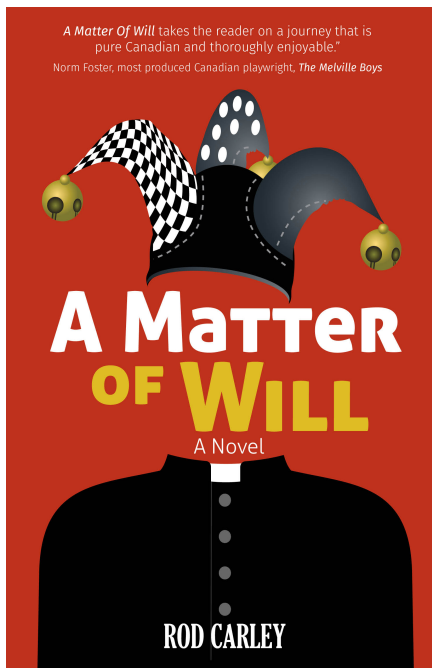


FALL 2017

LATITUDE 46  
PUBLISHING

109 Elm Street, Suite 205, Sudbury, ON, P3C 4Y1

contact: Laura Stradiotto, [laura@latitude46publishing.com](mailto:laura@latitude46publishing.com), 705-988-2155



**A Matter of Will**  
By Rod Carley

**ISBN: 978-0-9949183-8-3**

**BISAC: FIC019000**

**Paperback: Fiction**

**Publication Date: Sept. 29 2017**

**Price \$20**

**Pages: 283**

**Distribution: LitDistCo**

**Advance Praise:** "In this fable-like tale, author Rod Carley proves that he has a deft touch with story and character. *A Matter of Will* takes the reader on a journey that is pure Canadian and thoroughly enjoyable." - Norm Foster, Canada's most produced playwright

"I much admired Carley's comic mastery. The phantasmagoric scenes of Will Crosswell's forty Dark Nights of the Soul in Witless Bay, Newfoundland are grotesque comedy such as has been rarely seen in Canadian writing and how refreshing it is! Who but Rod Carley would have invented a spiritual picaresque!"  
- John Metcalf, author, *The Museum at the End of the World*

"Rod Carley's terrific ear for dialogue brings the worlds of theatre and telemarketing to life in a breezy picaresque about the spiritual redemption of a dissolute rake." ---  
- Allan Stratton, author, *The Dogs*

"*A Matter of Will* is literate – Dr. Seuss and Shakespeare get equal weight – but never ponderous. Funny, but never trivial. Poignant but never maudlin."

- Donna Sinclair, author, *The Long View*

"*A Matter of Will* is an unholy mix of *Withnail and I*, *Glengarry Glen Ross*, and an east coast kitchen party. Taking us from the Toronto theatre scene in the 1980's to a remote Newfoundland outport in the present day, it's the perfect cautionary tale for anybody contemplating a career as a Canadian actor ... I'm only sorry I didn't read it when I was 17; I could have saved myself a lot of trouble." – Chris Earle, playwright, *Radio :30*

"A genuine and unsettling cautionary tale describing a life in the theatre and a must-read for anyone foolish or misguided enough to be considering it." – Paul Thompson, Canadian playwright and theatre director

**Synopsis:** Will Crosswell's decision to pursue acting shattered his father's dream of him being a useful adult. When we first meet the young Will, he is a wolf in wolf's clothing. But in the ensuing years, from relationships to the theatre, his life has become one shipwreck after another. Dumped by his fiancée and desperate to pay the rent, he finds himself taking a job on the bottom rung of the Great Chain of Being – a telemarketer. The satire becomes serious when Will hits rock bottom. After a life-altering AA encounter with an unconventional minister, Will enrolls in divinity school and has to survive his most challenging escapade yet - a forty day fast in a Newfoundland outport in the middle of the frozen winter. As he struggles to keep from freezing and starving to death, he is confronted by a series of strange events, not the least of which is an encounter with Billy Blight, a bigger-than-life Newfoundlander headed for perdition. Funny, surprising, outrageous, and moving, *A Matter of Will* is the tale of a middle-age maybe minister and his journey to find a mighty purpose.

**Author:** Rod Carley is the Artistic Director of Canadore College's Acting for Stage and Screen Program in North Bay and a part-time English professor at Nipissing University. He is also an award-winning director, playwright and actor, having directed and produced over 100 theatrical productions to date including fifteen adaptations of Shakespeare. He was the 2009 winner of TVO's Big Ideas/Best Lecturer competition. *A Matter of Will* is his first novel.

## **5 questions with the author**

### **Rod Carley**

#### **1. What inspired you to write this book?**

I wanted to write a comic novel about a life in the theatre and a character's struggles within that framework. I also wanted to explore themes of perdition and redemption. The novel's title has a deliberate double meaning: literally, what's the matter with Will, and, when it comes to redemption, anyone can do it, it just takes persistence.

What matters to me is that people can change and with that comes the correction of many wrongs. Everyone deserves a shot at grace. I've had that chance and it's made a huge difference in my life. It laid out my spiritual quest for meaning, finding family and working through my own relationship with my parents, my disenchantment with the selfishness and inauthenticity I perceived all around me (and in myself), my later struggles with a theatrical career and ego, my challenges with relationships, and my journey to find love in all.

#### **2. You are an actor and theatre director. Do you write from experience?**

I have drawn from many of my experiences, indirectly, in the writing of this book. I have borrowed incidents and reworked them until they became fiction. To be clear, Will Crosswell is **not** Rod Carley, he is a combination of many individuals I have known filtered through the lense of my imagination.

#### **3. How much does art imitate life in *A Matter of Will*?**

Art imitates life in the sense that the Canadian theatre scene provides a backdrop for the narrative, a scene I am very familiar with. However, the story I am telling is fiction. I did do a brief stint as a telemarketer in my early 30's but the characters and scamming in Will's situation are pure fancy and bear little resemblance to my own experience (with the exception that the job is a pressure cooker and attracts people from a wide variety of backgrounds, from single mothers to struggling artists to downsized executives to ex-cons). Will's fast is born of the magic Stanislavski "what if" - what if one had to take a course in divinity school that required fasting for forty days to see if you had the right stuff?

I spent a week in Witless Bay one summer ten years ago with the intent of looking for inspiration. The warmth and humour of the inhabitants stayed with me. Billy grew out of this experience.

#### **4 .What is your writing style?**

My writing style is grounded in black humour and satire. Humour is that coin of exchange that, without it, we'd all have jumped off bridges long ago. I'm fascinated by the outrageousness of human behaviour, the extremes we often go to - passion battling with reason, foolishness finding the journey to hard-earned wisdom. We are all irrational creatures pretending to be rational. My characters struggle with this duality. I am drawn to scrappy underdogs stumbling to get a foothold in life to achieve a state of grace – a kind of alchemy of the soul that transforms my characters' often base and saddened histories into precious metals of worth. And that transformation often includes elements of mysticism. So, if I had to sum up my writing style in two words, it could be called mystical humourism.

### **5 . How does Northern Ontario influence your writing?**

It is impossible to define exactly how a place influences a writer. But there are clear parallels of feeling between my writing style and the Northern Ontario landscape in which I am a resident. Both are uncompromising, share severe elements to be reckoned with, at times are challenging in their starkness, dare one's creativity and humour to rise to the occasion, remain as hard as rock under one's feet – not giving an inch and yet the reliability of the harshness somehow strangely comforting.