
STORM WARNING

by

Norm Foster

SECOND SCENE EDITIONS

Playwrights Canada Press

Toronto • Canada

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Second Scene Editions

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Norm Foster

Norm Foster was born in Newmarket, Ontario in 1949. He attended West Hill Collegiate High School in Toronto. He studied Radio and Television Arts at Centennial College in Toronto, and at Confederation College in Thunder Bay. Norm wrote two plays for Malcolm Black, then Artistic Director of Theatre New Brunswick. Those two plays, *Sinners* and *The Melville Boys* were enormously successful for Theatre New Brunswick. *The Melville Boys* has made Foster one of Canada's most produced playwrights. *The Affections of May*, *Sinners* and *The Melville Boys* have been translated into French.

Storm Warning was first produced at The Bluewater Summer Playhouse in Kincardine, ON, in July of 2003 with the following company:

JACK Forrester	Daniel McCarthy
EMMA Currie	Tracey Hway

Directed by	Rick Kish
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Stage Manager	Kelly Luft
Ass. Stage Manager	Joel J Swann

Set Designer	Allan Wilbee
Lighting Designer	Wright Staines

CHARACTERS JACK Forrester
EMMA Currie

ACT ONE SCENE 1

Time: September, 1953. A Friday.

Place: Pigeon Lake

The set is comprised of the front of two summer cabins. There is a sizable space between the two cabins. We do not need to see the cabins in their entirety, but we must at least see the front doors to both cabins. The cabin stage right has the number '1' on it and the stage left cabin has the number '3' on it. In front of the cabins are a couple of lawn chairs and perhaps a picnic table. As the lights come up, we see JACK Forrester seated in one of the lawn chairs. He is writing a letter. JACK is forty years old. His hair is gray. We hear JACK's voice-over as he writes his letter.

JACK: (over) The lake is very calm now, John, which as you know is cool wind blowing down from the northwest, causing a choppiness with swells reaching as high as two or three feet. But, right now there is no sign whatsoever of such unrest. There is barely a breeze. No waves beating the shoreline. No rustling of leaves. And this being the off season, no boat motors ripping through the afternoon air. In fact, I can't remember when the lake has been this peaceful. This serene. This...

EMMA: (off) Goddamn it!! Son of a bitch!!

EMMA enters U.C. between the two cabins. She has just climbed up a hill and is a little the worse for wear. She is dragging a suitcase and carrying a briefcase, a purse and a bag of groceries.

Stupid bloody middle of nowhere bullshit! Dammit!!

JACK: Good afternoon.

EMMA: Yeah, sure it is. Is this where the Pigeon Lake Hidden Cabins are?

JACK: Yes, ma'am.

EMMA: Shit. I couldn't find the bloody things.

JACK: Hence the name.

EMMA: Yeah, cute. I had to climb up a goddamned mountain to get here.

JACK: Well, it's a little steep but it's not exactly a mountain.

EMMA: Hey, don't tell me it's not a mountain. I passed Edmund Hilary on the way up. He begged me to turn back.

JACK: You should have used the steps.

EMMA: The what?

JACK: The steps. There's a set of steps right over there.

Pointing off S.L..

EMMA: Steps? There's steps?

JACK: Yes. They lead right down to the parking lot.

EMMA: Parking lot?

JACK: Yes. You didn't see the parking lot?

EMMA: No, I just saw a sign with an arrow pointing up that said Hidden Cabins so I parked the car in a grove of trees and started hiking.

JACK: Oh, no, that arrow should be pointing to the parking lot. It shouldn't be pointing up.

EMMA: Well, it's pointing up.

JACK: Well, the squirrels must have been playing on it again.

EMMA: Squirrels, huh? Stupid goddamned wildlife.

JACK: I'm Jack Forrester. *(He holds out his hand to EMMA.)*

EMMA: Emma Currie. *(She shakes JACK's hand.)*

JACK: Hi.

EMMA: Hi. You staying here?

JACK: Yes. Yes, I am.

EMMA: Well, nice to meet you. Sweet Jesus, that was rough. Damn.

JACK is staring at EMMA.

EMMA: What's the matter?

JACK: Nothing. You're...uh...nothing.

EMMA: You're staring at me.

JACK: No, I was just...I mean, that's quite the mouth you've got on you.

EMMA: What's wrong with it? (*She puts her hand to her lips to see what's wrong.*)

JACK: No, I don't mean the mouth itself. Your mouth is fine. I mean the language.

EMMA: Oh.

JACK: I can't recall ever hearing that kind of language out of a lady's mouth before.

EMMA: Well, it's nineteen fifty-three, Jack. Women are doing a lot of shit we've never done before so get used to it. God, I'm winded. I thought I was in better shape than that.

JACK: Well, it is a long climb.

EMMA: Yeah, but, I was a pretty good long distance runner back in high school.

JACK: How long ago was that?

EMMA: You bein' a smartass, Jack?

JACK: No. I'm sorry. Would you care to sit down?

EMMA: Good idea. I'll just catch my breath and then I'll find the proprietor and get settled in. (*She sits in one of the chairs.*)

JACK: Oh, well I'm the proprietor.

EMMA: You are?

JACK: Yes.

EMMA: But, I talked to a man named...uh...what the hell was it?

JACK: Larry Cousins.

EMMA: Right, Larry Cousins.

JACK: Yeah, Larry owns the cabins. I just look after them for him in the off season. He goes down south for the winter.

EMMA: Oh. So, you're going to live here all winter?

JACK: Uh-huh.

EMMA: Just you or do you have a family with you?

JACK: No, just me.

EMMA: Gonna be awfully lonely.

JACK: I don't mind it.

EMMA: God, I'd go crazy up here. What would you do all winter?

JACK: Oh, I read a lot. You know, books, magazines. It's a good way to pass the time.

EMMA: It's a good way to pass an hour maybe, but not a whole season. Shit.

JACK: You said you were going to get settled in. You mean here?

EMMA: Yeah, I rented one of the cabins for the weekend.

JACK: Oh.

EMMA: You mean, you didn't know?

JACK: No. No, I didn't.

EMMA: But, if you're the proprietor, wouldn't you be the one who is supposed to give me the key?

JACK: Yes, I would be, but Larry didn't call me to let me know he had someone coming.

EMMA: So, you don't have the key?

JACK: Oh, yes, I've got the key all right.

EMMA: So, what's the problem?

JACK: Well, Larry didn't call me.

EMMA: So?

JACK: Well, how do I know you've actually rented the place if Larry didn't call me?

EMMA: Listen, Jack, do you think I'd drag my pretty behind all the way up here if I hadn't paid my thirty bucks already?

JACK: Well...

EMMA: And don't bother looking. It's pretty.

JACK: I'm sure it is. And no I don't suppose you would drag it all the way up here unless you paid already, so I'll take your word for it.

EMMA: Thank you. And I still have to drag it back down again to get my record player and my albums.

JACK: You brought a record player?

EMMA: Yeah, but don't worry. I won't play it loud. Wouldn't want to scare the goddamned squirrels.

JACK: Well, listen, I can go down and get it for you if you like.

EMMA: No, you don't have to do that.

JACK: It's no problem.

EMMA: Okay.

JACK: Good. Well, I'll just head down then.

EMMA: No, there's no rush. You can get it later on. I only listen to it at night anyway.

JACK: Oh. All right...So, what are you here for if it's not to relax?

EMMA: What makes you think I'm not here to relax?

JACK: You said you'd go crazy up here. That doesn't sound like someone who comes here for the pleasure of it.

EMMA: Well, aren't you a regular Sherlock Holmes? No, the fact is, I'm here to work.

JACK: Oh. What kind of work do you do?

EMMA: I write music charts for the Teddy Marx Orchestra. You ever heard of it?

JACK: Sure I have. Teddy Marx? Who hasn't heard of Teddy Marx?

EMMA: Well, I'm his arranger. I write all of the band's music charts.

JACK: No kidding? That's very exciting.

EMMA: They're starting a big tour next month and I've been doing some new arrangements for them. I've still got two more to go so I figured I'd better get away from the city. Too many distractions there.

JACK: Don't you need a piano to write? I mean, we haven't got a piano.

EMMA: Don't need one. It's all up here. *(She points to her head.)*

JACK: Really? Gosh. That must take quite a talent.

EMMA: I suppose. So, anyway, that's why I'm here.

JACK: And who told you about this place?

EMMA: Teddy's drummer. I guess he stayed here a couple of years ago. Son of a bitch didn't tell me there was a parking lot though. What about you, Jack? What do you do? I mean, when you're not looking after the cabins.

JACK: I'm retired. I travel around mostly. Pick up odd jobs here and there.

EMMA: Retired?

JACK: Yes, ma'am.

EMMA: You're awfully young for retirement, aren't you? Even with the gray hair.

JACK: Well, I retired from the military.

EMMA: Does that make a difference?

JACK: I'm sorry?

EMMA: Do they retire them younger in the military?

JACK: Well, sometimes yes. It all depends.

EMMA: On what?

JACK: On...circumstances. You know, length of service. Your service record. Things like that.

EMMA: Oh. You wouldn't have a beer handy, would you, Jack? I sure could use one right about now.

JACK: It's eleven a.m..

EMMA: I'm sorry. Did I ask for the time, because I meant to ask for a beer.

JACK: I have some inside. I'll get you one.

JACK goes into cabin number one.

EMMA: Thanks. I'll have to drive into town later on and buy some. There

is a town nearby I hope.

JACK: (off) Yes, Elliston. It's about seven miles west of here.

EMMA: Elliston, huh? And how big a town is Elliston?

JACK: (off) It's about four hundred in the off season and three thousand in the summer. It gets a lot bigger in the summertime.

EMMA: Yeah, so does my Uncle Vern but he blames it on the shortcake.
(to herself) Four hundred people. I've worked with bigger horn sections. What in the hell am I doing here?

JACK enters carrying a glass of beer.

JACK: Beg your pardon?

EMMA: Nothing. Just wondering what the hell I'm doing here.

JACK: I thought you were here to work.

EMMA: Right. Right. Work.

JACK: Here you go.

EMMA: Why, thank you, Jack. And you put it in a glass and everything just like you were serving a real lady.

JACK: Well, just because you're drinking beer at eleven o'clock in the morning doesn't mean you're not a lady.

EMMA: Well, thank you again. Your confidence in my morality is uplifting. Here's to ya. (EMMA drinks.)

JACK: So, as soon as you're ready, just give me a shout and I'll show you to your cabin. (He picks up his letter.)

EMMA: Where you goin'?

JACK: Well, I was going to go inside for a bit.

EMMA: Why? What's inside?

JACK: Well, nothing.

EMMA: You got a woman in there, Jack?

JACK: No, no.

EMMA: Then sit the hell down. Don't let me scare you off. You were quite comfortable out here before I showed up, writing your journal or whatever the hell it is you're working on.

JACK: No, it's not a journal.

EMMA: Well, whatever it is. Sit. Keep working. You won't even know I'm here.

JACK: I find that hard to believe.

EMMA: What?

JACK: I find it hard to believe that I wouldn't notice you.

EMMA: Oh, really? Because of my looks, right? You would be distracted by my looks? And think long and hard before you answer that, Jack.

JACK: Yes, because of your looks.

EMMA: Very good.

JACK: Not to mention your vivaciousness.

EMMA: Vivaciousness?

JACK: Yes, you're brassy.

EMMA: You're saying I'm loud, right?

JACK: Not in those words ma'am, no.

EMMA: And you think I couldn't keep quiet while you worked on your thesis?

JACK: It's not a thesis.

EMMA: Well, you're right. I couldn't keep quiet. If I feel like saying

something, I say it. No point in holding it in, is there?

JACK: I wouldn't know. I'm not much of a talker myself.

EMMA: Well, there isn't. You hold your thoughts inside and after a while they disappear in there. They evaporate. And they take a little bit of your personality with them. Pretty soon you're just a bump on a log with nothing to say because all your good thoughts are gone. You wouldn't want that to happen to me, would you?

JACK: No ma'am, I certainly wouldn't.

EMMA: No, you wouldn't. And stop calling me ma'am. Shit. I'm a lot younger than you are.

JACK doesn't answer.

I said, I'm a lot younger than you are.

JACK: Yes, you are. That's a fact.

EMMA: Thank you. Call me Emma. Now, sit.

JACK: Yes ma'am.

JACK sits.

EMMA: So, what are you, a captain, a major?

JACK: Oh, no, nothing that important. I was a sergeant.

EMMA: Were you in the war?

JACK: Yes, I was.

EMMA: In Europe?

JACK: That's where it was, yes.

EMMA: No, I meant were you over there. I had a friend who was training in Nova Scotia when the war ended. Never left the country. But, he still says he was in the war.

JACK: Well, whether he was over there or not, everybody did their part.

EMMA: So, where were you?

JACK: France mostly. And Holland.

EMMA: Was it rough?

JACK: Yeah. Pretty rough.

EMMA: Yeah, I saw *From Here To Eternity* a couple of weeks ago so I can imagine what it was like.

JACK: You saw what?

EMMA: *From Here To Eternity*. That new movie with Burt Lancaster and Montgomery Clift. It's really tops.

JACK: Well, I think that most movies tend to romanticize war. Personally, I didn't find it very romantic.

EMMA: I guess that sounded kind of dumb, huh?

JACK: What's that?

EMMA: Comparing the real war to a stupid movie.

JACK: No, it wasn't dumb at all. It was just ill-informed. I mean, you've never been in a war. How would you know what it's like?

EMMA: Right.

JACK goes back to his letter for a moment.

So, what are the cabins like?

JACK looks up.

See? I can't keep quiet.

JACK: The cabins are nice. Rustic.

EMMA: Rustic? Rustic how? Is there indoor plumbing?

JACK: In the kitchen there is, yes. There's a sink and running water in

the kitchen.

EMMA: What about the bathroom?

JACK: Uh, no.

EMMA: Oh, God. There's no running water in the bathroom?

JACK: There's no bathroom. Each cabin has it's own outhouse though. Right over there. (*pointing off L..*)

EMMA: Those are the outhouses?

JACK: Yes.

EMMA: Then what are these? (*pointing to the cabins*)

JACK: These are the cabins.

EMMA: Oh, my God. And what about a shower?

JACK: That's down by the lake. You see that little enclosed hut down there. That's the shower.

EMMA: Be a little brisk on a cool September morning wouldn't it?

JACK: Oh, yeah.

EMMA: Lovely.

JACK: Your drummer didn't tell you there were no indoor facilities?

EMMA: No.

JACK: Sounds like he didn't tell you very much.

EMMA: He just said it was quiet. I guess he meant I wouldn't be bothered by the sound of flushing.

JACK: I'll get that key for you now.

EMMA: That's a nice cabin over there.

JACK: Hmm?

EMMA: Across the way there. (*She points out.*)

JACK: Yeah. That's the Walker's cabin.

EMMA: Indoor plumbing?

JACK: Oh, yeah. Indoor plumbing, shower, fireplace, three bedrooms.

EMMA: Bastards.

JACK: Don't worry. I think you'll like it here just fine.

JACK goes into his cabin. EMMA takes out a vial of pills and swallows a couple, washing them down with a drink of beer.

EMMA: This is the last time I let a drummer act as my travel agent.

JACK enters from his cabin.

JACK: Okay, you'll be in number three. Right over here. And if you need anything, I'm in number one, right there.

EMMA looks at the two cabins.

EMMA: Okay, wait a minute. Hold on. That's number one, and that's number three. Where's number two?

JACK: In the lake.

EMMA: I'm sorry?

JACK: It slid into the lake last spring. If you look closely you can see the peak of it's roof sticking up out of the water there.

EMMA: It slid into the lake?

JACK: Yeah, we had four straight days of heavy rain this past April and it wore the ground clean away from under it.

EMMA: And it just slid into the lake.

JACK: Slid right in. (*He opens the door to the cabin.*) Okay, here you go.

EMMA: Oh, God, Jack. There's a lot of women out there. Millions of em'. And every one of them is probably better for you than I am. Why would you want to get something started with me?

JACK: Because I'm smitten.

EMMA: You're what? You're smitten?

JACK: I'm smitten.

EMMA: Smitten. He's smitten. No man's ever said that to me before. What kind of a person says smitten?

JACK: Come on, Emma. Look at us. Huh? An anti-social army washout and a brassy woman with a dependency problem. What can go wrong?

EMMA: It does sound too good to be true, doesn't it? Ahhh, shit. All right, fine then. I'll give you a chance to hate me.

JACK: Thank you.

EMMA: But, if this turns bad, promise me you'll kill yourself. Because I don't want to resent you for the rest of my life.

JACK: I promise.

EMMA: All right. I'll stay for a couple of more hours.

JACK: A couple of hours? That's all?

EMMA: And I'll come back next weekend, and maybe the weekend after that. (*She looks at JACK.*) You're going to hug me, aren't you?

JACK: Yes ma'am. I was thinking about it.

EMMA: All right, go ahead.

JACK gives EMMA a hug. After the hug, JACK grabs his jacket and puts it on.

But, I'm not committing to anything. Just remember that. We'll play it by ear and see how it goes.

JACK: Absolutely. That's all I ask.

EMMA: (*She notices JACK putting his jacket on.*) What's this? Why are you putting your jacket on?

JACK: I just have one thing to do.

EMMA: What? I've only got a couple of hours and we've got a whole box of condoms.

JACK: No, it won't take long.

EMMA: What is it?

JACK picks up his fishing rod from beside the door.

JACK: I just want to go down and drop a line in.

EMMA: Take your time. I'll be right here when you get back.

JACK opens the door and looks out.

JACK: It's a brand new day.

EMMA: Jack, it's the middle of the afternoon.

JACK exits. Lights down. End.