

WORTHY

By

James McLindon

James McLindon's plays have been produced or developed at theaters across America, Ireland, the UK and the world, including the O'Neill National Playwrights Conference, Lark, PlayPenn, hotINK Festival, Irish Repertory, CAP21, Samuel French Festival, Victory Gardens, Edinburgh Fringe Festival, Hudson Stage Company, Abingdon, New Repertory, Lyric Stage, Detroit Rep, Great Plains Theatre Conference, Seven Devils, Telluride Playwrights Festival, Ashland New Plays Festival, Boston Playwrights Theatre, Colony Theatre, Theatricum Botanicum, Circus Theatricals, and Arkansas Rep. They have been published by Dramatic Publishing, Smith & Kraus, and Applause Books.

Synopsis: The night before he is to leave for the Continental Congress in 1774, Massachusetts revolutionary leader Joseph Hawley is visited by fear and doubt ... and the ghost of his cousin, the fire-and-brimstone Puritan minister, Jonathan Edwards.

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WORTHY

CAST OF CHARACTERS
(In Order Of Appearance)

FATHER MALE, 40s-50s, ANY RACE

JOSEPH HAWLEY III MALE, 50s, ANY RACE

JONATHAN EDWARDS MALE, 40s-50s, ANY RACE

One actor should play both FATHER and JONATHAN EDWARDS.

Diverse casting is encouraged.

Running Time: 25-30 Minutes.

SETTING: *A late August night, 1774, in a bedroom in a Northampton, Massachusetts. All that is really necessary is a bed, a trunk, and a block that can be stood upon.*

WORTHY

A late August night, 1774, in a bedroom in a Northampton, Massachusetts. JOSEPH HAWLEY lies asleep, but restless, in his bed STAGE LEFT. He is a leader of those who would revolt against the crown. FATHER sits CENTER STAGE with his back to audience. The lights are low, but somewhat higher over FATHER. He mutters.

FATHER

This corruption of my soul, this weakness of my flesh, this torment ... (sobbing) I cannot endure any more. I cannot. I am sorry, I am so, so sorry.

A pause.

FATHER

Forgive me, my God.

FATHER reveals that he holds a straight-edge razor. Still with his back to us, he slowly slits his own throat. Perhaps the lights turn red. He gurgles, falls on ground, expires.

JOSEPH HAWLEY sits bolt upright in bed, wide awake. Although confused for the moment, he is otherwise a brilliant man, a political leader and fine orator, one who has made his mark on the world, is proud of it, and eager to make that mark bigger. As he speaks, FATHER slowly rises, becoming as he does, JONATHAN EDWARDS, perhaps putting on a hat and/or a frock coat. JONATHAN EDWARDS is surprisingly snarky, charming, vain, even a bit light-hearted, for an orthodox Puritan clergyman. (Have some fun with him.) He is a famous fire-and-brimstone preacher.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

Mother! Oh, Mother, come quickly, Father has destroyed himself! (No response) Mother, please, come! Mother! Mother!

JONATHAN EDWARDS

I don't believe she can hear you.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

Why not?

JONATHAN EDWARDS

She is dead.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

She is dead, too?

JONATHAN EDWARDS

These 30 years and more.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

(Looking around, trying to orient himself)

Dead. She is de(ad)- *(Remembering where he is, turning towards JONATHAN EDWARDS)* Who is that there? Mercy? *(No response)* Mercy, is that you?

JONATHAN EDWARDS

It's not yet dawn, Joseph. Your good wife is fast asleep.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

Who are you then?

JONATHAN EDWARDS

You of all people should know me.

JOSEPH HAWLEY *picks up a handbell on his nightstand.*

JOSEPH HAWLEY

I soon will, for I'll ring and raise the house and the watch both, man, whoever you are.

He picks the bell up and tries to ring it, but it makes no sound.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

I believe you need a clapper. Without one, it's like trying to clap with one hand. Pray, do you suppose that's where the name comes from?

JOSEPH HAWLEY

I do know you.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

Ah, my signature wit has given me away.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

You are my cousin.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

And you, mine, Joseph Hawley! Jonathon Edwards, at your service.

He bows somewhat flamboyantly.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

How is it that you are here?

JONATHAN EDWARDS

Now what sort of way is that greet a cousin?

JOSEPH HAWLEY

It seems an appropriate way to greet a cousin 17 years in his grave.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

Oh, well, fair enough. I leave it to you to work out the how, it's the why that interests me. I must be here to instruct you, I imagine.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

No, thank you!

JONATHAN EDWARDS

Come now, Joseph! I was your minister the first half of your life, so you will do well to take guidance from me now. At the end of the second half.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

This is not the end— Wait: so you are my friend again then?

JONATHAN EDWARDS

And whyever would I not be? *(Pause)* Other than you are the very reason I was not your minister for the second half of your life.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

That we ended up on opposite sides of a theological dispute should not have been enough to part us.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

That you stabbed me in the back was more than enough.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

Jonathan, how many times must I admit that I became heated and that I overstepped in my passion. I asked your forgiveness for that and I'll ask it again here and now if you like.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

I suspect you will ask it 'til the cows come home as long as you have an audience to listen to you. I don't know which was worse, your utter betrayal of me or your unending wheedling for forgiveness that followed. After five years of your importuning, I begged you once and for all to bother me no more about the matter, and it seemed but moments later, there was yet another of your posts at my door and you apologizing yet again.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

And how graciously you accepted it! You bellowed that the town, the church and I could not expect God's favor until we saw how greatly we had provoked God and injured you and were deeply humbled and confessed ourselves guilty, after I had just done all that in my letter!

JONATHAN EDWARDS

I begged you to leave me alone, and then I died, and did even that stop you!? No, you kept right on apologizing, publicly this time, to the entire world! No one cares, Joseph! Enough!

JOSEPH HAWLEY

(Aware that he is obfuscating)

I did not publish that apology, a friend did.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

Oh, please, I know how this world works, he did so solely at your bidding. And who was your "world apology" for, given that I was long moldering with the worms?

JOSEPH HAWLEY

Well, I never expected forgiveness from you.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

A wise man you.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

But without it, my behavior continued to gnaw upon me and I was a long time coming to peace with it.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

Hmm.

JONATHAN EDWARDS *stares at him for a few beats.*

JONATHAN EDWARDS

You know, it is astonishing to me how useful your outrageous treatment of me has been to your career. It made you the great

man of Northampton (*perhaps acting it out*) when you stepped through the meetinghouse window, cousin, picked up your cudgels, and laid into me for 90 minutes, and it cost me my pulpit. And then you rose even higher in the world's esteem when you publicly apologized to me three years after I was laid in the ground. "What a humble man," "what an introspective man," "what a great man." I would have lost my breakfast had I lived to hear it. That was a performance for the world, not an apology for me, a performance that made the world gaze upon you, your humility and integrity made manifest, with wonder and delight, which made you universally admired and trusted, which made you a great man in the State House, just as your backstabbing made you a great man in the Valley, and that was its only purpose. Wasn't it?

A pause.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

Well, I'm glad to see you're over it. (*Pause*) Why have you come to me if you've carried this anger beyond the grave.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

You tell me, Joseph. (*Pause*) Tomorrow is a big day for you. Isn't it?

JOSEPH HAWLEY

I leave tomorrow, yes.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

Setting off for the Continental Congress to win us our liberty.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

I will do my part, yes.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

"Do my part." So modestly speaks the leading man from the province leading the revolt. "I'll do my little bit."

JOSEPH HAWLEY

Why do you care?

JONATHAN EDWARDS

I don't. You do, that's why you've summoned me.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

I promise you, I did not.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

And yet here I unwillingly am. Why are you going?

JOSEPH HAWLEY

The Crown has taken away what self-governance we have in a ruthless fashion and a split has become inevitable. We have to ready ourselves for war.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

Well, but first you have to make sure none of the softies cave in and vote to make up with the Crown. A great man cannot become greater if peace breaks out, now can he? A great man needs chaos and tumult!

JOSEPH HAWLEY

My nation calls and I must heed it, it's as simple as that.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

Is it? Is that truly what's calling you?

JOSEPH HAWLEY

You are more vexing in death than even you were in life.

A pause.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

What was it all about, do you even remember? Your persecution of me.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

I didn't persecute you! And don't pretend you don't recall. I'm sure you could give your farewell sermon verbatim even today.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

(Smiling, happy to be caught out)

I could give you the five sermons I gave in my defense verbatim even today. Shall I?

JOSEPH HAWLEY

Gad, no. The boys in the congregation who had been reading a book about midwifery, *that's* where it started.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

Is that where it started?

JOSEPH HAWLEY

Yes.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

Well, they were hardly reading. More, they were leering at the drawings. Surely you weren't so naïve as to believe they were all aspiring physicians seeking academic enlightenment as to the female form?

JOSEPH HAWLEY

I think they were curious boys. You should have just seized the books and talked to their parents.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

They were hardly boys either. They were young men in their twenties, bothering the girls of the town with it, asking them what phase the moon was in, grabbing at them, and speaking in a most lascivious manner.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

Which needed to be corrected, but Jonathan, do you really claim that is why you started the investigation? To protect young women?

JONATHAN EDWARDS

I was the father of girls on the cusp of womanhood! I tried to investigate this sinful conduct, and you all responded with such an uproar one would have thought me a Jesuit come for an inquisition.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

You read to the entire congregation a single list naming both the offenders and the mere witnesses without distinguishing who was who, dozens of names, so the town assumed you were claiming they were all guilty. And at bottom, there were only two or three who were actively wicked, rather than just watching and smirking. Besmirching nearly every family in a New England town will generally cause uproar.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

Satan was in our midst and all those boys did was make a mockery of my procedure! I sequestered them on the ground floor and no sooner had I begun my inquiries of them than I saw out the window a ladder placed against the wall. Three young men who should have been in the room with me went scurrying up the ladder to peer in at the girls I had sequestered on the second floor!

JOSEPH HAWLEY

Well, how else could they complete their studies, you had taken away their books?

JONATHAN EDWARDS

Do you find this humorous, sir!?

JOSEPH HAWLEY

Your problem, you prig, is that 30 years later, you do not. Boys will always look at such books if they can, girls, too most likely, and you can't stop it. You should have charged the handful who spoke lewdly or grabbed the girls with that conduct and dared their parents to defend them.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

Oh, I can see why you're going to Philadelphia. The devious mind of a politician resides in that head. But I was a pastor, not a pol, sir, concerned not with the popular, but the pastoral.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

There is no more political creature on God's earth than a New England minister. And: you didn't care about the girls at all.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

How can you say that—!?

JOSEPH HAWLEY

You only made the boys apologize for challenging the authority of the church, not for what they did to the girls. All you cared about was how these boys, who you thought you had won over during the Awakening, were now ignoring you. Your nose was out of joint because you felt betrayed.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

Well. You're the one who would know best about betrayals of me. Wouldn't you?

JOSEPH HAWLEY

(Ignoring him)

This was a small matter, but you managed to blow it up until it turned the entire town against you.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

Listen to yourself, does that even make sense? That a whole town would turn against me over a single event.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

Well, your salary demands didn't help. Because you also were a bit of a fop.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

A f(op)-!?! Did you just call me a fop!?!?

JOSEPH HAWLEY

You who would only purchase your clothes in Boston!?! Could you not find a tailor in Northampton, in all of Hampshire County good enough to outfit you?

JONATHAN EDWARDS

I was ousted from my pulpit by the wrath of three angry tailors, that's your position? You are absurd.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

Sarah didn't help matters either.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

What of my wife?

JOSEPH HAWLEY

Nothing. Other than her taste was, amazingly, even more extravagant than yours. Only Paris was good enough for her dresses!

JONATHAN EDWARDS

Oh, so it was three angry seamstresses that tipped the scales!

JOSEPH HAWLEY

You could have implored her to be more modest. And yourself.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

You have no idea what passed between my wife and myself.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

So you did so implore her?

JONATHAN EDWARDS

I, I do not answer to you, sir! And that's not why I lost my pulpit. That's not why you turned against me.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

Our differences may have been doctrinal, but the issues are not dissimilar.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

How are my alleged foppery and salvation not different!?

JOSEPH HAWLEY

In both cases you were a rock-headed ass.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

(Sputtering)

I ... I-!

JOSEPH HAWLEY

Our religion is a hard one, cousin. Our grandfather, when he held your pulpit, had the sense to lighten that burden by allowing communion and full membership in the church before one had had a conversion experience to allow people access to the grace they needed to be converted.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

They were not worthy of that grace until they were members.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

You treated it as a prize, Jonathan, not as the help it should be! And when you tried to take us backwards, to deny it for the first time in a generation to those not yet members of our church, you lost whatever part of the congregation that was still loyal to you.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

It wasn't about communion.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

Oh, indeed it was, for many.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

But not for you. You never wanted to accept that God simply chose some and condemned others and we don't know why and we can't do anything about it.

A pause.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

No. I did not.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

Because of your father. *(Pause)* And now ... perhaps because of yourself.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

It was because I believed it was error. I believed that we had free will, that we had the power to draw nearer to God if we chose, and that the church should make that easier, not harder.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

You believeded. Why speak you in the past tense, dear cousin?

No response. JONATHAN EDWARDS *smiles.*

JONATHAN EDWARDS

Oh, come now, Joseph. Come now, why? Whyyyyyyy?

JOSEPH HAWLEY

You know why!

JONATHAN EDWARDS

(Enjoying this)

Oh, I do, but still: you say it.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

I do not ...

JOSEPH HAWLEY *stops.*

JONATHAN EDWARDS

What's that, you're trailing off. Louder now, like you're in the General Court advocating treason against the Crown.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

I ... I no longer believe in Arminianism.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

Ahhhhhhhhhh. You have at last returned to my orthodoxy. You are Paul on the road to Damascus, knocked to the ground by a thunderbolt, seeing clearly now that I, your shepherd, was right all along. Am I putting it fairly?

JOSEPH HAWLEY

Are you enjoying this?

JONATHAN EDWARDS

So much! You and your dullard fellow congregants didn't see until it was well too late for me that I was right all along, but still: there is satisfaction, cousin, immense satisfaction, in being vindicated in the end, however long delayed.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

Well, I give you joy of your victory.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

Thank you! I assume you'll be publishing a public apology for this offense too since I'm dead and what's the point of only my shade knowing of my victory. Who knows how high your acclaim may reach if you yet again lay yourself prostrate before dead me in front of the world and all your friends.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

Are you finished?

JONATHAN EDWARDS

Are you done lying?

JOSEPH HAWLEY

How have I lied?

JONATHAN EDWARDS

You did not leap through the window of that meeting house to address the council deciding my pulpit after promising you wouldn't, and destroy my life because of lewd boys and their purloined filthy books. Or because I abhorred the local tailors, who by the way couldn't sew a straight line if their lives depended on it. Or because I restored the church's admissions requirements. Did you?

A pause.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

Did you?

A long pause.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

Did! You!?

JOSEPH HAWLEY

No.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

No. Do you think, perhaps, that you led the charge against me because you think I murdered your father. 15 years ago?

JOSEPH HAWLEY

Yes.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

As sure as if I had drawn that razor across his throat myself?

JOSEPH HAWLEY

Yes. You did.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

Oh, Joseph! How can you say that? I do not mean to be unkind, but hundreds heard my sermons, thousands more read them, yet only your father was so unmanned by them as to go to that extreme.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

You forget so easily the man in Longmeadow who also slit his throat, the man in Hatfield who tried but failed? You preached unrelentingly for months about how wretched and unworthy my father and all of us were, you gave him no hope that the God who had made him so and therefore preordained his destruction would change his mind, you gave him no possible remedy for his eternal damnation and finally, you painted a picture of that damnation so terrifying that he rightly questioned what point there was to go on living.

JOSEPH HAWLEY uses a makeshift, elevated pulpit, perhaps just standing on a chair and becomes a fire and brimstone preacher.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

God holds you over the burning pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some other loathsome insect over the fire and at any moment may drop you into it when his disgust with you mounts too high! God abhors you, and God is dreadfully provoked by your utter evilness! Enjoy your day of rest!

JONATHAN EDWARDS

I did not damn your father. It was God alone did that, if he did, for I never said that I knew to a certainty that your father was damned.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

You said that outward signs of melancholia and despair such as he suffered, such as killed his mother before him, were sure signs that God had destined the bearer of such pain to be not among the Elect.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

Such as you suffer.

A pause as JOSEPH HAWLEY glares at him.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

Yes, such as I have suffered and will no doubt suffer again! Show me the daylight between what you said and saying he was damned.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

Only God can say if he was damned.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

Exactly! Not you.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

I tried to comfort your father as best I could.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

You told my mother that my father was past receiving advice and that your continued attendance was to no purpose, and you left him. You as much as told her he was a waste of your time.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

No one could do anything for him when the melancholia was on him, no one knows that better than you.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

You were the one who brought him that low, you had a duty to him and God to try. And, even then, having crushed him, did you break off your crusade, did you reconsider your methods? No, you preached on that those who despaired were unworthy in God's sight. You stood in that pulpit and you said it week after week until you killed my father as sure as if you had wielded that razor yourself, and I, a boy eleven years old, was left to find him gurgling on the floor, his eyes wild, the second mouth he had opened in his neck gaping, his life coursing across the floor like the outgoing tide until it dripped between these very floor boards to the ground where it no doubt pools still. If I close my eyes, know I see it all still.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

(Quietly)

Do you think I haven't suffered for your father's death, for you finding him so?

JOSEPH HAWLEY

Then why did you not relent even then, cousin?

No response.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

I'll tell you why. You used his death and the excitement it wrought in the town, in the province, in New England to raise your own star even higher, clambering up over the ruined minds and broken bodies on your way, celebrating your ascent by having your words published and sent across the colonies and across the sea! A great man needs chaos and tumult, indeed, for that is how you joined the first ranks of the New England clergy and how many did you have to murder to do it!? For my father was not the only one!

JONATHAN EDWARDS

And there it is.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

There is what!?

JONATHAN EDWARDS

The anger and the vengeance that was in your heart when you stepped through that window to lead my own church against me. You have as much a gift for stirring up the common folk against God and his ministers as you do against the King and his. Make sure you don't lose hold of the reins. For an angry mob will destroy whomever it will.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

Oh, you're here to instruct me on politics now?

JONATHAN EDWARDS

I'm here this moment to call you out. You promised that you'd merely listen to the proceedings at the window, not lead the attack on me, the man who had paid for you to go to Yale when your father was gone, the man who counseled you about a career in the pulpit when you came back, the man who supported you when you chose the law, the man who with joy watched you, a boy with so many gifts, coming into man's estate. You betrayed me, Joseph, you betrayed your own blood. I am right, am I not? That must be why you did it. I mean, what other reason did you need to eviscerate the man who told the world your father was damned? The man who, had he lived, would believe that you, who now has begun to suffer from the same profound melancholia these past few years, is likewise damned. (*Pause*) How does your mind fare these days, cousin?

JOSEPH HAWLEY

It is fine.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

Is it, indeed? Well, if you won't answer truthfully about how you are this night, tell me how you are when the melancholia descends upon you.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

Why care you for that?

JONATHAN EDWARDS

Why have you summoned me here, Joseph, on this night of nights!?

A pause. JOSEPH HAWLEY sags into the state he describes, perhaps dropping into a chair.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

When it comes upon me, I cannot work. I sit exhausted in a chair on the days when I can even leave my bed. I am lost to all matters which involve my judgment. My memory is broken. All my courage, my motivation, my spirit, that which formerly animated me, are absolutely extinguished. And I have no more hope of ever being restored to my former state and capacity than I would expect my leg, if once amputated, to grow back.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

You and your dear Mercy had no children. Did you? (*No response*) You say I ended your father, Joseph. But you appear to have ended your sons and daughters before they even began.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

Do you not find three generations laboring under this curse of melancholia sufficient?

JONATHAN EDWARDS

What matters is that you do. How will you go and make your mark then in the Continental Congress laboring under such a weight, should it, when it, descends upon you again?

JOSEPH HAWLEY

My country needs me.

A pause. Then JONATHAN EDWARDS is off again. As he speaks, JOSEPH HAWLEY visibly shrinks with weariness.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

Your country needs all good men indeed, and how can you let it down? Everything in your life has led up to this great event, the Continental Congress in Philadelphia, you a man who has never been beyond New Haven, although your mind certainly has been, a man about to meet the great men of every colony and reason with them and forge a nation if you have your way. How will your poor mind hold up on that long trip, and in that strange place, with so many strange people. It's quite exhausting to think about. Once again, you are about to vault through that window, aren't you, you can't help it? You will do it, you must, for the nation needs you to midwife its very birth. Come now, it's nearly dawn, get packing. The River God who left Northampton to lead the rebels in the General Court through the Stamp Act, the Townshend Acts, the Massacre, and the outbreak of war must be in Philadelphia to ensure that hotter heads prevail and that this kingdom of man is put asunder. You cannot turn away, not when your nation calls you forth.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

No.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

No? No, you can't turn away or no, you won't go.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

You still don't know why I stepped through that window. Do you?

JONATHAN EDWARDS

(Exasperated)

Do you really think I don't? Oh, you dull boy, you have always been an open book to me. It wasn't my theology that propelled you to your future that day, was it?

JOSEPH HAWLEY

No.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

It wasn't to avenge your poor father.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

No. Although that did make it sweeter.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

It wasn't because your church or your town, needed you either.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

No.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

It was for you, dear Joseph. It was entirely, completely, purely for you. Oh, you certainly cared about those other things, no one can say you didn't, but that isn't why, it was always first and foremost ... for you.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

Yes. It was for me. I knew I was ready to lead. I knew I had the gifts and abilities to do it and do it well, and my life that followed proved me right.

As JOSEPH HAWLEY continues, he acts out more or less what he describes, the watching, the frustration, the stepping through the window.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

I just had to seize my moment. I said I would just watch, but ... how could I? I saw other men with fewer oratorical gifts, less ability in debate, make imperfect arguments, and I knew I was better, that I was the man that the hour was calling for. The arguments against you were going to be made anyway, the town was against you from the start, you were going to be turned out, so it wasn't a betrayal or at least not one of any consequence. So why shouldn't I have the glory and the honor of it? Whichever man stepped through that window and seized the moment would make his name and his career that day. Who deserved that more than me? (*Pause; the acting at an end*) Now I have freely confessed to you that, in the course of things, I got carried away, I engaged in slander and in impolitic words, though it didn't change a thing or matter to a soul. But. But I knew I had done you wrong and I could not rest easy until I apologized to you for that. What I have never, will never, apologize for is seizing my moment, is stepping through that window instead of waiting for another day, a day that might never come, when it was someone other than my cousin.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

For vanity does not wait. Does it? If it did, it would not be vanity. But, aside from my clothes, what would I know of vanity?

JOSEPH HAWLEY

Do you joke now?

JONATHAN EDWARDS

Why would I do that?

JOSEPH HAWLEY

What does the great Jonathan Edwards know of vanity? The Jonathan Edwards who, when in the pulpit, visibly thrilled to his own voice, his own words, his own power; a preacher so formidable and so hard on his congregation that parishioners preferred to slit their own throats of a Sabbath morning rather than face your torments.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

Well, that seems a bit harsh.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

A man so vain that he would not, no I would say he could not, modulate that power, God's power, to help men reach salvation, because it so intoxicated him. He ruled over men on this earth because he was God's instrument and the sterner, the more vengeful God was, the more potent Jonathan Edwards became. Had you just left weaker men a chance to find salvation, cousin, had you let them join communion to get them there, you would have lived out your days as our preacher. But you could not do it.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

I will not fail to preach God's word because it is hard on my flock, his word is his word. But tell me cousin, does the vanity-bedazzled fellow you describe and his destruction remind you of anyone?

JONATHAN EDWARDS, thoughtful, paces for a moment or two, then turns towards JOSEPH HAWLEY.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

Do you still not understand why I have come tonight, this night, of all nights?

JOSEPH HAWLEY

I, I don't know.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

You are still one of my flock, even if you have rejected me. The sheep don't rid themselves of the shepherd that easily.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

I don't know.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

Of course you do. Madness is not the only thing that runs through our family. Vanity also courses in our veins. I dodged

the first, if not the second. But you did not dodge either. Does not your history, and my history, teach you that you had better try to suppress your vanity this time around, and let the glory fall upon someone else?

No response. Dawn's light begins to fill the room.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

Very well. I understand: Your entire life has brought you to this point and you cannot not turn away now when your ultimate triumph, your ultimate glory, to lead your country into its shimmering future, is so close you can see the dew glistening upon it. Come now, there is no time for delay, your beatification awaits, for the sun is now rising, rising upon you, just as it is now rising upon America.

JONATHAN EDWARDS walks over to a trunk with piles of folded clothes around it and studies them.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

Philadelphia will be sweltering, even in September, so you won't need— (*noticing that JOSEPH HAWLEY has not moved*) Well, come on man, shake a leg.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

You are right.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

Well, of course I am, I am always right, but of all the things I am right about, which do you mean?

JOSEPH HAWLEY

I ... I cannot do this.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

And how is that?

JOSEPH HAWLEY

I am ill. Or I will be again, soon. Already, I feel the gloom descending upon me again these last few days. And each time it comes, it is longer and deeper than the last.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

As you betrayed your blood, so now your blood betrays you.

A pause.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

You will not be a help to the cause if you go, then, will you?

JOSEPH HAWLEY

No.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

You'll be a hindrance for the weeks, the months, that the congress lasts.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

Yes.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

And so, unlike our Lord, this cup, and all its delights and acclaim, must pass from you. Who will go in your place?

JOSEPH HAWLEY

John Adams.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

Is he competent?

JOSEPH HAWLEY

He will do. He will do nicely.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

And what about you?

JOSEPH HAWLEY

I will be forgotten.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

You will indeed. And in short order, by your friends and your colleagues. And by history. Adams will be the Founder. You will be the footnote.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

That will be hard.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

Hard!? Try losing one of the most esteemed pulpits in New England and spending your remaining days in a cabin in the forests of Stockbridge. (*Smiling a self-deprecating smile*) Without a soul to appreciate the cut of your frock coat.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

Your writings have lived on.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

As will your work, cousin. Just not with your name on it. Come. Shall I help you unpack.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

Can you?

JONATHAN EDWARDS

I've always been rather ethereal for physical labor, and death has not improved matters. So probably not.

JOSEPH HAWLEY *begins to take clothes out of a trunk.*

JONATHAN EDWARDS

You could have conjured anyone: your friends in the General Court, Sam Adams, James Otis, someone alive at least. But you chose me. Why?

JOSEPH HAWLEY

I don't remember choosing anyone. But you make sense. They know me only as a politician. You have known me boy and man, you know my history, my flaws, my, my ...

JONATHAN EDWARDS

Bull.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

Yes, my bull, as well. As I know yours. Thank you, Jonathan.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

Thank you, Joseph. For listening to me. I believe I miss being listened to raptly most of all.

JOSEPH HAWLEY

I was not rapt. I was not at all rapt!

JONATHAN EDWARDS

(Smiling, patting JOSEPH HAWLEY's cheek)

You were close enough.

JONATHAN EDWARDS *dissolves.* JOSEPH HAWLEY *sits up in bed. Perhaps he stands. He calls out in a resolved voice.*

JOSEPH HAWLEY

Mercy? Mercy dear? Please come to me. For I have had a change of plans.

END OF PLAY