

INHERIT THE WIND

by Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee

ACT II, SCENE 2

Inherit the Wind is based on the famous Scopes "Monkey" trial of 1925 in which a schoolteacher, John T. Scopes, was brought to trial for violating a Tennessee statute prohibiting the teaching that man descended from other forms of life. The case was such a cauldron of controversy that it attracted the two foremost lawyers in the nation, William Jennings Bryan (three-time Democratic nominee for the presidency) and Clarence Darrow (a famous civil-liberties lawyer), to the positions of prosecuting and defense attorneys, respectively. The play focuses on the clash between these two men, each advocating different points of view on the right to teach evolution.

In the play, Matthew Harrison Brady (as Bryan is called) is a fundamentalist in his interpretation of the Bible and a staunch believer in the religious tenets of evangelism. Henry Drummond (as Darrow is called) is an atheist who pleads the scientific as well as the legal aspects of the case. Both are expert orators who can sway a courtroom with their arguments and charisma.

The following scene takes place in the crowded courtroom. The judge has denied Drummond the right to call as witnesses experts from the scientific community to support Darwin's theories. In a brilliant but risky maneuver, Drummond requests that he at least be allowed to admit into court a witness who is an expert on the Bible. The judge agrees and Drummond calls Brady himself to the witness stand. What follows is a tense, suspenseful, and sometimes humorous interchange upon which the outcome of the case hangs.

BRADY, with dignity: Your Honor, I am willing to sit here and endure Mr. Drummond's sneering and his disrespect. For he is

pleading the case of the prosecution by his contempt for all that is holy.

DRUMMOND: I object, I object, I object.

BRADY: On what grounds? Is it possible that something is holy to the celebrated agnostic?

DRUMMOND: *Yes! (His voice drops, intensely.)* The individual human mind. In a child's power to master the multiplication table there is more sanctity than in all your shouted "Amens!" "Holy, Holies!" and "Hosannahs!" An idea is a greater monument than a cathedral. And the advance of man's knowledge is more of a miracle than any sticks turned to snakes, or the parting of waters! But are we now to halt the march of progress because Mr. Brady frightens us with a fable? *Turning to the jury, reasonably:* Gentlemen, progress has never been a bargain. You've got to pay for it. Sometimes I think there's a man behind a counter who says, "All right, you can have a telephone; but you'll have to give up privacy, the charm of distance. Madam, you may vote; but at a price; you lose the right to retreat behind a powder-puff or a petticoat. Mister, you may conquer the air; but the birds will lose their wonder, and the clouds will smell of gasoline!" *Thoughtfully, seeming to look beyond the courtroom:* Darwin moved us forward to a hilltop, where we could look back and see the way from which we came. But for this view, this insight, this knowledge, we must abandon our faith in the pleasant poetry of Genesis.

BRADY: We must *not* abandon faith! Faith is the important thing!

DRUMMOND: Then why did God plague us with the power to think? Mr. Brady, why do you deny the *one* faculty which lifts man above all other creatures on the earth: the power of his brain to reason. What other merit have we? The elephant is larger, the horse is stronger and swifter, the butterfly more beautiful, the mosquito more prolific, even the simple sponge is more durable! *Wheeling on Brady:* Or does a *sponge* think?

BRADY: I don't know. I'm a man, not a sponge.

There are a few snickers at this; the crowd seems to be slipping away from Brady and aligning itself more and more with Drummond.

DRUMMOND: Do you think a sponge thinks?

BRADY: If the Lord wishes a sponge to think, it thinks.

DRUMMOND: Does a man have the same privileges that a sponge does?

BRADY: Of course.

DRUMMOND, roaring, for the first time: stretching his arm toward Cates: This man wishes to be accorded the same privilege as a sponge! *He wishes to think!*

There is some applause. The sound of it strikes Brady exactly as if he had been slapped in the face.

BRADY: But your client is wrong! He is deluded! He has lost his way!

DRUMMOND: It's sad that we aren't all gifted with your positive knowledge of Right and Wrong, Mr. Brady. *Drummond strides to one of the uncalled witnesses seated behind him, and takes from him a rock, about the size of a tennis ball. Drummond weighs the rock in his hand as he saunters back toward Brady.* How old do you think this rock is?

BRADY, intoning: I am more interested in the Rock of Ages, than I am in the Age of Rocks.

A couple of die-hard "Amens." Drummond ignores this glib gag.

DRUMMOND: Dr. Page of Oberlin College tells me that this rock is at least ten million years old.

BRADY, sarcastically: Well, well, Colonel Drummond! You managed to sneak in some of that scientific testimony after all.

Drummond opens up the rock, which splits into two halves. He shows it to Brady.

DRUMMOND: Look, Mr. Brady. These are the fossil remains of a prehistoric marine creature, which was found in this very county—and which lived here millions of years ago, when these very mountain ranges were submerged in water.

BRADY: I know. The Bible gives a fine account of the flood. But your professor is a little mixed up on his dates. That rock is not more than six thousand years old.

DRUMMOND: How do you know?

BRADY: A fine Biblical scholar, Bishop Ussher, has determined for us the exact date and hour of the Creation. It occurred in the Year 4,004 B.C.

DRUMMOND: That's Bishop Ussher's opinion.

BRADY: It is not an opinion. It is literal fact, which the good Bishop arrived at through careful computation of the ages of the prophets as set down in the Old Testament. In fact, he determined that the Lord began the Creation on the 23rd of October in the Year 4,004 B.C. at—uh, at 9 A.M!

DRUMMOND: That Eastern Standard Time? *Laughter.* Or Rocky Mountain Time? *More laughter.* It wasn't daylight-saving time, was it? Because the Lord didn't make the sun until the fourth day!

BRADY, fidgeting: That is correct.

DRUMMOND, sharply: The first day. Was it a twenty-four-hour day?

BRADY: The Bible says it was a day.

DRUMMOND: There wasn't any sun. How do you know how long it was?

BRADY, determined: The Bible says it was a day.

DRUMMOND: A normal day, a literal day, a twenty-four-hour day?

Pause. Brady is unsure.

BRADY: I do not know.

DRUMMOND: What do you think?

BRADY, floundering: I do not think about things that . . . I do not think about!

DRUMMOND: Do you ever think about things that you do think about? *There is some laughter. But it is dampened by the knowledge and awareness throughout the courtroom, that the trap is about to be sprung.* Isn't it possible that first day was twenty-five hours long? There was no way to measure it, no way to tell! *Could it have been twenty-five hours?*

Pause. The entire courtroom seems to lean forward.

BRADY, hesitates—then: It is . . . possible . . .

Drummond's got him. And he knows it! This is the turning point. From here on, the tempo mounts. Drummond is now fully in the driver's seat. He pounds his questions faster and faster.

DRUMMOND: Oh. You interpret that the first day recorded in the Book of Genesis could be of indeterminate length.

BRADY, wriggling: I mean to state that the day referred to is not necessarily a twenty-four-hour day.

DRUMMOND: It could have been thirty hours! Or a month! Or a year! Or a hundred years! (*He brandishes the rock underneath Brady's nose.*) Or ten million years!

THE WAGER

by Mark Medoff

ACT I

In the first scene a wager is made—a most peculiar wager: “We are *both* betting that you can seduce Honor Stevens! However, if within forty-eight hours after you’ve first been to bed with her, her husband makes an attempt on your life or kills you, you lose. If he makes an attempt on your life or kills you *after* forty-eight hours, you win.” From that bizzare scheme, the four protagonists embark on a sequence of events that alternates between intrigue, foolishness, and just plain fun.

The wager is proposed by Leeds, a very intellectual graduate student who is eminently unsuccessful with women, to his not very intellectual, superjock roommate, Ward. Leeds’s proposition is actually his reply to Ward’s boastful challenge that he could seduce Honor Stevens within ten days. Ward’s seduction of Honor succeeds within the hour (she is very bored with her husband and her life as an elementary education graduate student); Leeds promptly conveys the news to Ron, Honor’s husband, and calmly suggests that Ron kill Ward for revenge. But all of Leeds’s plans eventually backfire: Ron learns of the wager and comes stalking Leeds, machine gun in hand; and the final twist—Honor winds up seducing Leeds.

The scene that follows is the opening one between Ward and Leeds. They are in their apartment. Leeds is working at his desk. Ward is dribbling his basketball and shooting baskets at a hoop hung on the wall.

WARD, *dribbling the basketball near Leeds to get his attention:* You wanna make a bet, Leeds?

LEEDS, *without interest and without looking up:* No.

WARD: How do you know?

LEEDS: I don’t believe in betting.

WARD: This is an excellent bet. Don’t you even wanna hear what it is? *Ward dribbles once, makes a casual head fake, and lays the ball up and in.*

LEEDS, *without interest:* What is it?

WARD, *crossing back to Leeds:* I’m willing to bet you a hundred dollars that I can fuck Honor Stevens inside . . . what?—a month, three weeks? Name it. Make it tough, I need the work. *Leeds is unresponsive.* Okay—make it two hundred that I can get her inside ten days. *Leeds displays no interest.* Three hundred and inside a week. *Nothing from Leeds.* Okay, my final offer, Leeds. Listening? Four hundred dollars and I get her inside five days. That’s it. Take it or leave it.

LEEDS, *without looking up:* How about the divorcée downstairs?

WARD: That pig! Look, Leeds, it’s got to be Honor Stevens. I’ve balled everybody in the building but her that I want to. Her number’s come up and that’s all there is to it.

LEEDS: Why don’t you expand your operations to the building next door?

WARD: They’ve got a kidney-shaped pool. I don’t like kidney-shaped pools. I mean, what *is* this sudden interest in Honor Stevens, Leeds? I don’t get it.

LEEDS, *trying to end the conversation:* If you get Honor Stevens, her husband *could* find out. If her husband *did* find out, they *might* get a divorce. If they *got* a divorce, I *probably* wouldn’t have a ride to class at 7:30 every morning.

WARD: Why not?

LEEDS: Because *he* probably wouldn’t take me anymore. *Ward makes a less casual drive on the basket.*

WARD: Maybe she’d get the car.

LEEDS: She has ten o’clock classes.

WARD, *sitting at the counter:* Look, Leeds, whudduya say we forego your eternal self-interests a minute and talk about the practical aspects of this thing.

LEEDS, *fixing on Ward:* How can a mechanical penis taking a