

Once More With Passion

By Terrie Todd

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DEDICATION

Dedicated with love and gratitude to the members of Stage Right, the drama team at Portage Alliance Church, without whose courage this play would not have gone beyond my computer screen.

SYNOPSIS

Rick Hampton, an actor, gets a part as a Roman soldier in his hometown's professionally produced Passion Play. As Rick works hard to learn his lines, he's also trying to navigate his personal life which is in turmoil. Recently separated, he's temporarily staying with his mother, who exemplifies so many Christian virtues, including also giving temporary shelter to Karen, Rick's estranged wife. When Rick is asked to take on the role of Jesus, which includes a dramatic, stylized crucifixion scene, questions begin to arise for him and he's forced to take a good look at his character—and his Character—and runs smack into grace.

Although *Once More With Passion* makes a wonderful Easter play, it can be done anytime. Performance time approximately 90 minutes.

PREMIERE PERFORMANCE

First performed by the Stage Right Drama Team at the William Glesby Centre in Portage la Prairie, Manitoba, Canada, March 21 and 22, 2008. Main cast included Tim Lehman as Rick; Vicki Hooke as Nancy; Nettie Neudorf as Tanis; Melanie Ferg as Karen; Dan Buhler as Ben; and Preston Meier as Pat. Directed by the author; Stage Manager was Barb Knott.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 m, 4 w, 1 flexible, 1 small girl; 5-9 extras)

RICK: Actor, 25-35.

NANCY: His mother, 55-60.

TANIS: His sister, 25-35.

KAREN: His ex-wife, 25-35.

PAT: The Passion Play's director, any age *(male or female)*.

JUDY: Nancy's friend, 50-60.

BEN: An actor in the Passion Play.

GRACE: Age 4 *(or a small 5 or 6-year-old girl)*.

Additional Cast *(doubling possible)*

STAGEHAND *(M or F)*

2 AMBULANCE ATTENDANTS *(M or F)*

PEOPLE IN WAITING ROOM

NURSE

REPLACEMENT ROMAN SOLDIER *(M)*

2 JEWISH MEN *(M)*

SET

This play utilizes 3 basic scenes. They should all be set up, using lights to transition from one to the other, allowing the whole story to flow smoothly from scene to scene with no intermission and a bare minimum of scene changes required:

Center Stage: Nancy's kitchen, with a front door leading outside, an opening to the bedroom hallway, and another opening to the basement. *(Center stage.)*

Stage Right: The tomb of Christ, where the Passion Play rehearsal scenes take place and the crucifixion scene.

Stage Left: The hospital waiting room – 4 chairs in a straight row.

MUSIC

The powerful music used is integral to the play. Some scenes have no dialogue but merely have the music playing while the action on stage carries the story forward, like a movie soundtrack. These scenes will need careful choreographing. See production notes at the end of the script for the list of suggested songs.

CRUCIFIXION SCENE

Like in the original production, this should be done in a stylized way, with no actual cross, but Jesus posed with his arms out and head down as dead. He should be up on a big black box. In front of Him, two Roman soldiers hold up a black sheet with their spears. After the lights come up and the scene is established, they drop the sheet. Very effective. During the first verse of the music, the soldiers take the body of Jesus down from the cross. One soldier can mime prying out the nails while the other (*Ben*) takes his place in front of the cross with his back to Rick (*Jesus*). As Rick's arms are released, the soldier carries him using a fireman's carry. During the second verse, the two Jews pick up the black sheet and spread it in front of the tomb. Ben carries Rick to the sheet where all four men help lower him onto it, wrap it around him, and carry him inside the tomb. The Roman soldiers push the stone in place and take their stance. During the third verse, a bright light begins to shine from inside the tomb. As the song builds to its crescendo, an unseen stagehand kicks out the stone from inside (or uses a long stick). A blinding light comes out of the tomb and the two soldiers fall down as dead. A fog machine inside the tomb really helps diffuse the light and make it more effective.

COSTUMES

Most of the clothing is modern day summer wear, plus a navy suit for Karen, plus nightwear and 2 ambulance attendants' shirts. For the "play within the play" you will need:

2 Roman soldier costumes, with helmets (3 if the replacement soldier does not fit Rick's)
2 Jewish men costumes
Jesus robe, sash, and crown of thorns
Loin cloth for crucifixion scene
Fake blood

See additional production notes at the end of the script.

Scene 1

(AT RISE: MUSIC begins: "Draw Me Lord" reprise. SPOTLIGHT up on RICK.)

RICK: *(Speaking directly to audience in character.)* Hi, I'm Rick Hampton. And I've been on quite a journey. Grew up in a little foothills town that sleeps all winter and comes alive every summer with swarming tourists and our version of the world famous Passion Play. I spent every summer in high school selling popcorn and programs, taking tickets, carting around props and sound equipment...and dreaming of the day I'd be out from behind the scenes and acting on stage. Then life happened. My dad explained how I needed a "real" job, so...I tried a few. I think he went to his grave disappointed in me. And, in all my youthful wisdom, I got married at 21.

(LIGHTS come up on the kitchen. NANCY is on the phone, TANIS is working with a screwdriver, trying to tighten the leg of the kitchen table.)

RICK: *(Cont'd.)* That's my mom on the phone. She had doubts about my marriage, I could see it in her eyes, but she quietly accepted her daughter-in-law and extended a lot of grace to us both. And that's my sister Tanis. Lives just down the street with her husband Ed – Steady Eddy, I call him – and the two smartest little boys in the world, Cameron and Aaron. Man, I love those little guys. After my marriage fell apart, I decided to give my acting dreams another shot. Got out of town, made a few connections. And I guess you could say that's how I got to be Jesus.
(LIGHTS down on RICK.)

NANCY: *(Into the phone.)* That is FANTASTIC news! I'm so proud of you, Rick -- and of course you can stay here, I will love it. When's your flight? Okay, well, just email me all the details as soon as you can. Okay. Looking forward to it. Love you! Bye. *(To TANIS, excitedly.)* Your brother's got a part in the Passion Play!

TANIS: The Passion Play? Not Jesus I hope – that would be an awfully big stretch.

NANCY: No, a Roman soldier and possibly one other small part. But it's a paycheck for him, a paid acting job! And best of all, he's going to stay here with me for a month of rehearsals plus the run of the play. Two whole months, Tanis! I haven't seen that much of him since he was in high school. *(Does a little victory dance.)*

TANIS: And this is a good thing because...?

NANCY: *(Stops and looks at HER.)* Do I detect a bit of sibling rivalry over there?

TANIS: Definitely. Do you do a little dance like that when you see me?

NANCY: That's different. I see you nearly every day. And yes, actually. You have no idea how often I pinch myself that you live only three blocks away.

TANIS: Just checking.

NANCY: More coffee?

TANIS: No, I should get going. The boys will be home from school soon and Cameron's uniform is still in the washer. I've got this fixed as best I can, I think. I'll have Eddie come take a look at it as soon as he can. *(Putting tools back in toolbox.)* I'm glad, too, Mom. It will be nice to have Rick around for awhile. Since he split with Karen, I've seen him maybe two or three times. *(Pause.)* I saw her the other day.

NANCY: Karen? Where?

TANIS: In line at the drugstore.

NANCY: Did you talk to her?

TANIS: Just said hi.

NANCY: How'd she look?

TANIS: Mm - worn out. A little sheepish.

NANCY: She thinks we blame her.

TANIS: Do we?

NANCY: What?

TANIS: Do we blame Karen?

NANCY: *(Looks at HER for a moment.)* Do you?

TANIS: *(Shrugs.)* It takes two...

NANCY: Yeah.

End of Freeview

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