

The Writer

NORM FOSTER



"I believe every single person in the audience of *The Writer* will have a story that puts them in the world of the play. Norm Foster puts us in that world with humour, seriousness, compassion, frustration and understanding. And just for fun, there is a bombshell of a revelation that will have your eyeballs popping . . . Foster gives Blake a speech to his father in Act II that is so true, so moving that it leaves one limp with emotion."

—Lynn Slotkin, *The Slotkin Letter*

"Foster is so talented and comic that he adroitly assigns lines to an unseen lady next door who has the house howling with laughter."

—Mike Keenan, *Niagara Now*

"*The Writer* provides a sometimes-gut-wrenching experience many of us have dealt with in our own lives and finds shafts of light and gentle humor throughout . . . *The Writer* is simply one of Norm Foster's best efforts."

—Mike Saunders, *Fine Music*

Also by Norm Foster

Bedtime Stories

Dear Santa

Ethan Claymore

A Foster Christmas

The Foster Season

The Foursome

The Gentleman Clothier

Hilda's Yard

Jasper Station

Jenny's House of Joy

Jonas and Barry in the Home

Kiss the Moon, Kiss the Sun

The Ladies Foursome

The Long Weekend

The Melville Boys

Mending Fences

Ned Durango (with Leslie Arden)

Office Hours

Old Love

On a First Name Basis

One-Actmanship

Opening Night

Outlaw

Self-Help

Sinners

Skin Flick

Storm Warning

Triple Play

Wrong for Each Other

The Writer

NORM FOSTER



Playwrights Canada Press

TORONTO

The Writer © Copyright 2020 by Norm Foster
First edition: November 2020

Jacket illustration and design by Patrick Gray

Playwrights Canada Press
202-269 Richmond St. W., Toronto, ON M5V 1X1
416.703.0013 | info@playwrightscanada.com | www.playwrightscanada.com

No part of this book may be reproduced, downloaded, or used in any form or by any means without the prior written permission of the publisher, except for excerpts in a review or by a licence from Access Copyright, www.accesscopyright.ca.

For professional or amateur production rights, please contact:
The GGA
250 The Esplanade, Suite 304 Toronto, ON M5A 1J2
416.928.0299, <http://ggagency.ca/apply-for-performance-rights/>

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication
Title: The writer / Norm Foster.
Names: Foster, Norm, 1949- author.
Description: A play.
Identifiers: Canadiana (print) 20200364286 | Canadiana (ebook) 20200364340 | ISBN 9780369101372 (softcover) | ISBN 9780369101389 (PDF) | ISBN 9780369101396 (EPUB) | ISBN 9780369101402 (Kindle)
Classification: LCC PS8561.O7745 W75 2020 | DDC C812/.54—dc23

Playwrights Canada Press operates on Mississaugas of the Credit, Wendat, Anishinaabe, Métis, and Haudenosaunee land. It always was and always will be Indigenous land.

We acknowledge the financial support of the Canada Council for the Arts—which last year invested \$153 million to bring the arts to Canadians throughout the country—the Ontario Arts Council (OAC), Ontario Creates, and the Government of Canada for our publishing activities.



Canada Council
for the Arts

Conseil des arts
du Canada



ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL
CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO
an Ontario government agency
un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario

Canada



ONTARIO
CREATES | ONTARIO
CRÉATIF

for Robert Brickell

The Writer was first produced at the Foster Festival in St. Catharines, Ontario, from June 19 to July 5, 2019, with the following cast and creative team:

Donald Wellner: Guy Bannerman
Blake Wellner: Jamie Williams

Director: Patricia Vanstone
Set and Costume Design: Peter Hartwell
Lighting Design: Chris Malkowski
Stage Manager: Carolyn MacKenzie
Apprentice Stage Manager: Melanie Coomber
Production Manager: David Costello

Characters

Donald Wellner

ages sixty-eight to seventy-five during the course of the play

Blake Wellner

ages forty-two to forty-nine during the course of the play

Place

The main living area of Donald Wellner's one-bedroom apartment. There is a small beer fridge in part of the room. There is also one couch and one chair. And there is a desk with an old typewriter on it. There is a door to the apartment and another door that leads to the bedroom and bathroom area and a third entrance that leads to the kitchen.

Act One

SCENE ONE

Seven years ago. October. Lights up. DONALD Wellner enters from the kitchen. He is followed by BLAKE Wellner.

DONALD: Oh, and I have a beer fridge too. See? I keep it out here because there's no room in the kitchen.

BLAKE: A beer fridge in the living room?

DONALD: I know. A dream come true. Would you like a beer?

BLAKE: Sure.

DONALD: Attaboy. The sun is over the yardarm, right?

DONALD gets two cans of beer out of the beer fridge.

BLAKE: So, you're okay with living here?

DONALD: Oh absolutely, yes.

BLAKE: Hmm.

DONALD: Why? What's wrong with it?

BLAKE: Well, it's a lot smaller than what you're used to. I mean, you're a rich man, Dad. I think you can afford to get a better place.

DONALD: Oh, this is just temporary.

BLAKE: It is?

DONALD: Oh, yes. Yes. Your mother and I will work things out. You'll see.

BLAKE: Dad, you don't rent an apartment if you think things are going to work out.

DONALD: It's a short-term rental.

BLAKE: Why didn't you go to a hotel?

DONALD: That would be even smaller. No, your mother and I will get past this in no time.

BLAKE: You think so?

DONALD: Oh, yes. We're already talking.

BLAKE: Are you?

DONALD: We spoke on the phone last night. Had a very positive conversation.

BLAKE: When she told you never to call her again? That conversation?

DONALD: That was only a small part of the conversation.

BLAKE: Dad, I was at Mom's last night. I heard the conversation. That was the conversation.

DONALD: No, look. Don't you worry. It'll work itself out.

BLAKE: I'm not worried. I'm forty-two years old. I'm beyond worrying what you and Mom do in your relationship. I just want you both to be happy. That's all I want.

DONALD: And we will be. We'll figure this out.

BLAKE: You're sixty-eight, Dad. Shouldn't you have life figured out by now?

DONALD: You never figure life out, Blake. That's what makes it so exciting. If I could figure life out, I wouldn't want to live it. You have to live each day as if you're riding a Brahma bull and you're about to get thrown off its back onto the humbling dirt below. That's how you live.

BLAKE: Do you think that's how Mom feels?

DONALD: Your mother is different. She likes being settled. She doesn't like surprises.

BLAKE: And you do?

DONALD: I like not knowing what's around the next corner.

BLAKE: Uh-huh. Well, you're probably better off that way because I have a feeling that around the next corner is an eighteen-wheeler coming at you head-on. I see you're still writing on this old Underwood.

DONALD: I wrote *A Kind Heart* on that typewriter. That's my lucky typewriter.

BLAKE: You wrote one hit play on this typewriter thirty-five years ago. And that makes it your lucky typewriter?

DONALD: Hey, *A Kind Heart* put you and your sister through university. It put a roof over your head. A damn nice roof. So don't knock my typewriter.

BLAKE: All right. Don't get excited. So, what are you working on these days?

BLAKE reads the sheet of paper that's in the typewriter.

Cast in Stone.

DONALD: A very provocative piece. Filled with angst, intrigue, and unrequited love. It will shine a light on social injustice across the land.

BLAKE: Page one.

DONALD: Just getting started. But, I think it's an important play. It'll make people think.

BLAKE: An important play. Just what the world needs.

DONALD: You know, I wish you wouldn't mock me like that, Blake.

BLAKE: I'm not mocking you.

DONALD: You are mocking me.

BLAKE: All right, maybe a little bit.

DONALD: And you have no right to mock. You have no idea what goes on in a writer's mind.

BLAKE: Dad, I'm a writer.

DONALD: A travel writer.

BLAKE: And that's not writing?

DONALD: That's reporting. That's not creating.

BLAKE: Thanks, Dad.

DONALD: Well, isn't it? You get on a plane, you fly someplace, and you say, "Oh look. The pyramids." And then you write about the pyramids. The pyramids have been there for thousands of years, Blake. You didn't create the pyramids. You're reporting on the pyramids. Then you get on another plane and you say, "Oh, look. Stonehenge." And you write about Stonehenge. It is nothing like what I do.

BLAKE: What you did, Dad. What you did.

DONALD: What do you mean?

BLAKE: You wrote one play.

DONALD: I've written many plays.

BLAKE: Okay. I'm sorry. One play that's been produced.

DONALD: All over the world, I might add. Nine hundred and forty-eight performances on Broadway. Two years on the West End. Touring productions as far away as Australia. Revival upon revival. Production after production.

BLAKE: Dad, I'm your son. Please don't recite your resumé to me.

DONALD: I just want to make sure you don't forget it.

BLAKE: I won't forget it. Believe me. It's like a shadow on my chest x-ray.

DONALD: And well it should be. That was a joke.

BLAKE: I know. I love you, Dad.

DONALD: I love you too, son.

BLAKE: God.

DONALD: So, do you want to stay and watch the football game with me? There's a football game on today.

BLAKE: You don't have a TV.

DONALD: There's a TV in the bedroom. We can watch it in there. And I've got potato chips. Barbecue. Your favourite.

BLAKE: Tempting, but no, I can't.

DONALD: Come on. It'll be like old times. We used to watch football together every Sunday. Remember that? The National Football League. The league of my people.

BLAKE: Your people?

DONALD: The Americans.

BLAKE: I would hardly call them your people, Dad. You were born there, yes, but your parents moved you here when you were two.

DONALD: They ripped me from my homeland. I was devastated.

BLAKE: You were two.

DONALD: I was very advanced for my age. Now, stay. Watch the game with me.

BLAKE: Dad, I can't. Mom's cooking dinner for us today.

DONALD: Oh. I see.

BLAKE: I'm sorry.

DONALD: No, that's fine. It's good that you're there for you mother. That's good. She needs you right now. What about Mandy? Is she going to be there too?

BLAKE: Yeah.

DONALD: Good. She'll be surrounded by love, your mother. That's good.

BLAKE: Have you spoken to Mandy since . . .

DONALD: No.

BLAKE: Well, she's pretty upset.

DONALD: I know. But she'll come around. This whole thing is going to blow over. You'll see.

BLAKE: You think so?

DONALD: Oh yes. It's minor. It'll blow right over. Mandy can't stay mad at her old man. A father-daughter relationship is very special. We'll patch it up.

BLAKE: Well, she is your favourite.

DONALD: Oh, don't start that again. I have no favourite.

BLAKE: No?

DONALD: No. I've always treated you and your sister exactly the same. There's been no favouritism on either side.

BLAKE: Well, I don't know about that.

DONALD: There hasn't. You can ask your mother.

BLAKE: No, Mom saw it too, Dad. So did Mandy.

DONALD: Oh, that's nonsense.

BLAKE: All right. Whatever.

DONALD: So, how long are you in town for this time?

BLAKE: Just until tomorrow night.

DONALD: And then where are you off to?

BLAKE: Chile. I'm doing a piece on the marble caves.

DONALD: You travel too much.

BLAKE: Well, that's my job.

DONALD: But I don't get to see you. I see you whenever you have a layover. You're never around more than two days at a time.

BLAKE: I know. I'm sorry.

DONALD: I barely know what's going on in your life.

BLAKE: Travel is what's going on in my life. So far this year I've visited ninety-five different locations.

DONALD: Ninety-five?

BLAKE: Yes. That's all I do. I get on a plane and I get off a plane. That's my life.

DONALD: It doesn't sound like much of a life.

BLAKE: I have to earn money, Dad. In fact, most travel writers have second jobs to keep us afloat.

DONALD: And what's your second job?

BLAKE: I write a restaurant column for the *Herald*.

DONALD: A food critic?

BLAKE: Yeah.

DONALD: I thought you were a travel writer. Why didn't you tell me you wrote a food column?

BLAKE: I only tell you things that I think will impress you.

DONALD: And you thought "travel writer" would do that?

BLAKE: Anyway, the restaurant column is in the paper every Saturday.

DONALD: Well, I'll have to buy a *Herald* and have a look. First thing tomorrow.

BLAKE: I'm sorry I'm not around very much. I'll call more often. How's that?

DONALD: That would be the very least you could do. And how's that woman you've been seeing?

BLAKE: What woman?

DONALD: The lawyer.

BLAKE: What lawyer?

DONALD: Weren't you seeing a lawyer?

BLAKE: I was seeing a lawyer, yes. I wasn't dating a lawyer. And it was a man. It wasn't a woman.

DONALD: So, you're gay? Your mother and I always wondered about that.

BLAKE: No, Dad. I'm not gay.

DONALD: Is that why you don't watch football anymore?

BLAKE: I do watch football.

DONALD: Just because you're gay doesn't mean you can't watch football.

BLAKE: I'm not gay! And I do watch football!

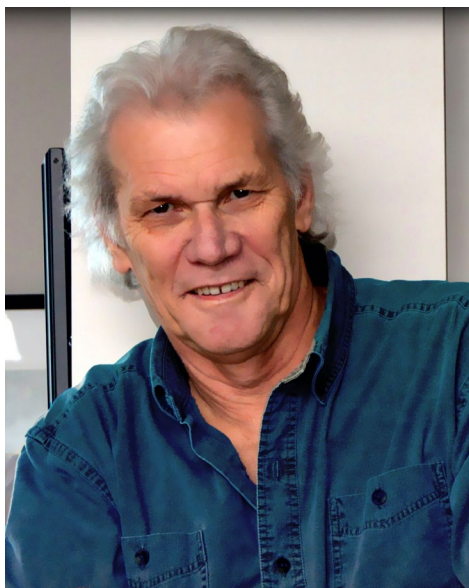
DONALD: Hey, don't get defensive. I don't care if you're gay.

BLAKE: I'm not getting defensive. If I was gay I would tell you. It wouldn't bother me.

DONALD: Good. Because it doesn't bother me either. I work in the theatre.

Acknowledgements

With thanks to Joan Miller, Steve Watts, Kirsten Koza, and
Doctor Allan Patrick.



Norm Foster has written sixty plays and has been produced all over the world from Newfoundland to Australia. His most popular plays include *The Melville Boys*, *The Ladies Foursome*, *Hilda's Yard*, and *On A First Name Basis*. He has been given the Los Angeles Drama-Logue Award for *The Melville Boys*, and *The Motor Trade* won the best new play award at the Hollywood NAACP Awards in 2012. He was made an Officer of the Order of Canada in 2017.