

Halfway

THERE



Also by Norm Foster

Bedtime Stories

Dear Santa

Ethan Claymore

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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

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The Melville Boys

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Office Hours

Old Love

On a First Name Basis

One-Actmanship

Opening Night

Outlaw

Self-Help

Sinners

Skin Flick

Storm Warning

Triple Play

The Writer

Wrong for Each Other

Halfway

THERE

**NORM
FOSTER**

Playwrights Canada Press

TORONTO

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ONTARIO
CREATES | ONTARIO
CRÉATIF

For my children, Lee, Randy, Daniel, and Jacqueline.

Halfway There was first produced from August 10 to 27, 2016, at the Foster Festival in St. Catharines, Ontario, with the following cast and creative team:

Vi: Lisa Horner

Rita: Sheila McCarthy

Mary Ellen: Helen Taylor

Sean Merrit: Darren Keay

Janine Babineau: Kirsten Alter

Director: Patricia Vanstone

Stage Manager: Carolyn Mackenzie

Set and Costume Design: Sue LePage

Lighting Design: Chris Malkowski

Cast of Characters

Janine Babineau, mid to late thirties

Vi

Rita

Mary Ellen

Sean Merrit, forty-two years old

Vi, Rita, and Mary Ellen can be anywhere from fifty to sixty
years old

Time

The present. Friday afternoon.

Place

A restaurant called Junior's in the town of Stewiacke, a town
in Nova Scotia located halfway between the equator and the
North Pole.

Act One

SCENE ONE

There are tables and a counter with stools in the diner. On the front door is sign on a string. The sign, facing the audience, reads "Closed." Lights up to reveal three women, VI, RITA, and MARY ELLEN sitting at a table in the diner.

RITA: Well, I don't know why she doesn't just leave him. They don't even sleep in the same bed anymore.

VI: Get out.

RITA: Hand to God, Vi. She sleeps in the master bedroom and Ian sleeps in what used to be Harvey's room.

VI: Harvey? Their son Harvey?

RITA: Yep.

VI: So, why don't they just get a divorce?

MARY ELLEN: No, Elspeth won't do that.

RITA: No. She says it would be too hard on the children.

VI: Harvey and Glad?

RITA: Right.

VI: Harvey's forty-one.

RITA: But he only just moved out a couple of months ago. He's still finding his legs. His parents divorcing could be a setback. Plus there's the whole circumcision fiasco. That muddies the waters too.

VI: The circumcision has nothing to do with Harvey's insecurities.

MARY ELLEN: The "botched" circumcision.

RITA: Performed by Elspeth's veterinarian cousin.

VI: Oh, that's just a rumour. I don't think it was done by a veterinarian at all.

MARY ELLEN: Elspeth swears it's the gospel.

RITA: I wouldn't have let him near a flank steak with a knife let alone a you-know-what. My land, it's no wonder Harvey is skittish.

MARY ELLEN: I've never seen a man flinch so much around cutlery.

VI: But he was a baby when it happened.

RITA: Yes, but those things stay with a person. That's why I'm against circumcision. It should be outlawed.

VI: And Glad? Glad lives in Costa Rica last I heard.

MARY ELLEN: Well, not so much lives as is “in custody.”

RITA: Anyway, I hope they work it out. I mean, Elspeth just turned sixty. She hasn't got too much tread left on those tires.

VI: I'm just glad I didn't have any kids when I got divorced. Johnny's girl Katie still finds it tough, and he's been divorced from her mother for twelve years.

MARY ELLEN: How old is she now?

VI: Seventeen. And she's having a rough go of it up there in Thunder Bay. Hanging with a bad crowd too. Johnny's really worried.

RITA: Johnny's a cop. Can't he tell the cops up there to keep an eye on her?

VI: He has. But it's not the same as being there himself.

MARY ELLEN: It's so hard being a teenager these days. I hope she gets through it.

VI: From your lips to God's ears, Mary Ellen. All right, girls, I'm off to the gym. Or as the owner insists on calling it, Dugan's Pub.

MARY ELLEN: No, don't go yet, Vi. What's the rush?

VI: I'm meeting Johnny for happy hour.

RITA: Oh, Johnny. What's Johnny?

MARY ELLEN: Yeah, what's Johnny?

VI: We meet every Friday at Dugan's for happy hour. You know that.

MARY ELLEN: So, he can't wait on you for fifteen minutes?

RITA: Yeah, you know what they say about keepin' a man waiting.

VI: No. What do they say, Rita?

RITA: It makes him want you more.

MARY ELLEN: Maybe Rita has a point, Vi. Maybe you should play hard to get.

VI: Mary Ellen, I've already been got. I've been got six ways from Sunday.

RITA: She's right. Her gettin' got days are long gone.

VI: Well, now I haven't stopped gettin' got. I still get got. There's just no need to play hard to get got. Now, I gotta get. The love of my life is waiting.

SEAN Merrit enters the restaurant.

I suppose he can wait fifteen more minutes.

VI sits.

MARY ELLEN: Well, what do we have here?

RITA: What do we have, indeed?

SEAN: Ladies.

VI: Well, the jury's still out on that but thank you anyway.

MARY ELLEN: Vi, stop that.

(to SEAN) Don't listen to her. She's nothing but trouble.

RITA: And so am I if you like that sort of thing. And I hope you do.

MARY ELLEN: Now, that's enough, you two.

(to SEAN) They're a caution. I'm sorry.

SEAN: Quite all right.

MARY ELLEN: Just sit anywhere. Janine will be out shortly.

SEAN: Janine?

VI: Your waitress. She's using the facilities at present.

SEAN: Oh. Thank you.

SEAN sits.

RITA: Well, he's a handsome rascal, isn't he?

VI: You can say that again.

MARY ELLEN: Not from around here, I'm guessing.

VI: Oh, he's not from around here at all, Mary Ellen. He's from away as sure as a monkey's got a bare arse.

MARY ELLEN: He is a cute one.

RITA: He is. And looks to be unspoiled. Like a piece of fresh fruit on a sturdy vine. Just waiting to get plucked.

SEAN: Ladies. I can hear you.

RITA: Oh, we know, dear. We don't like to talk behind someone's back.

VI: No, we'll say it straight to your face.

SEAN: Well, that's good to know.

MARY ELLEN: So, were we right? Are you from away?

VI, RITA, and MARY ELLEN move to SEAN and sit, surrounding him.

SEAN: From away? Uh . . . yes, yes I am. I just got into town and I haven't eaten since breakfast. That's why I stopped in here.

RITA: Oh, ya poor thing. You gotta eat. You gotta keep up your strength. You need it for your endurance. Although I'll bet your endurance is just fine. Is it?

VI: What's your name?

SEAN: Sean Merrit.

VI: Well, welcome to Stewiacke. I'm Violet. This is Rita. And this is Mary Ellen.

SEAN: Pleased to meet you.

VI: So, where are you from, Sean?

SEAN: Toronto.

VI, RITA, and MARY ELLEN just stare at SEAN.

What's wrong?

MARY ELLEN: We don't like Toronto.

RITA: We don't like Toronto one bit.

SEAN: That seems like an odd reaction. Is there a reason that you don't like Toronto?

MARY ELLEN: Oh, there's a very good reason.

VI: Mary Ellen's niece Martine fell in love with a fella from Toronto.

MARY ELLEN: Fell head over heels.

RITA: Like a ton o' bricks.

VI: Next thing you know she gives up a good job at the Scoop and Save and moves to Toronto to be with him. Oh he promised her the world he did. And I don't mean little trinkets and baubles here and there. No, I mean he literally promised her the world.

SEAN: Well, I don't think he could "literally" promise her the world. I mean, "literally" would mean . . .

VI: Who's telling the story here, Sean?

SEAN: Sorry. Go ahead.

VI: So, within two months he decides that he's not "in love" with Martine anymore. He said she had some qualities that weren't apparent to him at first blush. Qualities that only came to light when they moved in together.

SEAN: Like what?

VI: Well, when she got mad she'd throw knives at him.

MARY ELLEN: Not big knives. Not your carving knife or your bread knife.

RITA: No, just little ones. A paring knife or a cheese knife.

VI: But that wasn't the worst of it.

SEAN: Throwing knives at him wasn't the worst of it?

RITA: No. Martine is a kleptomaniac. She steals things. She can't help herself.

VI: And they were living in a small apartment and they had no place to put everything.

RITA: And apparently this got to be too much for the jam tart Toronto boyfriend. I guess he doesn't like clutter. And so he sent her packing. Without so much as a by your leave.

VI: He broke that poor girl's heart he did.

MARY ELLEN: Broke it bad.

VI: And she comes back home with tears in her eyes and her tail between her legs. And I mean literally with her tail between her legs.

Pause.

Okay, now I'm messin' with ya'. She doesn't have a tail.

RITA: At least not one long enough to tuck between her legs.

The women laugh.

SEAN: And that's why you hate Toronto?

VI: That's it.

SEAN: Well, that's tarring a pretty sizable population with the same brush, isn't it?

VI, RITA, and MARY ELLEN just stare at SEAN.

But it's probably valid. You're probably right.

RITA: So what brings you to Stewiacke, Sean? Is there a slacks convention in town?

SEAN: I'm going to be working at the medical clinic. I'm taking over for Doctor Caldwell for a month.

RITA: You're a doctor?

SEAN: I am.

RITA: Well. And me about due for my annual physical. How fortuitous.

MARY ELLEN: Yes, I think I might be coming down with something.

VI: I'm feeling a little feverish myself, girls. Whoo! Is it hot in here or is it him?

RITA: So, you're taking over for Pooch Caldwell?

SEAN: Pooch?

RITA: Yeah, Pooch. We've called him that for years.

SEAN: Do I want to know why you call him that?

rita: Well, it's no big secret. A while back we had a pharmacist here named Virginia Wilmot. Sometimes she'd go out for lunch and not come back for two or three hours. She'd just disappear. So one day the druggist asked her where she'd been and she said nowhere. She was just screwin' the pooch. Turns out it was Doctor Caldwell.

vi: That wasn't the biggest revelation though.

sean: No?

vi: No. It was the fact that it took two or three hours.

rita: We all thought a little better of Pooch after that.

sean: Are you sure there's a waitress working here?

vi: Yeah, she's here. Give her time. She's experiencing a heavier period than usual this month.

mary ellen: I don't know if Janine would want you telling Sean that, Vi.

vi: Why not? He's a doctor.

mary ellen: I know, but maybe Sean doesn't want to hear about her heavier period. He just landed in town. He's looking for a sandwich and a beverage. Maybe it's too soon to talk about menstruation.

vi: Is it too soon to talk about menstruation, Sean? Because if it is, I'll shut the hell up.

sean: Not at all. Talk about whatever you like.

rita: Where do you stand on circumcision?

MARY ELLEN: Rita!

RITA: He said talk about whatever you like.

SEAN: Maybe I should find another restaurant.

VI: Oh nonsense. Stay right where you are. Here, let me start you off with a coffee.

VI goes behind the counter and gets the coffee pot and pours a coffee for SEAN.

SEAN: No, I'm in kind of a hurry, so . . .

VI: Oh, nobody's in a hurry here.

SEAN: No?

MARY ELLEN: We can't be. Every time you go out you see somebody you know and you wind up talking to them for half an hour. Nobody gets anywhere in a hurry here.

RITA: Oh, that reminds me. I saw Penny Steeves on the way to work this morning.

MARY ELLEN: Really? I haven't seen Penny in weeks.

RITA: She's been over in Elderbank looking after her father.

MARY ELLEN: Ted?

RITA: Yeah.

MARY ELLEN: What's wrong with Ted?

RITA: He's got the gout. Can barely get around.

VI: It's the whiskey that causes it. Isn't that right, Sean?

SEAN: That can be one of the causes, yes.

VI: Well, that's what it is with Ted. That man drinks like a winded goat.

MARY ELLEN: Drinks likes he's trying to forget two wives.

SEAN: That much, huh?

MARY ELLEN: Oh that much and more.

RITA: So, yay or nay, Sean? On the circumcision question.

JANINE Babineau enters from the back.

JANINE: She-it!! This is a bad one. It is one giant motherffff . . .

The other three women point to SEAN.

Hey, how you doin'? I hope you haven't been waiting long. I was just . . . out back.

RITA: It's okay, Janine. Vi told him about your heavy flow this month.

JANINE: *(to VI)* You what?

VI: He's a doctor. It's fine.

JANINE: You what?

RITA: He didn't even blink, Janine. Took it right in stride.

VI: Well, we know you're happy for us, Rita. You're our friend.
Of course you're happy for us.

RITA: I just wanted to say it.

JANINE: Thank you, Rita.

VI: All right, let's go.

MARY ELLEN: Wait.

VI: Oh, what now?

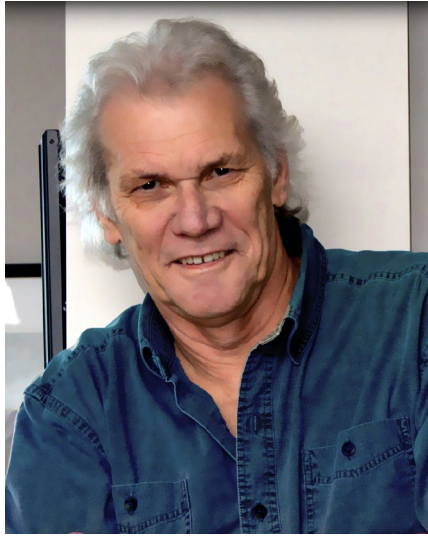
MARY ELLEN: Just a little more.

JANINE: A little more what?

MARY ELLEN turns the music on again. VI, RITA, JANINE, and MARY ELLEN dance.

Lights down.

End.



Norm Foster has been the most produced playwright in Canada every year for the past twenty years. His plays receive an average of one hundred and fifty productions annually. Norm has over sixty plays to his credit, including *The Foursome*, *On a First Name Basis*, and *Hilda's Yard*. He is the recipient of the Los Angeles Drama-Logue Award for his play *The Melville Boys* and is an Officer of the Order of Canada. He lives in Fredericton.