obligations to others and to ourselves—and begin a dialogue between friends, parents and children, teachers and students that will extend the life of the play long after the last words of the performance. Ironically, this play was created during the summer prior to 9/11. The events of that terrible day redefined our perceptions of heroism, and made us aware that everyday heroes are always among us.

EVERYDAY HEROES

A Full-length Play

CHARACTERS:

WIN 16 years old
KURT. 18 years old, Win's brother
SHAWNA 16 years old, Win's friend
JO JUDSON. 30, female firefighter
ACTOR I (female) Cash McKenzie, Ms. Branch, Dr.
 Krakauer
ACTOR II (male) Payton Powers, Raphael Jimenez
CAMERA OPERATOR I (male or female)
CAMERA OPERATOR II (optional) (male or female)

TIME: The present.

- The play takes place on a bare stage. At center is a raised platform with steps that rise to a smaller platform with a door. Somewhere on the platform is a television set.

- A live camera (and camera person) projects the news scenes as they occur, creating a simultaneous broadcast of the action. Thus, the audience sees the action in two ways: as the actors play it and simultaneous close-up projections. These projections are sometimes skewed, distorted, not quite real. There is a sense that the news and the news-people are larger than life.

- The lyrics to the Nightshade theme are included in the play. Producers may create their own music.
- Two large U.S. maps are hung on stage with red marked routes that crisscross the country. On the platform throughout the play is a packed duffle bag.
- TV news characters remain on stage throughout the play, watching the action. No effort is made to conceal their doubling as other characters. These additional characters are created through actors' posture and voice.

EVERYDAY HEROES

(WIN in spotlight.)

WIN. Most of the time I try to be invisible. I go to school, study, do my chores, take care of my mother. I do what's expected of me and keep my head down. Try not to call too much attention to myself. That's in the daytime. At night, I dream. And even though the dreams are different, they're always the same. I'm traveling. On the road to somewhere and no one cares. No, that's good, because then I don't have to feel bad because I'm leaving. Most of the time I'm on this monster black Harley, the engine humming underneath me, screaming down the highway. All the small towns look the same—banks, hardware stores, supermarkets. But here's the best part, nobody knows who I am. I could be anybody. Anybody at all. Invisible.

(LIGHTS cross-fade. WIN studies a map. Enter KURT.)

KURT. Guess what, Boy Scout.

WIN. You won the lottery.

KURT. Almost as good. I'm starting in the game tomorrow. *(Sports announcer voice.)* Here's Kurt Lawrence on the mound. He winds up...and there's the pitch. Stee-rike! Looks like a no-hitter today, Bob. Tell us, Mr.

Lawrence, how does it feel to be the hottest young pitcher in baseball? Well, Bob, baseball's been very, very good to me.

WIN. Oh, you're good. Real intelligent.

KURT. That's right. I am good. Today is the beginning of a star in the making.

WIN. I washed your uniform.

KURT. Good. What's today's route?

WIN. The Appalachian Trail, all the way from North Carolina to Upstate New York. People hike it.

KURT. Why would anyone want to walk that far when you can drive?

WIN. Never mind.

KURT. Gold mining in California, climbing the red rocks or whatever in Arizona... I don't get it.

WIN. It's called adventure, Kurt. Here. You gotta sign these papers for me.

KURT. What are they?

WIN. Stupid forms that say I'll follow the rules of the classroom. (*KURT signs.*)

KURT. Like you wouldn't. Hey, I'm getting pretty good at this forging. Looks just like her signature. All those loopy letters and everything.

WIN. The telephone company called again.

KURT. You tell 'em she wasn't home?

WIN. Yeah, but they didn't buy it. So I told 'em she sent the check yesterday.

KURT. Good. Where is she?

WIN. Upstairs.

KURT. Did you check on her when you got home?

WIN. Yeah, I checked on her.

KURT. Well?

WIN. She was sleeping.

KURT. At three o'clock?

WIN. She was up earlier. It's just a nap.

KURT. She was okay at lunch?

WIN. Yeah. I made her some soup.

KURT. Did she eat?

WIN. Yeah. She's doing good.

KURT. Okay. Okay. Did you remember to check her room again?

WIN. Every inch. Nothing. It's clean.

KURT. You check the bathroom?

WIN. I ought to know the drill by now. Besides, she's gonna make it this time. I know it.

KURT. Yeah, I've heard that one before.

WIN. She went to that counselor, didn't she? And she ironed.

KURT. She what?

WIN. She ironed my shirt.

KURT. She ironed your shirt.

WIN. I'll ask her to do one of yours tomorrow.

KURT. I can iron my own shirts.

WIN. I think this time is different, Kurt. She wants to stop.
For us.

KURT. For you, Boy Scout.

WIN. What are you talking about?

KURT. Do you think she'd do it for me? (*Silence.*) Like she'd ever iron my shirts.

WIN. I believe her this time.

KURT. Don't. Don't be stupid.

WIN. It's not stupid.

KURT. How many times has she promised you?

WIN. Why can't you be hopeful for once? It wouldn't kill you.

KURT. Hopeful? That's a candy-ass word if I ever heard one. Because I'm not "hopeful." Why do you talk like that?

WIN. Sorry. I forgot how confusing two-syllable words are for you.

KURT. Shut up, Boy Scout.

WIN. Here. You gotta sign this one, too. (*KURT signs.*) Aren't you gonna ask me what you're signing?

KURT. No. I'm not. I trust you.

WIN. I went to the store and got those cookies you like.

KURT. Good. I could eat a couple thousand. That girl called again last night. Sharon or something.

WIN. Shawna?

KURT. That's it.

WIN. What'd she say?

KURT. She wanted to talk to you, that's all.

WIN. Did she say she'd call back?

KURT. No.

WIN. Did she leave her number?

KURT. No.

WIN. Thanks for asking.

KURT. I didn't know it was important. Where's the car keys?

WIN. In the freezer.

KURT. That's a new one.

WIN. She found 'em in the lamp. She got halfway down the driveway before I stopped her.

KURT. I better keep 'em on me for now.

WIN. Kurt?

KURT. Yeah.

WIN. Mom wants to come to your game.

KURT. I don't want her at the game.

WIN. I'll watch her. I'll make sure she's okay.

KURT. Not good enough.

WIN. I won't even let her have a jump-starter. Not even if she begs.

KURT. No. Not one more time.

WIN. Give her a chance, Kurt.

KURT. A chance? Like the chance when she got so trashed that I had to walk her home because she was too fall-ing-down drunk to drive? How about the chance when she laughed so loud that no one could hear the game? How about so drunk she propositioned the coach for a little fun after the game?

WIN. That's a lie. You didn't hear what she said to him.

KURT. No, but a few hundred other people did. Why do you always stick up for her? You don't owe her anything. She's just the woman who gave birth to us. And that was our bad luck.

WIN. Shut up, Kurt.

KURT. A couple sober days and you think you're in Disney World. Come on, Mom, let's ride the merry-go-round.

WIN. Shut up, Kurt, I mean it.

KURT. Get back. He's getting mad. Is the Boy Scout pissed off? Guess he's not "hopeful" anymore. (*WIN charges his brother. They fall to the floor. KURT quickly overpowers WIN.*) What do you have to say now, Boy Scout?

WIN. Get off me.

KURT. Not until you say you won't trust her. I didn't spend all this time and energy raising you up so that you

could blow it for both of us. We've managed to get this far without a major disaster and I aim to keep it that way.

WIN. Get off me. (*WIN struggles.*)

KURT. Okay, Boy Scout. Get up. (*KURT releases WIN.*)

You're gonna have to get a lot tougher or you're gonna get eaten alive. If she doesn't kill you those thugs at school will. If you're smart you'll listen to me and take my advice.

WIN. I know. I know.

KURT. Get yourself a posse, some friends.

WIN. I got friends.

KURT. Yeah, a coupla girls and that geek, what's his name.

WIN. I don't choose my friends by how many fights they win.

KURT. Easy for you to say. I got your back. That's my job. But I won't be around forever.

WIN. I know.

KURT. I just want to be sure you don't go into la-la land with Mom. She's not going to get better. I don't care what she promises.

WIN. You don't know that for sure.

KURT. Yes, I do. A couple more years and you can have that adventure. In the meantime, I got to get to bed early. You got mom detail tonight.

WIN. It's your turn.

KURT. I got the game tomorrow. I gotta get some sleep.

WIN. I was going out tonight.

KURT. So go out. Just don't be late. I'll watch her till you get home. Then you take over.

WIN. Okay, but you owe me.

KURT. I don't owe you squat. (*KURT picks WIN up and swings him around. SOUND of breaking glass. Everything stops.*) Now look what you did.

WIN. I did?

KURT. Never mind. Get outa here. I gotta get this cleaned up.

WIN. I'll help. We both did it.

KURT. Get out. (*SOUND of MOM's voice calling, "Win!"*) She's coming. Get out!

WIN. No fighting, okay?

KURT. Okay. Hurry up. (*WIN moves to exit.*) Win.

WIN. Yeah?

KURT. Don't bring her to my game.

(LIGHTS cross-fade. Night. KURT watches TV. Simultaneous, overlapping PROJECTIONS of the news scenes are seen. TV news. MUSIC.)

CASH MCKENZIE. In today's world it's even more important to stay on top of what's happening, to keep informed on the events of the day as they unfold. When you want to know, we keep you in the know. I'm Cash McKenzie, and I'll tell it like it is, no holds barred.

PAYTON POWERS. And I'm Payton Powers. I'll take you to the heart of the story, throw open the windows of truth and give you the bottom line. All the news, guests, innovations, trends and events, weather and traffic. Every day. All day.

CASH MCKENZIE. On the Everyday Show...what you need to know...

PAYTON POWERS. ...the way you want it told.

VOICE-OVER. Payton Powers and Cash McKenzie, your friends in the news.

KURT. My friends in the news.

(Outside SOUNDS of laughter, joking. KURT clicks off TV. PROJECTIONS out. Enter WIN.)

WIN. What are you doing up?

KURT. Mom detail.

WIN. It's not late.

KURT. Never mind.

WIN. Is she all right?

KURT. *She's* all right.

WIN. What happened to your face?

KURT. I told you not to be "hopeful." It's the same thing all over again. Just another happy day at home.

WIN. What happened?

KURT. I was trying to sleep but this crashing woke me up, so I came upstairs. And what do you think I saw? She was sitting at the kitchen table, downing shots. I was right about her, Boy Scout, I knew she'd never quit. A thousand promises that add up to zero. Right then, looking at her, I saw my future stretching out like some endless highway. You and me tied to her for the rest of our lives.

WIN. Shit! Did you fight?

KURT. What do you think? I poured the rest of the bottle down the sink. She came at me. I put my arms up to block her punches, but she got one past me and connected...right here. When I got up I...I just lost it. I shook her and shook her and shook her. She looked right

at me. God, she looked like a wild animal. Then she just went limp. Passed out, I guess.

WIN. Is she all right?

KURT. Yeah, she's all right.

WIN. I'll go check on her.

KURT. She's sleeping. I carried her upstairs and put her to bed. She's out cold. (*Car horn honks.*)

WIN. They're waiting for me.

KURT. You're not going anywhere. I've gotta get some sleep.

WIN. I won't be long, Kurt.

KURT. I'm done with mom detail tonight.

WIN. You said yourself she's out cold. We're gonna pick up Shawna. She's waiting for me.

KURT. Boy Scout likes a girl.

WIN. Give me a break, Kurt.

KURT. No, you give me a break. I got a game tomorrow. (*Car horn honks.*)

WIN. I gotta go.

KURT. Wait. There is a solution. (*KURT takes a key out of his pocket.*)

WIN. Put the key away. I'm not locking her in again.

KURT. Why not? It worked before. She's passed out anyway. She won't wake up until morning.

WIN. It's not right.

KURT. Right? Is it right that she breaks her promises? Is it right that she controls our lives? Don't talk to me about what's right. (*Car honks again.*) Shut up. He's coming. (*Pause.*) Look. You can unlock the door when you get home.

WIN. What if she wakes up and finds out?

KURT. I told you, she's out cold.

WIN. I don't know.

KURT. Then stay home with her for the rest of your life.

I'm going to bed.

WIN. Wait. Wait.

KURT. What?

WIN. You really think it'll be okay?

KURT. I think when she wakes up she won't know what planet she's on. Just don't be out too late.

(WIN exits. LIGHTS cross-fade. SOUNDS of laughing young people, car doors slamming, driving away. IMAGES of fire. SOUNDS of fire—crackling, burning, hissing. Smoke. TV NEWS MUSIC. PROJECTIONS. SOUND of police band radio reporting the fire. Multiple, overlapping voices of news reporters.)

Late-breaking news report... This just in...a teenager...a fire...a daring rescue...we're here at the scene of the fire... Four-alarm blaze...119 Trevor Place... Fire erupted on the second floor just past midnight...in the Woodlawn Park section of the city...described as a smoke-filled inferno...

(Sirens. KURT and WIN are seen in the smoke. The two boys struggle. WIN pushes KURT. He falls. A firefighter (JO JUDSON) passes through the smoke. She tackles WIN to the ground. He gets up, pummels her. She prevents him from re-entering the fire. WIN screams once, "Mom!" LIGHTS cross-fade. TV NEWS MUSIC. PROJECTIONS.)

This is the end of the excerpt. The following pages are an after-play interactive forum.

Everyday Heroes After-play Interactive Forum

Designed and written by Laurie Brooks

At the end of the play the curtain call is held until the end of the forum. After the blackout, the facilitator, who introduces him/herself and invites the audience to participate in the Forum, greets the audience.

Agree and Disagree Statements

Facilitator: Hello. My name is _____ and I'd like to ask you for your help. I'd like us to spend some time talking about the story we've just seen. I know I have some thoughts and questions about the people and their choices in the story. Let's begin with some opinions. I'd like to read you a series of statements. As I read each statement, stand up if you agree to show your support, or if you disagree, remain seated in protest.

1. It was not Win and Kurt's responsibility to take care of their mother.
2. It is okay to lie to protect a family member.
3. Win is right when he says, "A lie doesn't count if it doesn't hurt anybody."
4. Kurt Lawrence is a good brother to Win.

5. When something is on the news we automatically assume it is true.
6. Jo is right when she says, “Men have this unwritten rule, thou shalt not talk.”
7. Win Lawrence was not really a hero.
8. The truth is more important than loyalty.
9. Anyone can be a hero.
10. Anyone can be an everyday hero.

Exploration: Lies, deceptions, half-truths and denial

Facilitator: There are over fifty lies told in *Everyday Heroes*—deceptions, half-truths and denial, when someone can’t admit the truth to themselves or others, maybe because it’s too painful. What are some of the lies you remember from the play?

Audience responds.

The Facilitator offers positive, neutral responses to audience members after they speak, such as, “Thank you.” or “I didn’t think of that.”

Facilitator: Who was in denial in the play? What were they in denial about?

Audience responds.

Facilitator: Do you think that in this play one lie led to another? Which lie do you think caused the most damage?

Audience responds.

Facilitator: I'd like to give Kurt and Win a chance to speak about this. Let's ask the boys to join us.

Kurt and Win enter. They wear different clothes so it is clear they have begun their new life and we are looking back on the past.

Facilitator: How are you doing?

Boys each respond with one or two sentences about their new life. Keep it brief, specific and use clues from the play.

Facilitator: Kurt, we've been talking about your experiences during the time of the fire, and I'm wondering if you'd be willing to share some thoughts with us. Looking back on what happened, if you could take back one lie, which one would it be?

Kurt responds. His answers are brief and specific.

Facilitator: How about you, Win? Which lie would you take back?

Win responds with different thoughts.

Reflection: Unexpected Mentors

Facilitator: Sometimes random people take an interest in someone else and that changes their life. Like Jo did with Kurt and Win. I wonder how many of you here tonight have known someone whose caring changed your life, maybe someone outside the family who didn't have to care? Raise your hand if you've had that experience. That's a lot. Kurt and Win, will you share with us how Jo changed your lives?

Kurt and Win each respond with different specifics. Avoid clichés.

Facilitator: (To the audience.) I'd like to hear from you about the person who has made a difference in your life. I wish we had time to hear all your stories, but just give us a sentence or a phrase about your mentor and what that person did for you. You don't have to raise your hands, just stand if you'd like to share and take turns. Start your sentence with, "I learned or I realized..."

Facilitator steps back, allowing the audience to respond on their own.

Facilitator: Thank you for coming and thank you for sharing...

Win interrupts.

Win: Can I say something?

Facilitator: Sure. Go ahead.

Win: My mom told me to watch for my chance when it comes sliding down the highway. I'm just hoping that if you get a chance to help someone out—maybe be a mentor to someone—you'll grab onto that chance and take it before it slips away.

Kurt joins his brother to show his support.

Facilitator: Thank you, boys. And thank you for coming and thanks for being an everyday hero. Now give yourselves and the entire cast of *Everyday Heroes* a big hand.

Actors take their curtain call.

End Forum.