

Cold Hearts

By Michael Walker

CAUTION: Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that COLD HEARTS is subject to a royalty. It is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America, the British Commonwealth, including Canada and all other countries of the Copyright Union. All rights, including professional, amateur, motion pictures, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television and the rights of translation into foreign language are strictly reserved. In its present form, the play is dedicated to the reading public only.

The live stage performance rights to COLD HEARTS are controlled exclusively by Michael Walker, and royalty arrangements and licenses must be secured well in advance of presentation. PLEASE NOTE that amateur royalty fees are set upon application in accordance with your producing circumstances. When applying for a royalty quotation and license please give us the number of performances intended, dates of production, theater seating capacity and admission fee. A royalty deposit may be required before a license is granted. Amateur royalties are payable four weeks before the opening performance of the play to Michael Walker, at Box 333, Sutton, MA 01590.

Royalty of the required amount must be paid whether the play is presented for charity or gain and whether or not admission is charged.

Particular emphasis is laid on the question of amateur or professional readings, permission and terms for which must be secured in writing from Michael Walker.

Copying from this book in whole or in part is strictly forbidden by law, and the right of performance is not transferable.

Whenever the play is produced the following notice must appear on all programs, printing and advertising for the play: "Produced by special arrangement with Michael Walker."

Due authorship credit must be given on all programs, printing and advertising for the play.

No one shall commit or authorize any act or omission by which the copyright or the right to copyright, this play may be impaired. No one shall make any changes in this play for the purpose of production.

Publication of this play does not imply availability for performance. Both amateurs and professionals considering a production are STRONGLY advised in their own interests to apply to Michael Walker for written permission before starting rehearsals, advertising, or booking a theater.

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form, by any means, now known or yet to be invented including mechanical, electronic, photocopying, recording, videotaping or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author.

Cold Hearts

Cast

Peter (mid 50's), a businessman
Richard Charles (early 50's), a friend
Mary (60), Peter's wife
Cassandra ("Cassie") 30, Peter and Mary's daughter
Simon Delgado (24), a former student, Hispanic
Rosa, 28 – 32, a prostitute, attractive, Hispanic

Setting

The play takes place in the present in New York and Argentina. It is an open stage with four playing areas, which have only enough furniture to suggest the locations: Peter and Mary's combined living/dining room; Richard's living room; Simon's dingy, studio bedroom; and a raised upstage platform, which becomes various places. In Act II, Simon's bedroom becomes his sleeping area in Argentina. At best, there will be a cyclorama, drop or some surface on which slides can be projected.

A Note About Language

This draft is written in English for development. The intention is that the scenes in Argentina appear to development audiences to be in Spanish. For purposes of readings and workshops, Spanish-speaking actors are not required. In performance, the actors playing Simon and Rosa should be Hispanic and be able to speak Spanish well enough to appear fluent.

ACT I

SCENE ONE - PETER AND MARY'S TABLE

(New York condo. There are four chairs at the table. RICHARD CHARLES, PETER and MARY are seated with cocktails. They are rich people.)

PETER

I told Clara we're going to linger over our cocktails a bit longer. Richard, can I get you another?

RICHARD

No, no; this is fine. She's such a fabulous cook; I've been looking forward to tonight for weeks.

MARY

Everyone loves Clara's cooking.

RICHARD

Now tell me, where have you been lately?

MARY

Lincoln Center for *Godot*. Gorgeous. And then Newport.

RICHARD

The races?

MARY

Yes, and Meg Fairchild came along – but it was so windy outdoors, we stayed in.

RICHARD

Who played Estragon? Or Vladimir?

(Mary looks blankly at him.)

In *Godot*.

MARY

Oh! I can never tell them apart; nobody can. A woman in either case. They were very attractive – you could tell – but I thought their costumes looked shabby. Everyone said it was fabulous.

RICHARD

And dining?

PETER

Vincent's just last week.

MARY

At *Centuries* we saw Marjorie Britt. She wasn't looking her best.

RICHARD

How was *Centuries*?

MARY

Well, it's gotten absolute rave reviews and I wouldn't disagree.

RICHARD

I heard the lighting there was remarkable.

MARY

I couldn't say. I'm sure it was there but I never saw it myself.

PETER

Clara's making a special coffee for after dinner – just for you.

RICHARD

Katherine loved her Turkish, "With a little Drambuie."

PETER

Exactly the one; it won't bother you?

RICHARD

Not at all; I appreciate the thought.

(CASSIE, 30, enters. She is a lanky, cosmopolitan fireball of energy, beauty and style.)

CASSIE

Pretend you don't see me! I'm blowing through, as the wind.

(She stops, now seeing Richard.)

Mr. Charles, I didn't know you'd be here.

RICHARD

You make me sound like a hairdresser.

CASSIE

(She kisses his cheek.)

That would be "Mr. Richard." I refuse to call anyone "Dick." It's good to see you again. I know it's been a long time, but I'm sorry about Katherine.

MARY

That's why we've gotten him over.

RICHARD

(To Cassie.) Thank you. I'm really past it now; it has been a while.

CASSIE

It was awful.

RICHARD

And to where are you running off?

CASSIE

I AM NOT HERE! I only came back because I left my papers for tonight on the dresser. I have to fly.

(Cassie exits to her room.)

PETER

She's giving a lecture across town.

MARY

I've read that grown people should have less energy.

RICHARD

She is quite beautiful. "Striking," really. Well, she's your daughter, you should know.

(Cassie re-enters carrying a folder. She crosses to Peter and kisses his cheek on her way out.)

CASSIE

Bye-bye, Daddy. I'm off! Lecture time at Carter Hall – the "Lincoln Center" for religious eggheads. Night, night all. Richard, I repeat my condolences. It's good to see you. (To everyone.) Don't wait up, I may meet someone and then, who knows?

(Cassie exits through the "front door.")

RICHARD

She's living here?

MARY

Temporarily. She's moving into a new condo on Seventy-Second, and it's being renovated.

PETER

It seems her book is an international success.

RICHARD

It certainly is. She's still unattached?

PETER

We believe she has a boyfriend in hiding.

MARY

He's probably dreadful – wants to have sex with her.

RICHARD

Do you think so?

MARY

Stop it. She attracts radical thinkers.

RICHARD

There wouldn't be anything radical about men wanting to have sex with Cassandra.

PETER

Astounding as it sounds, I don't believe she is interested in sex.

MARY

Nobody is interested in sex except men.

PETER

Mary believes women can take it or leave it, and would prefer to leave it.

RICHARD

Oh my. Really?

MARY

And how about you, Richard? Were you and Katherine having sex?

RICHARD

We had a routine.

PETER

As do we.

MARY

Nonsense. I gave up on it years ago. I tell everyone. I told Peter – he could hunt and peck around down there if he wanted to but he isn't getting any help from me.

PETER

I don't know that Richard is much interested in this.

MARY

Well he should be. Now that he's alone, he should hear the other side before he becomes predatory again. If you ask me, it's all about somebody getting on top of somebody else and nothing more. Everything I read says people marry for sex and they shouldn't.

RICHARD

They should marry for money?

MARY

I prefer "security." Heaven knows Peter has been nice enough and we've been together for ages but more importantly, when we married he was secure. I loved him for it.

RICHARD

Here, here.

MARY

Cassie, of course, is secure already so I can't imagine why she finds these tweedy-types attractive.

PETER

Scholars, she means. Men.

MARY

Not just men, foreigners. I'm sure of it. She gives these lectures on the religion of Persia or someplace and all these men want to have sex.

PETER

The Middle East.

MARY

Of course it's the Middle East, but it's a place too. Wherever it is, it's very dirty. She's been there; I wouldn't go. Nobody goes. I don't think anyone says you *should* go.

SCENE TWO – CARTER HALL

(SLIDE SHOW. The cyclorama is lit with a succession of slides showing holy places of the world. The show includes shrines, cathedrals, cities, poor villages, and beggars, in addition to market places, large commercial, industrial or military complexes. Cassie appears behind a podium on the rear platform. The audience sees her in the beginning of the lecture, but soon her light fades out, the sound fades to a voiceover and the focus is on the slides.)

CASSIE

For those of you who are new to this series, our discussion surrounds the impact of the great religions in the world and particularly on developing nations. We have spoken of the birthplaces of the major religions as being the hubs of their wheels of influence. Yet we have noted that it is the spokes of the wheels – the extent of their spread – that are most significant. What effect do these religions have on societies and institutions such as education, government, commerce, the arts and journalism? Religions have conquered countries and civilizations just as governments do now. Indigenous populations embraced invading religions or they were slaughtered. What we have left, are the countries of today. Rome will always be Rome but the effects of the Papacy, the Crusades and the Spanish Conquistadors, have made Catholicism one of the most far-reaching and important focuses in relation to our discussion tonight, which centers on the world's largest religion, Christianity.

SCENE THREE - RICHARD'S LIVING ROOM

(Richard is seated, reading. Cassie enters, carrying her folder. She crosses to him, leans over the back of his chair, and kisses him deeply.)

CASSIE

I didn't expect to see you at the house tonight. You looked very handsome. Did you want me?

RICHARD

I would have had you for desert, but I didn't think your father would approve. How was the lecture?

CASSIE

They applauded wildly saying it was brilliant and the slides were stunning; I was bored to death.

RICHARD

So you came here.

CASSIE

(She moves toward his bedroom)

I don't have much time; come to bed. I want to be conquered.

RICHARD

Your father says you're not interested in sex.

CASSIE

He's wrong.

RICHARD

Your mother says you have a boyfriend.

CASSIE

She's right. Come. Please?

RICHARD

Is it me?

CASSIE

Why don't you take off your clothes and find out?

RICHARD

You're in a rush.

CASSIE

I only have an hour and I want to take a shower before I leave. Come on, time for desert.

RICHARD

(Rising.)

You're going to wear me out.

CASSIE

(Taking off her clothes as she exits.)

I better not.

SCENE FOUR - PETER AND MARY'S TABLE

(Peter and Mary are still seated at the dinner table.)

MARY

Do you think he's gay? I hate that word. Do you think he's homosexual?

PETER

Richard?

MARY

He's certainly sounds it. He says, "Oh, my!"

PETER

He's not effeminate.

MARY

You don't have to be a pansy, Peter. Every magazine says the big, muscle men are all fags. Queer as that senator.

PETER

I wouldn't think so for Richard.

MARY

You went to school with him.

PETER

Yes, but we didn't date.

MARY

Is that why Katherine was leaving him?

PETER

I don't know that she was.

MARY

Celeste says she was. I told you. He could be queer; he's certainly attractive enough. How did she die?

PETER

You know; she fell from the balcony.

MARY

But how does a person do that? It doesn't make any sense. It could have been suicide.

PETER

Why would she commit suicide if she were leaving him?

MARY

He might have killed her.

PETER

He was in Turkey!

MARY

He could have arranged it. He didn't have to kill her himself; people don't do that anymore. I mean powerful people. She could have been leaving him, taking all the money and he could have had her killed. It could be a movie.

PETER

Is that how you see him?

MARY

Oh, I like Richard, I do. Everybody says everybody's homosexual now; it's inside us: it's latent. They say people like to see what they already know – like in a mirror. Women are more complicated of course but it's inside everybody. Not me. After all, when you look at people, what do you really know?

(Pause.)

I guess I don't see him in a movie.

(Pause.)

I had Chrystal book us with the Meyerson's for Alaska in June.

(Pause.)

I'm going to bring my fur.

SCENE FIVE - SIMON'S BEDROOM

(A dingy Greenwich Village apartment. SIMON DELGADO, 24, is lying on the bed, propped up by a supply of pillows. He is a little scruffy, but clean. He is lean, with long hair. He is wearing pants, but no shoes and is shirtless or possibly unbuttoned. He is drinking wine from the wrong glass.

Cassie enters. She puts her folder on the dresser, comes to him and kisses him. She moves away and then comes back

to him and kisses him again, this time forcefully grabbing a handful of his hair. She returns to the dresser and takes off her jewelry and clothes.)

SIMON

That was nice. You're later than I expected.

CASSIE

I know.

SIMON

Did you shower?

CASSIE

Recently?

SIMON

I don't know. You smell different.

CASSIE

I used a new bath gel. Do you like it?

SIMON

I suppose. How was the diatribe?

CASSIE

"Lecture." You really should have come. You could learn something.

SIMON

What was it?

CASSIE

"The Imprint of Great Religions on New Worlds." It's a series.

SIMON

It's bullshit.

CASSIE

I know you think that.

SIMON

It is! A bunch of phony people in long robes pushing the bible.

CASSIE

And the Koran.

SIMON

It's all bullshit. They raped South America – and Mexico. Imprint my ass. It's as much a business as fucking Microsoft.

CASSIE

I know. But what if you're wrong?

SIMON

Fuck you, Cassie. They came in golden robes to all these peasants in rags and fed them crap and took their gold and food and art and then they told them they were all going to Heaven.

CASSIE

Maybe they are.

SIMON

That's not how you get to heaven.

CASSIE

You know?

SIMON

The university's no better. Takes the money from the students and pays you to fly all over the world doing research and taking pictures of crap. And for what?

CASSIE

I was on the cover of *Newsweek*.

SIMON

So was Hitler.

CASSIE

One night you won't talk so much. One night you'll just shut up and fuck me.

(She sits by him in her slip and takes off her stockings.)

But you can't do that, can you? That doesn't work for you. Take off your pants.

SIMON

Why don't you move in?

CASSIE

Here?

SIMON

With me.

CASSIE

Let's see, what are they cooking tonight? Garlic? How remarkable.

SIMON

It's an Italian restaurant.

CASSIE

And it's right downstairs!

(She takes his glass and drinks his wine.)

SIMON

This place was your idea.

CASSIE

I'm not going to live here.

SIMON

I could move in with you when your place is done. We could discuss the imprint of the great religions on your bank account. Moses and the parting of the red ink...

CASSIE

That's not going to happen. If you say another word, I'll walk out and I won't come back. No more talk. I came for the sex tonight, that's all. We're going to do this my way. Here we go. Don't move.

(She pours the last of the wine on his face and chest and then smears it around with her hand before she climbs on top and devours him as the lights fade to black.)

SCENE SIX - PETER AND MARY'S LIVING ROOM

(Peter and Mary are seated with after-dinner drinks or coffee.)

MARY

Is the war good for business?

PETER

There's more manufacturing. More shipping. More money around. I suppose it is.

MARY

I mean is it good for *your* business? Are we getting richer?

PETER

Not really.

MARY

You make bandages during a war! How could it be bad?

PETER

It isn't good or bad. There's always fighting somewhere. It doesn't matter.

MARY

But if there wasn't a war, would we make money? Tomorrow, if there wasn't any more fighting. People say it could happen.

PETER

People bleed all over the world. They use surgical supplies and we make money. We're recession-proof. War-proof.

(Pause.)

MARY

Clara's stealing from us.

PETER

Clara?

MARY

She's taking things from the trash.

PETER

What kind of things?

MARY

Clothes we throw away. Books and... "things." I don't know.

PETER

Well, it's trash.

MARY

I don't want her taking home things from our trash. I want to throw them away.

(Pause.)

I just want to be sure we'll have money.

PETER

War or no war, we'll have money.

MARY

So it doesn't matter who I vote for.

PETER

No.

MARY

I want Clara to start buying our fruit from Second Avenue.

PETER

That's a long walk for her.

MARY

Penny Roper says it's firmer there. Just the fruit; I still want her to buy vegetables down the street. Penny says vegetables cost too much on Second.

SCENE SEVEN - RICHARD'S LIVING ROOM

(Richard is seated on the sofa. He could be reading or working on some papers. Cassie lets herself in through the front door. She is dressed in a stunningly simple cocktail dress. She comes to him, puts her bag down and sits. She doesn't speak.)

RICHARD

Yes?

CASSIE

I'm bringing someone over to the house for dinner. To meet my parents.

(Pause.)

They were beginning to wonder who I've been spending every night with.

RICHARD

"Every night?"

CASSIE

Not really. He's young; he was a student of mine a few years ago. Are you jealous?

RICHARD

Should I be?

CASSIE

I'm going to be spending more time with him. For a while.

RICHARD

You don't have to tell me this.

CASSIE

It's a phase I'm going through.

RICHARD

Young men?

CASSIE

Honesty.

RICHARD

Come over here.

(She kisses him. He slips the strap of her dress off one shoulder and holds her breast. She kisses him again.)

RICHARD

This young man won't change anything; you know that. Can you stay?

(She rises, pulling the strap back up.)

CASSIE

The dinner is tonight. I won't be able to come back later.

(She picks up her bag and begins to exit, pausing at the "door" before she exits.)

I'm not giving back your key.

(End of "First Pages")