



Working Without An Agent

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Sep 01, 2018 CRAFT



As playwrights, we are our own worst critics. Most of us are odd creatures of hypocrisy who enjoy our solitude in dark corners of coffee shops. We would like to be left alone so we can write this mess of words we think might be a play, in peace. We are scared to reveal these Word docs and scribbles because we are pretty sure it's garbage. However, we need to leave our little nooks and collaborate because words left silent on a page are not a play. Playwrights must venture into the forest of submissions and face the monster that feeds our inner worst critic: rejection.

For playwrights, the definition of rejection is: it's going to happen...a lot. One solution to fight this monster is to find an agent. Agent submissions seem to have a secret power that seduces playwrights. Agents hold a key that will get a playwright past the dreaded barrier of, "no unsolicited plays."

While this kind of access is of course powerful, useful, and intoxicating, it leaves many unrepresented playwrights feeling helpless. A helpless playwright is prone to spiral as our inner critic eats us alive with whispers like, "If you're not good enough for an agent, then your play isn't good enough, then you are not good enough..." until we are back in our dark corners staring at a submission opportunity, terrified to hit the send button. However, this fear is a foe we unrepresented playwrights can conquer because there is strength in numbers.

Any playwright will tell you that writing is a discipline. The same can be

said about submissions; the more you submit, the better your chances are of being accepted. I'm not a mathematician, but it's common sense the more you put into something, the greater the outcome. By keeping track of deadlines, setting a goal, and submitting to numerous playwriting opportunities, you increase your chances of acceptance. Rejection is always lurking in the shadows, but that monster doesn't have to feed your critic; it can feed your career.

When a theatre company rejects your play, they have simultaneously learned your name and your writer's voice. When you submit again next year, the theatre will watch your writing grow. Now, you are doing something greater than submitting a play; you are building a professional relationship with the theatre. Instead of being your own worst critic, you are now your own best agent.

RACHEL BYKOWSKI