

Maggie

Ellsworth

Winnie

MAGGIE. You see? The tragedy lingers.

ELLSWORTH. Fine, yes, but a lingering tragedy is the last thing we –

MAGGIE. Exactly! The *Henriad* does not speak of tragedy, but of patriotism, sacrifice, victory! And that victory shall linger with those who are lucky enough to see our production for the rest of their lives.

ELLSWORTH. The Linger Effect.

MAGGIE. Exactly, yes.

ELLSWORTH. You know, the more I think about it, the more I think you're right, Mrs. Dalton. If you put on this show, there will be a Linger Effect. A big one. For generations, Rhode Islanders will double over with laughter as they recall how the hallowed Oberon Play House permitted a gaggle of unprofessional girls with false mustaches, directed by a neophyte, to put on a two –

MAGGIE. Four –

ELLSWORTH. – A four-hour hysterical embarrassment that caused the Play House to not only go dark the rest of the war, but to be shuttered for all time. Are you prepared, madam, to destroy everything your husband has built? Everything that he –!

WINIFRED. I love the theater.

(All is silent.)

ELLSWORTH. Excuse me, dear?

WINIFRED. I love a good play.

ELLSWORTH. Well...so do I, dear. So do I. But this would be a far cry from a good –

(MAGGIE has an idea.)

MAGGIE. OH MY GOD!

(ALL start.)

ELLSWORTH. *(Looking around, grabbing his heart.)* Honestly woman, you can't just proclaim like that in normal –

MAGGIE. Mrs. Snow!

WINIFRED. Yes?

MAGGIE. Why didn't I think of this before!

ELLSWORTH. Of what?

MAGGIE. Have you...have you ever acted, Mrs. Snow?

WINIFRED. Winifred, please – and yes, back at Miss Porter's finishing school.

MAGGIE. And I'll bet you were spectacular.

ELLSWORTH. Well, I – I did turn a head or two. The *Cranston Clarion* called me "rounding out the cast."

MAGGIE. I'll bet they did.

ELLSWORTH. Mrs. Dalton, I don't like where this is –

MAGGIE. If I may be so – Mrs. Snow – Winifred – how would you like to be in our play?

WINIFRED. To be in your –?

MAGGIE. Exactly.

WINIFRED. Oh, no, I couldn't –

ELLSWORTH. Oh no, she couldn't.

MAGGIE. You'd be spectacular.

WINIFRED. Do you really think so?

ELLSWORTH. Mrs. Dalton –

MAGGIE. I do. I'd even go so far as to say you'd round out the cast.

WINIFRED. (*Blushing.*) Me? No.

MAGGIE. We're holding auditions tomorrow, but –

ELLSWORTH. Auditions? Who said you could schedule –?

MAGGIE. – But I am prepared to pre-cast you. That's how much I believe in you, Mrs. Snow.

WINIFRED. You do?

ELLSWORTH. Mrs. Dalton. My wife does not act.

MAGGIE. Oh, but she did once.

WINIFRED. I did. I did, indeed.

MAGGIE. And you will again? Tell me you will.

WINIFRED. Ellsworth?

(She turns her full power on ELLSWORTH, asking permission, her face an unwavering, heartbreaking plea.)

ELLSWORTH. Winifred, imagine all the time this will siphon from your – it's the start of the Social Season, after all, you... Peaches, please, think of your friends, the Women's Committee, all the ladies who will fill up those seats on opening night and watch you make a...

WINIFRED. Yes?

(ELLSWORTH can see how much this means to WINIFRED, can't break her heart.)

ELLSWORTH. ...A triumph. You would make a triumph.

(WINIFRED hugs ELLSWORTH.)

WINIFRED. Oh, darling!

(MAGGIE applauds. Embarrassed to do so in public, ELLSWORTH struggles to gently break the embrace.)

ELLSWORTH. That's all right, that's enough, dear.

MAGGIE. Then we can count on you, Mrs. Snow?

WINIFRED. Oh, yes indeed. Yes, you can.

MAGGIE. (*To ELLSWORTH.*) And you? May we count on you and the Board?

(ELLSWORTH stares daggers at MAGGIE.)

ELLSWORTH. You may.

(MAGGIE raises her glass.)

MAGGIE. Then here's to the *Henriad*!

(The other two raise theirs, ELLSWORTH reluctantly.)

ALL. The *Henriad*!