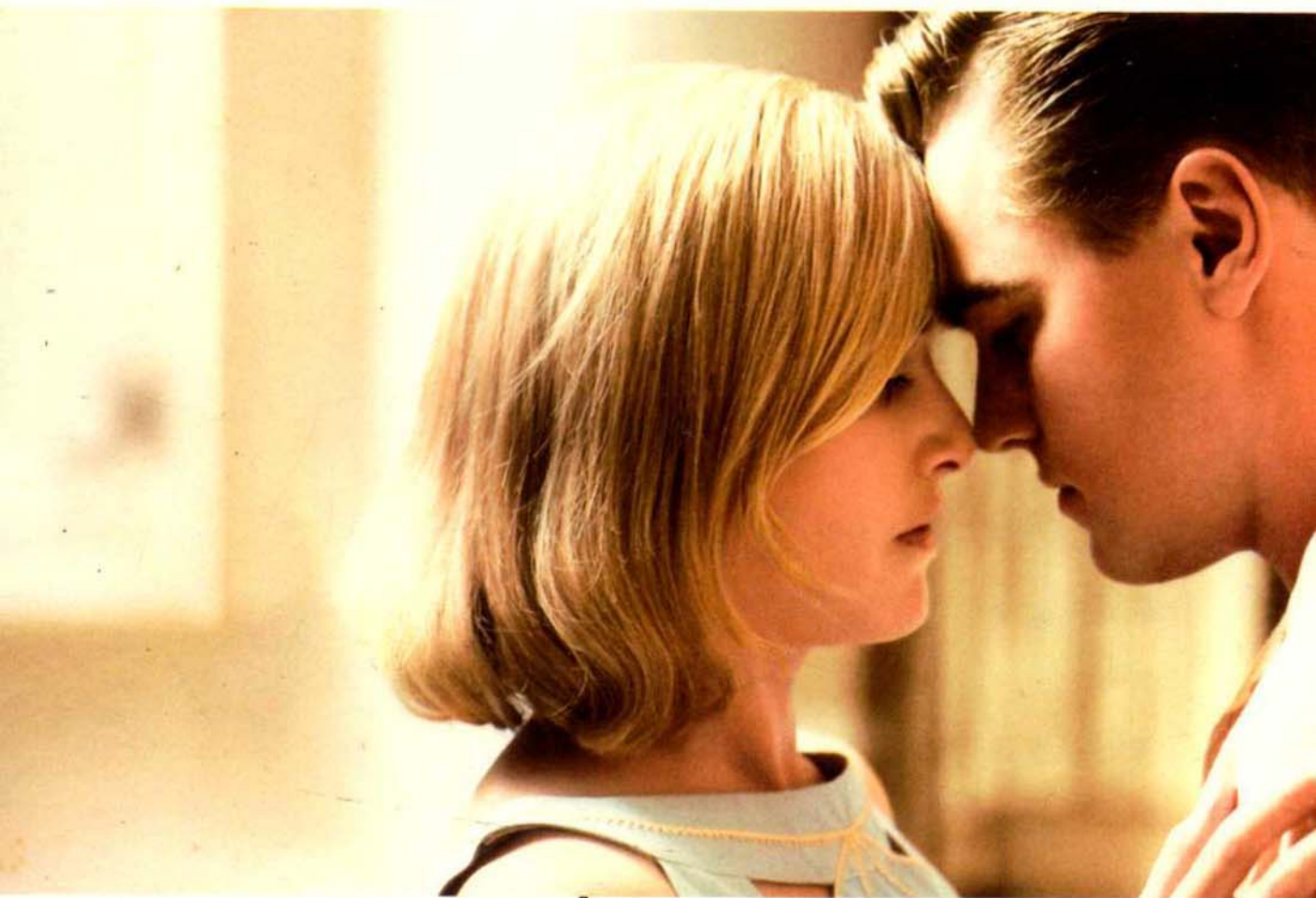


**NOW A
MAJOR
MOTION
PICTURE**

Starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Kate Winslet



Revolutionary Road

Richard Yates

Excites the reader's compassion and interest." —*The New York Times*

REVOLUTIONARY ROAD

Richard Yates

VINTAGE CONTEMPORARIES

Vintage Books

A Division of Random House, Inc.

New York

Sale of this book without a front cover may be unauthorized.
If this book is coverless, it may have been reported to the publisher
as "unsold or destroyed" and neither the author nor the publisher
may have received payment for it.

FIRST VINTAGE CONTEMPORARIES
MASS MARKET EDITION, JANUARY 2009

Copyright © 1961, copyright renewed 1989 by Richard Yates

All rights reserved. Published in the United States by Vintage Books, a division of
Random House, Inc., New York, and in Canada by Random House of Canada Limited,
Toronto. Originally published in hardcover in the United States by
Little, Brown & Co., Boston, Massachusetts, in 1961.

Vintage and colophon are registered trademarks and Vintage
Contemporaries is a trademark of Random House, Inc.

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are either the
product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual
persons, living or dead, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Yates, Richard, 1926–1992.

Revolutionary road / Richard Yates. —
Vintage Contemporaries ed.

p. cm.

1. Married people—Connecticut—Fiction.
2. Suburban life—Connecticut—Fiction. I. Title.

PS3575.A83 R4 2000
813'54—dc21 99-055503

Vintage Mass Market ISBN 978-0-307-45478-2

Book design by Christopher M. Zucker

www.vintagebooks.com

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8

Acclaim for Richard Yates's

REVOLUTIONARY ROAD

"Every phrase reflects to the highest degree integrity and stylistic mastery. To read *Revolutionary Road* is to have forced upon us a fresh sense of our critical modern shortcomings: failures of work, education, community, family, marriage . . . and plain nerve."

—*The New Republic*

"Richard Yates is a writer of commanding gifts. His prose is urbane yet sensitive, with passion and irony held deftly in balance. And he provides unexpected pleasures in a flood of freshly minted phrases and in the thrust of sudden insight, precise notation of feeling, and mordant unsentimental perceptions."

—*Saturday Review*

"A powerful treatment of a characteristically American theme, which might be labeled 'trapped.' . . . A highly impressive performance. It is written with perception, force and awareness of complexity and ambiguity, and it tells a moving and absorbing story."

—*The Atlantic Monthly*

Richard Yates

REVOLUTIONARY ROAD

Richard Yates was born in 1926 in New York and lived in California. His prize-winning stories began to appear in 1953 and his first novel, *Revolutionary Road*, was nominated for the National Book Award in 1961. He is the author of eight other works, including the novels *A Good School*, *The Easter Parade*, and *Disturbing the Peace*, and two collections of short stories, *Eleven Kinds of Loneliness* and *Liars in Love*. He died in 1992.

ALSO BY RICHARD YATES

Eleven Kinds of Loneliness

A Special Providence

Disturbing the Peace

The Easter Parade

A Good School

Liars in Love

Young Hearts Crying

Cold Spring Harbor

REVOLUTIONARY
ROAD

To Sheila

Alas! when passion is both meek and wild!

—JOHN KEATS

PART ONE

ONE

THE FINAL DYING SOUNDS of their dress rehearsal left the Laurel Players with nothing to do but stand there, silent and helpless, blinking out over the footlights of an empty auditorium. They hardly dared to breathe as the short, solemn figure of their director emerged from the naked seats to join them on stage, as he pulled a stepladder raspingly from the wings and climbed halfway up its rungs to turn and tell them, with several clearings of his throat, that they were a damned talented group of people and a wonderful group of people to work with.

"It hasn't been an easy job," he said, his glasses glinting soberly around the stage. "We've had a lot of problems here, and quite frankly I'd more or less resigned myself not to expect too much. Well, listen. Maybe this sounds corny, but something happened up

here tonight. Sitting out there tonight I suddenly knew, deep down, that you were all putting your hearts into your work for the first time." He let the fingers of one hand splay out across the pocket of his shirt to show what a simple, physical thing the heart was; then he made the same hand into a fist, which he shook slowly and wordlessly in a long dramatic pause, closing one eye and allowing his moist lower lip to curl out in a grimace of triumph and pride. "Do that again tomorrow night," he said, "and we'll have one hell of a show."

They could have wept with relief. Instead, trembling, they cheered and laughed and shook hands and kissed one another, and somebody went out for a case of beer and they all sang songs around the auditorium piano until the time came to agree, unanimously, that they'd better knock it off and get a good night's sleep.

"See you tomorrow!" they called, as happy as children, and riding home under the moon they found they could roll down the windows of their cars and let the air in, with its health-giving smells of loam and young flowers. It was the first time many of the Laurel Players had allowed themselves to acknowledge the coming of spring.

The year was 1955 and the place was a part of western Connecticut where three swollen villages had lately been merged by a wide and clamorous highway called Route Twelve. The Laurel Players were an ama-

teur company, but a costly and very serious one, carefully recruited from among the younger adults of all three towns, and this was to be their maiden production. All winter, gathering in one another's living rooms for excited talks about Ibsen and Shaw and O'Neill, and then for the show of hands in which a common-sense majority chose *The Petrified Forest*, and then for preliminary casting, they had felt their dedication growing stronger every week. They might privately consider their director a funny little man (and he was, in a way: he seemed incapable of any but a very earnest manner of speaking, and would often conclude his remarks with a little shake of the head that caused his cheeks to wobble) but they liked and respected him, and they fully believed in most of the things he said. "Any play deserves the best that any actor has to give," he'd told them once, and another time: "Remember this. We're not just putting on a play here. We're establishing a community theater, and that's a pretty important thing to be doing."

The trouble was that from the very beginning they had been afraid they would end by making fools of themselves, and they had compounded that fear by being afraid to admit it. At first their rehearsals had been held on Saturdays—always, it seemed, on the kind of windless February or March afternoon when the sky is white, the trees are black, and the brown

fields and hummocks of the earth lie naked and tender between curds of shriveled snow. The Players, coming out of their various kitchen doors and hesitating for a minute to button their coats or pull on their gloves, would see a landscape in which only a few very old, weathered houses seemed to belong; it made their own homes look as weightless and impermanent, as foolishly misplaced as a great many bright new toys that had been left outdoors overnight and rained on. Their automobiles didn't look right either—unnecessarily wide and gleaming in the colors of candy and ice cream, seeming to wince at each splatter of mud, they crawled apologetically down the broken roads that led from all directions to the deep, level slab of Route Twelve. Once there the cars seemed able to relax in an environment all their own, a long bright valley of colored plastic and plate glass and stainless steel—KING KONE, MOBILGAS, SHOPORAMA, EAT—but eventually they had to turn off, one by one, and make their way up the winding country road that led to the central high school; they had to pull up and stop in the quiet parking lot outside the high-school auditorium.

“Hi!” the Players would shyly call to one another.

“Hi! . . .” “Hi! . . .” And they'd go reluctantly inside.

Clumping their heavy galoshes around the stage, blotting at their noses with Kleenex and frowning at the unsteady print of their scripts, they would disarm

each other at last with peals of forgiving laughter, and they would agree, over and over, that there was plenty of time to smooth the thing out. But there wasn't plenty of time, and they all knew it, and a doubling and redoubling of their rehearsal schedule seemed only to make matters worse. Long after the time had come for what the director called "really getting this thing off the ground; really making it happen," it remained a static, shapeless, inhumanly heavy weight; time and again they read the promise of failure in each other's eyes, in the apologetic nods and smiles of their parting and the spastic haste with which they broke for their cars and drove home to whatever older, less explicit promises of failure might lie in wait for them there.

And now tonight, with twenty-four hours to go, they had somehow managed to bring it off. Giddy in the unfamiliar feel of make-up and costumes on this first warm evening of the year, they had forgotten to be afraid: they had let the movement of the play come and carry them and break like a wave; and maybe it sounded corny (and what if it did?) but they had all put their hearts into their work. Could anyone ever ask for more than that?

The audience, arriving in a long clean serpent of cars the following night, were very serious too. Like the

Players, they were mostly on the young side of middle age, and they were attractively dressed in what the New York clothing stores describe as Country Casuals. Anyone could see they were a better than average crowd, in terms of education and employment and good health, and it was clear too that they considered this a significant evening. They all knew, of course, and said so again and again as they filed inside and took their seats, that *The Petrified Forest* was hardly one of the world's great plays. But it was, after all, a fine theater piece with a basic point of view that was every bit as valid today as in the thirties ("Even more valid," one man kept telling his wife, who chewed her lips and nodded, seeing what he meant; "even more valid, when you think about it"). The main thing, though, was not the play itself but the company—the brave idea of it, the healthy, hopeful sound of it: the birth of a really good community theater right here, among themselves. This was what had drawn them, enough of them to fill more than half the auditorium, and it was what held them hushed and tense in readiness for pleasure as the house lights dimmed.

The curtain went up on a set whose rear wall was still shaking with the impact of a stagehand's last-minute escape, and the first few lines of dialogue were blurred by the scrape and bang of accidental offstage noises. These small disorders were signs of a mounting