

ACT I

SETTING: At center is the Library of the Presidents Manse represented by a large desk backed by a set of French windows; outside is a small patio, snow covered. SL is an entrance from the main hall of the house, perhaps with double doors, and SR a door to the den; all of this could be raised or otherwise delineated/ the DR, DC and DL stage areas, represented by furniture or small set pieces, are used for various other locations around the campus.

AT RISE: Music. A circle of light picks up CLAYTON, dressed in slacks and ski sweater with Haven College logo. He is addressing Haven alums in Denver; there is applause from a small but enthusiastic group.

CLAYTON Thank you – thank you Harry for that very generous introduction. Mary and I have been here in Denver before, but this is our first official visit with Haven’s Denver Nexus – and I can’t tell you how delighted we are for this change to get to know you, to share your hospitality and, of course, to be with many of you on the ski slopes tomorrow morning.

(More applause.)

When I first contacted Harry about having this meeting, he apologized for the small size of your group. Well, I want to tell you right off – there’s no need for apologies. Since becoming Haven’s president, we’ve been to both ends of the country, Mary and I, and believe me – there are smaller groups than fifteen. Numbers don’t mean a thing when we consider our motto: “Where one Haven heart beats – there beats the world.”

(Strong applause.)

And, of course, this brings to mind the loss we all suffered just eight short months ago in the death of our beloved Board of Trustees chairman, Oliver Bates. You may not know this, but Oliver was responsible for bringing me to Haven. He took a chance on me even though I, unlike you, am not an alum of Haven College. Oliver will be missed.

(Pause; a moment of respectful silence.)

Now, the most frequent question I’m asked at meetings like this is, “what’s going on at Haven – how’s the good old place doing?” Well I’m here to tell you, “just fine!” Oh sure, you may have heard of some minor problems with enrollments; that some philosophic differences are being debated here and there on campus and that our financial solvency is in question. Certainly we’ve had some difficulties – but I’m here to say – Haven is going to come back and come back stronger than ever!

(Strong applause.)

The programs I've instituted in my three years as President are the right ones – the ones that will eventually make Haven a “Little Yale” of the mid-west!

(Strong applause.)

Yes indeed, there's a lot of work to be done – many tasks, as the wise old master Oliver Bates would say. Above all, we need to put our economic house in order – to spend wisely – to eliminate waste – and, to balance our budget!

(Strong applause.)

But to do this, we need your help – Haven needs your help! Friends, your alma mater is crying out for your strong support! Your strong moral support and – above all else – your strong financial support. Let's make a difference, for our love of Haven!

(Pause. Weak, scattered applause. Broad, coverup smile from CLAYTON as the light fades. Music. We go to the Library. It's Saturday evening about two weeks later; we hear voices from SL hall.)

MARY Okay, now push! *(Outer door slams.)* Now – pitch forward a little...

CLAYTON OOWW! I'm not made of rubber!

CHRIS Sorry, daddy.

MARY Be a big boy CLAYTON – we're doing the best we can. *(She switches on Library lights. Turns back.)* Where do you think you're going?

CLAYTON Damnit!!

MARY My sentiments, if you think we're carrying you up those stairs. Push him in, Chris. *(CHRIS pushes in wheelchair with CLAYTON in it. He is wearing slippers.)*

CLAYTON Where the hell am I suppose to sleep – on the desk?

MARY *(As she moves to the den.)* I'll make up the daybed in the den. *(As she crosses the back to SL doors and out.)* Get the thermostat, Chris.

CLAYTON Damnit!!

CHRIS *(Moves to SL wall.)* Lighten up, dad – skiing was your idea.

CLAYTON Not too high. *(He wheels himself back of desk. It is stacked high with mail and folders; he contemplates these.)*

CHRIS *(At thermostat.)* Should we hold at 68 or go for 72 and bankruptcy?

CLAYTON Funny. (*Regards her for a moment.*) So, what have you been up to?

CHRIS Work, daddy, – work, work, work.

CLAYTON Vocation or avocation?

CHRIS Both.

CLAYTON In proper order, I hope.

CHRIS Of course. Speaking of which, I hit the jackpot.

CLAYTON Duke or Harvard?

CHRIS Law schools decide in March, – I told you. I'm the main lady in the Scottish play!

CLAYTON Scottish play?

CHRIS Kill the king, take his job?

CLAYTON Why not just say Macbeth?

CHRIS Mr. Voidman says it's bad luck. (*MARY returns with bedding from SL. Moves toward SR den door.*)

MARY What is?

CLAYTON Everything, lately. Shakespeare – pretty big jump for you.

CHRIS You don't think I'm up to it?

CLAYTON I... I meant – the whole group. The whole drama club.

CHRIS Alright, dad.

CLAYTON How's he to work with – Voidman?

CHRIS Great. He says it's time the Haven Harlequins moved out of safety and into the danger zone.

MARY A radical.

CLAYTON I don't know how much about him, but if he's willing to help me shake this place out of its' provincial rut, I'm glad we hired him.

CHRIS That makes two of us.

MARY From the looks of that desk you'd better get off shaking for a while and get back to the basics.

CLAYTON How the hell could this much accumulate in three weeks?

CHRIS Emma says three months.

CLAYTON There goes my whole damn weekend.

CHRIS You told me to have her bring it.

CLAYTON *(Picking up a stack of envelopes.)* I meant these – the P and C. Not all this other crap.

MARY You have nothing better to do.

CLAYTON That Goddamned branch.

CHRIS You didn't see it – what?

MARY Oh he saw it alright: "I'm going through, Mary!" *(She goes into SR den.)*

CLAYTON I saw the little bastard – I didn't see his big brother hiding behind him.

CHRIS Ouch! But nothing broke.

CLAYTON No.

CHRIS How long?

CLAYTON The so called specialist proclaimed it a "major tibia trauma." In a couple of weeks, I'm to take two aspirin, try standing and get in touch if I hear any snapping sounds.

CHRIS Don't push it.

CLAYTON I may have... *(Has been looking through stack of letters and finds an interesting one.)* Hello. The crap pile yields a morsel of good tidings – I hope.

CHRIS *(Gives him a hug.)* I'm out of here, just in case it's not.

CLAYTON Stick around – we'll order some food.

CHRIS Saturday night, dad.

CLAYTON Who with?

CHRIS Just – a friend.

CLAYTON Yeah?

(No response. MARY comes back in.)

CHRIS Bye, mom.

MARY Thought maybe you'd stay here tonight.

CHRIS Plans.

MARY *(Moving toward her.)* Dinner tomorrow?

CHRIS I – I've got lots to do – study – play practice... oh, sure.

MARY Good. Thanks for picking us up.

CHRIS *(As she goes out SL door.)* Preview – of our geriatric future together.

CLAYTON *(Shouts to her.)* Funny!

MARY What's the big mystery?

CLAYTON You heard her – plans. I hope she's not back with that fraternity jerk – what's his name...

MARY Steve – Bingo – something...

CLAYTON Stupid juvenile group mentality.

MARY I don't think intellect was the attraction.

CLAYTON I just hope she's out of that stage.

MARY Probably not – it's male hormones that begin sputtering at twenty-one.

CLAYTON I'm talking about selection. *(Has opened and begun to read letters.)*
And – for being such a smartass – I'm not taking you with me.

MARY Which?

CLAYTON Looks like we're still on track.

MARY Boston?

CLAYTON *(Reading.)* The short list is shorter and I seem to be on top – according to Milton.

MARY Smell the salt air!

CLAYTON Could be a problem.

MARY Like?

CLAYTON He wrote this three weeks ago.

MARY So?

CLAYTON I had set up next week to go there.

MARY Why not?

CLAYTON Somehow, interviewing for president at a prestigious Eastern University with my butt in this chair seems a little – rickety.

MARY Not when you explain you're the macho skier person.

CLAYTON *(Not amused.)* Sure.

MARY Sorry. But it's what we both want – right.

CLAYTON Of course.

MARY We'll go together. We'll wow 'em.

CLAYTON I'll call Milton first thing Monday and confirm.

MARY Good. *(A moment; she regards him.)* I don't like that look, Clayton.

CLAYTON I hate unfinished business.

MARY *(Points to desk.)* Really?

CLAYTON Routine is a pain in the ass. I'm about the big picture. I practically swore a blood oath I would bring this place back. Oliver Bates had faith in me.

MARY Well Henry Steeler doesn't. I need to get back to a sane and functioning environment, Clayton.

CLAYTON I know that. And I want to be there as well. It's just – he was sure I could do it.

MARY I have no doubt you could have. If Oliver hadn't up and died on us, I'm sure the two of you would have returned Haven to its resplendent glory – whatever that was. But he did. And there's no way in hell you'll get the job done with Steeler here. At least not before we're both ready for Medicare.

CLAYTON I know that. But I still get angry thinking about it. This place is the perfect example of a relic begging to be let out of its 19th century coffin. It's got nowhere to go but up.

MARY It's your social science hormones working again.

CLAYTON They always have been, love. At least since I decided to trade them in – right after I turned twenty one.

MARY Bad choice. They last longer, but they're a lot less fun.

CLAYTON We're so clever sometimes. I want to vomit.

MARY First thing Monday morning. Okay?

CLAYTON Okay.

MARY *(As she starts out SL.)* You're set up in there – yell if you need help.

CLAYTON Where're you going – it's Saturday night.

MARY Get serious, Clayton.

CLAYTON Just what I don't want to get. Go thaw something and bring a bottle of wine – two bottles of wine.

MARY *(As she starts out again.)* This should be interesting. *(Phone on desk rings; she goes to it. At the same time PORTER is in the DR area with phone in hand. He is at home, dressed in fancy pajamas and robe.)* Hello.

PORTER Porter Wilcox, Mary – checking to see if you arrived safe and sound.

MARY Yes Porter, safely back – we're about to check the sound part. Here's Clayton. *(She holds the phone out for him to take; gives him a knowing look and goes out SL doors.)*

CLAYTON Hello, Porter.

PORTER Welcome home, Clayton.

CLAYTON Good to be back. Any new developments?

PORTER Not since we talked last week. Few more details.

CLAYTON Any word on the Willows grant?

PORTER Bad news, I'm afraid – rejected.

CLAYTON Damn it! I was counting on that; it looked so certain.

PORTER Best laid plans.

CLAYTON They say why?

PORTER Far as I can tell, they feel we don't have the stability to support the programs we have, let alone starting a new one in "gender neutral advocacy."

CLAYTON Crap. Those that have get. How the hell will we ever make progress with that kind of attitude.

PORTER Is that a statement or question?

CLAYTON Sorry – I don't mean to imply it's your fault. It's just... Anyhow – how about the altercations? *(We hear exaggerated animal whimper sounds from off. PORTER covers the mouthpiece of the phone and responds with wolf howl.)*

PORTER Yes – yes, I'm here.

CLAYTON Anymore on that fraternity stuff.

PORTER Now, now Clayton – you don't want to spoil your weekend. Emma will fill you in on Monday.

CLAYTON Just as well, I guess.

PORTER Certainly. The lid should stay on till then.

CLAYTON What?

PORTER Joke, Clayton. I hope you haven't lost wit, along with mobility?

CLAYTON It's dulled the edge a little.

PORTER Relax – it'll all come together before we know it.

CLAYTON I'll expect you to make good on that.

PORTER No problem. Well, Saturday night.

CLAYTON Anyone I know?

PORTER Discretion, Clayton – discretion.

CLAYTON The carefree bachelor.

PORTER Want to trade?

CLAYTON There are times. Don't tell her I said that.

PORTER Rest assured.