

NORM FOSTER

Hilda's Yard



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One-Actmanship

Opening Night

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Self-Help

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Skin Flick

Storm Warning

Triple Play

Wrong for Each Other

NORM FOSTER

HILDA'S YARD

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Playwrights Canada Press acknowledges that we operate on land, which, for thousands of years, has been the traditional territories of the Mississaugas of the New Credit, the Huron-Wendat, the Anishinaabe, the Métis, and the Haudenosaunee peoples. Today, this meeting place is home to many Indigenous peoples from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work and play here.

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CRÉATIF

Hilda's Yard was first produced at Theatre New Brunswick in Fredericton, New Brunswick, in October 2012 with the following cast and creative team:

Hilda Fluck: Patricia Vanstone
Sam Fluck: Sam Rosenthal
Gary Fluck: Jonathan Gould
Janey Fluck: Perrie Olthuis
Bobbi Jakes: Jane Spence
Beverly Woytowich: Gordon Gammie

Director: Caleb Marshall
Stage Manager: Eamonn Reil
Set Designer: Patrick Clark
Costume Designer: Sherry Kinnear
Sound Designer: Michael Doherty
Lighting Designer: Chris Saad

CHARACTERS

Hilda Fluck: mid-fifties

Sam Fluck: mid-fifties

Gary Fluck: thirty-three

Janey Fluck: thirty

Bobbi Jakes: early thirties

Beverly Woytowich: around forty

TIME

Morning. Friday, September 28, 1956.

SETTING

The backyard of the Fluck family home. We see the back porch, an outdoor table, a couple of chairs, and a clothesline. A fence runs down both sides of the yard. There are a few kitschy lawn ornaments in the yard as well.

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

HILDA Fluck enters from the house carrying a basket of laundry. HILDA is about fifty to fifty-five years old. She moves down to the clothesline, and as she does she speaks to her neighbour in the yard behind hers. We don't see the neighbour. The audience is the neighbour. HILDA hangs laundry from the line as she speaks.

HILDA: Oh good morning, Mrs. Lidstrom. I see you had the same idea as I had this morning. Getting an early jump on the wash. Yes. Well, look at us, would you? Don't we lead the glamorous lives? We're like Grace Kelly and Rita Hayworth, I swear. Fortunately the loads are much lighter for me these days now that the children are out of the house. You knew that my Gary moved out finally, right? . . . Yes, two weeks ago. He got a job in the city. He's working in the food industry and living right downtown. And Janey and her husband Duncan are all settled over in Farmington. They have a lovely little split-level over there on a quiet cul-de-sac . . . Cul-de-sac. It's French. Sounds pretty, doesn't it? It means dead end . . . Oh yes indeed they do grow up fast. Sadly, they don't move out of the house as fast as they grow. Oh I thought my Gary would never leave. Thirty-three years old,

Mrs. Lidstrom, and he just wouldn't go. He said he needed time to recover from his war experience. Well, God bless him for rolling up his sleeves and pitching in to crush the Nazi horde, but eleven years to recover? It only took them five years to rebuild Berlin. And then there's Janey. Mercy me. I practically had to break her fingers to get them loose from my apron strings. I mean, you've raised a family, Mrs. Lidstrom. You know what it's like. There comes a time when you just want to be free of the responsibility. These years—what they call the golden years—these should be for Mr. Fluck and myself. Lord knows we've earned them . . . I seem anxious? Well, I am a little anxious, Mrs. Lidstrom, yes. Mr. Fluck is off to make a sizable purchase this morning and it's got me concerned . . . Oh, yes it's very dear. I just hope it doesn't send us tumbling headlong into the poorhouse . . . Well, thank you, but hopefully we won't need good luck. Luck is a last resort, isn't it? Luck is what you hope for before you start to pray.

She looks to Heaven.

God, I'm coming to you now because my luck has run out. And then God gets mad at you because you didn't come to him first and he kills a relative. Not a close relative. A second cousin. Just to serve as a warning shot . . . All right, Mrs. Lidstrom. I'll see you later. Have a nice day now.

SAM Fluck enters onto the back porch. He is in his mid-fifties. He wears a suit.

SAM: (*moving to HILDA*) Hilly? I'm all set.

HILDA: Yes, I see that. And you're wearing a suit.

SAM: Well, I want the salesman to know that he's dealing with a certain class of gentleman here. That Sam Fluck is not just some chowderhead off the street that he can take advantage of. No, when

I walk into that showroom, this suit will level the playing field. We'll be able to talk man to man and I'll get the best deal I can.

HILDA: Well, I hope so, Sam. We don't have a lot of money to throw around, you know.

SAM: Don't worry, Hilly. With the money we're saving on the groceries we would have been buying for Gary, which we no longer have to buy, plus the clothes we bought for him and the other incidentals, we can have this purchase paid for in a matter of five or six months.

HILDA: And you're sure we need this.

SAM: Need it? Hilly, it's not a case of need. It's a case of finally buying something that we want. Something that will enable us to enjoy our lives a little more.

HILDA: I thought we would have enjoyed that trip to North Carolina this winter. Warm weather. Beaches.

SAM: I thought you wanted to go to Florida.

HILDA: We only had enough money to get us as far as North Carolina, remember?

SAM: Well, a trip to North Carolina would only last us a week. This purchase is going to last us a lifetime.

HILDA: A lifetime?

SAM: All right, the warranty says five years. But, Hilly, I know we're doing the right thing. Just imagine. Tomorrow night, God willing, Mr. James Arness will be starring as Marshal Matt Dillon in our very own living room on our brand-new Zenith

twenty-one-inch console television set. I get goose bumps just thinking about it.

HILDA: And what's the price of this television set again?

SAM: You know what the price is, Hilly.

HILDA: Just say it, Sam.

SAM: The ad has been taped to the icebox for the past two weeks.

HILDA: But I want to hear you say the price out loud.

SAM: That price isn't important because that's not the price we're going to pay.

HILDA: Three hundred and thirty-seven dollars and forty-five cents.

SAM: And we'll be paying less than that because I know how to barter. I know what the markup is for these outfits. And I know they're willing to come down in price to make a sale. I know that for a fact.

HILDA: Well, I don't know why you had to take the morning off work to do this. Couldn't you do it tomorrow?

SAM: They're not open on weekends. And it's not the whole morning. I'll be into work by eleven.

HILDA: And Mr. Westcott won't mind?

SAM: How long have I worked there, Hilly? How long have I . . . twenty-seven years I've worked there. I'm a valued employee of Westcott Paper Products. Mr. Westcott and I are the same age,

for God's sake. And if I want to take a couple of hours off one morning for personal time, nobody is going to ask any questions. It'll be my time to do with as I please. Besides, I have to buy it this morning so they can deliver it this afternoon. If they don't deliver it today, there'll be no *Gunsmoke* tomorrow. How do I look? Do I look like a man of importance?

HILDA: Yes, you look very important. I barely recognize you.

SAM: Seriously, Hilly. Do I look presentable?

HILDA: You look very presentable, Sam. You look like a gentleman of substance.

SAM: I do, don't I? And you, Mrs. Fluck, don't look too bad yourself.

HILDA: Oh stop.

SAM: No, I mean it. You're the most beautiful woman in the world, Hilly. And I'm lucky to have you.

He puts his arm around HILDA.

HILDA: Ohhh.

SAM: It's the truth. Sometimes I look at you and I see the hand of God, because the hand of God is the only logical explanation for you becoming my wife.

HILDA: Sam, you're going to make me blush.

SAM grabs HILDA's behind.

Oh, Sam! The audacity!

SAM: I tell you something, Hilly, this is the beginning of a new life for us. Footloose and fancy free. That's us from here on in. And we've waited a long time for this, haven't we? To be on our own. To enjoy the spoils of a life of hard work.

HILDA: Now, Sam, you make it sound as though we couldn't wait to get rid of Gary and Janey.

SAM: Well, we couldn't.

HILDA: I know, but you don't need to make it sound that way.

SAM: Look, I love them just as much you do. Even Gary. But this is our time now, Hilly. And we are going to make the best of it. All right, my dear. Kiss for luck.

HILDA: What do you mean "kiss for luck"?

SAM: I mean, kiss for luck. For my dealings with the television man.

HILDA: I thought you had this purchase all planned out.

SAM: I do have it planned out.

HILDA: So why do you need luck?

SAM: I don't need luck.

HILDA: You're going to kill a second cousin.

SAM: I'm what?

HILDA: Is our financial future hanging on the luck you're going to have bartering with this television salesman?

SAM: It's an expression, Hilly. It's just an expression.

HILDA: Well, I don't like that expression. Find another expression.

SAM: What other expression?

HILDA: Any expression.

SAM: Fine. Damn the torpedoes! Full speed ahead!!

HILDA: That's better.

SAM: All right then. Here I go.

SAM turns to leave.

HILDA: Wait a minute.

SAM: What?

HILDA: You can still have the kiss, you know.

SAM: I can?

HILDA: Of course. It just won't be for luck.

SAM: Then I'll take it.

HILDA: Of course you'll take it. Why wouldn't you take it? It's a kiss. Who wouldn't take a kiss? A woman offers you a kiss, you take it. It's common sense.

SAM: Hilly. Stop talking. I can't hit a moving target.

SAM kisses HILDA.

And here's my promise to you, Mrs. Fluck. When I get home tonight and that console television gets plugged in and that first picture flickers into our living room, and after I get washed up, and maybe after I eat because I'll be hungry—after all of that, you and I are going to expand on that kiss.

HILDA: We're what?

SAM: That's right. We're going to go all the way.

HILDA: Sam!

SAM: You heard me.

HILDA: But it won't even be seven o'clock. It will still be light out.

SAM: That doesn't matter anymore, Hilly. We have no children in the house. We can do it whenever we like. We can do it at lunch-time if we like. Or breakfast. We can do it at breakfast.

HILDA: You mean at the table?

SAM: Well, not at the table. Not with my back.

HILDA: But you said at breakfast.

SAM: Well, not *at* breakfast. Not over a Danish with the stickiness and the mess, no. But at that time of day. That's what I meant. In fact, any time of day we like. Twice a day if we like!!

HILDA: Well, now don't get too ambitious, Sam. Sometimes once in a day is accomplishment enough.

SAM moves towards the house.

SAM: Oh, twice a day will be a walk in the park now, Hilly. With our new television set and no children in the house, I'll feel like a new man!!

SAM exits to the house.

HILDA: *(to herself)* Well, I'd better get the housework done if I'm going to clear my evening.

HILDA starts for the laundry basket. A duffle bag comes over the fence and lands in the yard. Then GARY Fluck climbs over the fence after it.

Gary?

GARY: Oh, hi, Ma.

HILDA: What are you doing?

GARY: What do you mean?

HILDA: I mean what are you doing?

GARY: What am I doing what? I don't follow, Ma.

HILDA: You're throwing luggage over fences and then you're climbing over fences.

GARY: Oh, that.

HILDA: Yes, that. What's going on?

GARY: Well the fact is, Ma, uh . . . I'm moving back home for a while. That's all.

HILDA: You're what?!

GARY: Shhh. Not so loud.

HILDA: You're moving back home?

GARY: It's just temporary. Just till I can find a new place.

HILDA: What new place? I thought you already had a place.

GARY: Well, that didn't work out. It had rent issues.

HILDA: What rent issues? What's a rent issue?

GARY: A rent issue is when you can't pay it.

HILDA: You can't pay it? Why can't you pay it? You've got a good job. You're in the food industry.

GARY: Well, that didn't work out either. And I wasn't in the food industry. I was delivering pizzas. On a bicycle.

HILDA: Well, pizza is food, isn't it? And why did you climb over the fence? What's this fence-climbing all about?

GARY: It's hard to explain.

HILDA: So, I'll listen harder. Now, tell me.

GARY: Oh geez. Do you have any lemonade, Ma? I'm dying of thirst.

HILDA: Lemonade is for people who use the front door. Now, tell me why you're climbing over fences at ten o'clock in the morning.

GARY: Look, it's nothing . . .

HILDA: No, no, no. You don't address me as "look." I'm your mother. I'm not a "look" or a "listen here" or a "hey, toots."

GARY: Hey, toots? I wouldn't call you toots. You're my mother. That's sick, Ma. Besides, nobody says toots anymore.

HILDA: Well, what do they say?

GARY: I don't know. Baby or chickie.

HILDA: Well, don't be calling me baby or chickie either.

GARY: Ma, please!!

HILDA: So, why all this fence-climbing? Out with it.

GARY: Well, I got in a little bit of trouble and there are some guys looking for me.

HILDA: What guys? Tough guys? Big guys?

GARY: No, Ma. Midgets. I'm running from midgets. Yes, they're big guys. They're very big guys.

HILDA: And why are they after you? What's this trouble you got into?

GARY: Well, it's just . . . you know . . . I made a couple of bets that didn't pan out and uh . . . I couldn't pay up, so the guy I owe the money to sent these other guys out to collect.

HILDA: Gambling? You're gambling?

GARY: I made a couple of bets.

HILDA: Bets on what?

GARY: Horses.

HILDA: Oh my God. You're betting on horses? Like some common street thug? What are you, a Dead End Kid?

GARY: I made a couple of bets, Ma. I was just trying to get ahead, you know?

HILDA: Wait a minute. Wait. Why would you owe money? When you bet on a horse, don't you have to pay the money right there when you bet? And if you lose, the gentleman already has the money? Isn't that right?

GARY: That's if you bet at the track. If you bet with a bookie you just call him on the telephone and place the bet that way.

HILDA: On the telephone?

GARY: Yes.

HILDA: Well, that doesn't sound like a very good way to run a business if you ask me. This man—what's his name?

GARY: The bookie?

HILDA: The bookie.

GARY: Beverly Woytowich.

HILDA: Beverly?

GARY: Yes.

HILDA: A woman?

GARY: No, Beverly Woytowich is a man.

HILDA: She is?

GARY: Beverly is a man's name too, Ma.

HILDA: So you're running from a man named Beverly?

GARY: No, I'm running from two large men who work for Beverly.

HILDA: Well, if you ask me, Beverly should expect this to happen if he's just going to take bets willy-nilly over the telephone. No, I think Beverly is just as much to blame for this as you are.

GARY: Well, I don't think he would see it that way, Ma. Could I have that lemonade now, please?

HILDA: Not yet. So, what happened with the job?

GARY: What?

HILDA: You said the pizza job didn't work out. So, what happened?

GARY: The owner and me didn't see eye to eye.

HILDA: Didn't see eye to eye on what? It's pizza. They make it, you deliver it. What's to see eye to eye on?

GARY: Well, there was a woman.

HILDA: What woman?

GARY: A woman I met while I was delivering pizza. I delivered a pizza to her place and we hit it off and we started seeing each other.

HILDA: She started seeing the pizza delivery man?

GARY: Yes.

HILDA: Really?

GARY: Yes. Why?

HILDA: Well, I have to tell you, Gary, I'm not impressed with a woman who would date someone who brings pizza to her door. I mean, what kind of a future can this fellow have?

GARY: Ma, it's me! I brought pizza to her door!

HILDA: I know, but still.

GARY: So, anyway, this woman and me started seeing each other.

HILDA: And what does this have to do with you and the owner not seeing eye to eye?

GARY: Well, sometimes when I was making deliveries I would stop in at her place even when I wasn't delivering to her place.

HILDA: . . . I don't understand. You would do what?

GARY: When I was delivering pizzas I would stop in at her place even if she didn't order a pizza.

HILDA: Why would you do that?

GARY: Oh boy.

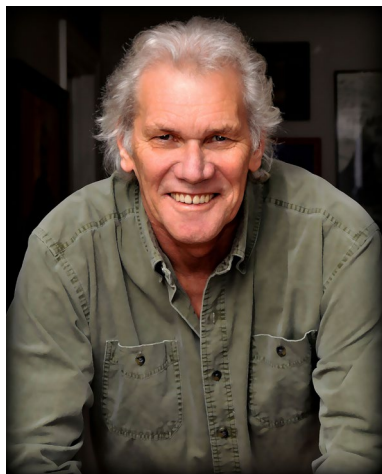
HILDA: Well, why would you stop into her place when she didn't order a pizza?

GARY: Ma.

She stops and thinks for a moment.

Actually, I can't talk now. We have guests. Goodbye, dear.

HILDA exits into the house. Lights down. End.



Norm Foster has written over sixty plays and been produced all over the world. His most popular plays include *The Melville Boys*, *The Ladies Foursome*, *Hilda's Yard*, and *On A First Name Basis*. He was made an Officer of the Order of Canada in 2017, and currently lives in Fredericton, New Brunswick.