

“The Heart of Stone” *PRESS KIT*
Synopsis • Cast List • Set Requirements • Excerpts

“The Heart of Stone”

by

Hartley Wright

Play Synopsis

“Don’t ever take a fence down until you know why it was put up.”

—Robert Frost.

This play is very intense. But then, sometimes, so is life. The *Heart of Stone* takes a close look at the Stone family from both sides of their respective fences. It allows audiences to learn why they were put up and how they’ll come down. The play is about a family—A very intense family.

Some time ago, David Stone left home in pursuit of a dream and against his parent’s wishes. By choice, David has stayed away from home, allowing the barrier between he and his father to grow taller with each passing day. David’s sister, Angela, however, is graduating from High School; it’s an occasion David wouldn’t miss for the world. The family is glad to celebrate the occasion (and the reunion of their *prodigal son*), but seems almost fearful of the days ahead; each knows too well of the conflict that seems so thick you can choke on the tension. To make matters worse, Mr. Stone is facing a crisis of his own and needs the help of his family to see him through it. They could help him, if only he would tear down a few barriers of his own.

With a fair and true representation of the conflicts that occur in far too many homes today, this story is sometimes incredibly funny and sometimes painfully tragic. Through laughter and tears, the Stones must face the challenges and commitment of tearing down a few fences while learning to let their love for one another and the healing power of God help fill the emptiness left by their absence.

Cast List

DAVID STONE is a handsome young man of twenty-three. An occasional college student, his current major of study is playing drums for a touring band. He is confident and secure of almost anything.

ANGELA STONE is an eighteen year old girl about to graduate from high school. She is mature yet, unlike her brother, DAVID, she is genuinely insecure, but hides it well. She is intelligent, nervous and perpetually anxious.

CASSANDRA FITZSIMMONS, 18, is ANGELA's best friend.

ANNE STONE is a strong Christian woman who loves her husband and children without reservation or prejudice. Her spirit is one of grace.

MARIA DeVITO is an Italian neighbor to the Stone family. A mother of four children, she feels a constant need to look after ANNE and lend a hand whenever necessary.

SHANE STONE, a strong man of forty-six, is a providing Father of discipline and respect. His manner suggests a restrained restlessness and hunger. He is detached, with unsatisfied emotion wrestling within.

KARRICK JENNS is a twenty-six year old college graduate and an officer in the U.S. Marines. A friend of DAVID, he grew up hanging around the Stone's home and never has broken the habit. He is like a Son to SHANE and ANNE.

The Heart of Stone

has been produced & performed on public stages in 2001 and 2003.

Timeline

ACT I: Scene 1, Just before the evening meal

Scene 2, Later the same night

ACT II: Early the next morning

The Heart of Stone has a tight run time of two hours, including Intermission.

Set Requirements

The entire play takes place in the Great Room at the home of Shane and Anne Stone. The room is decorated with an aura of friendliness and is carefully divided into two sections with half serving as a dining area and the remainder arranged as a sitting room. In the Upstage Right Corner is a door that leads to the garage. Along the Stage Right wall is a large buffet hosting dinnerware and fine China. There is a wide and arched doorway that leads to the front entry over the Downstage Right Corner. A dining table with seating for six is at Stage Right. A full-size swinging door is at Upstage Center and leads into the kitchen. Another hallway at Stage Left leads to the bedrooms and bathrooms. Centered at Left is a large couch that sits between a recliner and a wing chair. A lamp and telephone sit on a table separating the recliner and couch. There is a magazine rack next to the wing chair. This ensemble is set off by a coffee table just in front of the large couch. A television console is at Downstage Left just below an unseen window in the invisible “fourth wall.”

Dialogue Excerpts

Dialogue Clip #1 • From Act One

In “The Heart Of Stone,” audiences are introduced to a family that most people can quickly identify with. The curtain opens with Angela Stone playing a practical joke on her older brother, David, who has come home for Angela’s graduation. As David plots vengeance on his sister, the audience is drawn into the Stone’s household—if not from the familiarity of David and Angela’s rivalry, then from being able to relate to their mother, Anne. As the story unfolds, those watching begin to suspect that the Stone family suffers some dysfunction. This scene, approximately thirty minutes into the play, confirms that suspicion. The patriarch, Shane Stone, has come home from work bearing the news that his closest friend has been hospitalized. During the evening meal, his loved ones attempt to console him.

ANNE. Your father and I are going to the hospital as soon as we finish eating.

CASSANDRA. I didn’t hear what happened. Who is in the hospital?

ANGELA. “Boots.” You know...Dad’s friend?

CASSANDRA. Yeah, sure. I’m sorry, Mr. Stone. I know how close you and “Boots” are to each other.

{With this reminder we will abandon the nickname’s quotation marks.}
{ANNE pours tea in everyone’s glasses.}

ANGELA. Are you okay, Dad?

SHANE. I’ll be fine.

ANGELA. David said Boots had a heart attack.

SHANE. *(to DAVID)* What is wrong with you son? He didn’t have a heart attack! He collapsed!! *(To ANGELA, adamantly.)* We don’t know that he had a heart attack. It could be anything. *(He looks sour at DAVID.)* He simply collapsed, that’s all.

ANNE. *(quickly)* Did the company doctor look at him?

SHANE. We don’t have a doctor, only a nurse.

ANNE. *(quickly)* Was he able to talk when it happened?

SHANE. I don’t know. I couldn’t talk to him.

ANGELA. *(quickly)* How did it happen? Was he on a machine? I’m sure it was a heart

ANGELA (cont'd). attack. Had to be. Did he grab his chest and keel over?

ANNE. (*quickly*) You said he collapsed, right?

SHANE. Okay! Okay! (*He raises his hands to silence them.*) Look. We were all working and all of a sudden he was on the floor in pain. Nobody knows how it happened. And nobody said that they saw him fall. He was working one second and on the floor the next. We called the ambulance and they took him to Ellis Hospital. That's it! That's all I know! Now, everybody satisfied? Can we go ahead and eat? I've told you everything. (*He returns to his meal. Everyone except ANGELA proceeds to eat throughout the dialogue that follows.*)

ANGELA. Let's pray for him.

SHANE. Angie, please.

ANGELA. No, Dad. I'm serious.

SHANE. (*to DAVID*) What time did you get in?

DAVID.
We pulled into town
about ten thirty.

ANGELA.
Can we pray
for him, Dad?

{*DAVID helps himself to the bread basket. ANGELA sits and stares with a growing frustration at her father.*}

SHANE. (*to DAVID*) You don't look good, son. You sleeping well? (*DAVID shrugs his shoulders.*)

ANGELA. I want us to pray for Boots, Dad.

SHANE. (*to DAVID*) Where did you drive in from?

DAVID. We started in Canada. (*A beat passes.*) Worked our way here.

SHANE. That doesn't tell me where
you drove in from.

ANGELA.
(*restrained*)
...Dad?

DAVID. Wyoming. We played in Cheyenne
the night before last.

CASSANDRA.
My cousin used to
live in Cheyenne.

SHANE. When do you pull out again?

DAVID. Monday. Maybe Sunday night. We
open for the group Nevermore next.

ANGELA.
...Dad?

CASSANDRA. (*awe struck*) Nevermore!?! Really!!

SHANE. Why don't you skip this next jaunt—stay at home for a while and take some time off? Someone else can play in your place, huh?

DAVID. Please, Dad. Let's not start this discussion. We've talked about this before.

ANGELA.
Fine. I'll pray for him all by myself.

SHANE. That was four months ago. A lot of things have changed.

DAVID. My feelings haven't changed. I'm not quitting the band.

SHANE. Who said anything about quitting? Just take some---

ANGELA. ---Stop ignoring me, Dad!

SHANE. Angela! (*He communicates clearly with a stern look.*)

ANNE. (*quickly*) Who wants more tea? (*She reaches for the pitcher.*)

CASSANDRA. I'll take some, Mrs. Stone. (*ANNE pours her some.*)

ANGELA. Sorry, Dad...I just don't understand why you don't want to pray for Boots. Isn't he your friend?

SHANE. Drop it, Angela. I don't really want to get into this. (*to DAVID*) Pass me the butter, son.

ANGELA. Why not?

SHANE. Because. (*He thinks of a better reason.*) We have company.

ANGELA. Company? Since when is Cassandra considered company? And if she IS company, you sure are making her feel welcome. You haven't said two words to her!

SHANE. (*sarcastically, to CASSANDRA*) How are you, sweetheart? Getting enough to eat? Are you leaving after supper, or will you be staying the night?

CASSANDRA.
I'm staying
the night.

ANGELA.
That's very
cute, Dad.

ANNE.
I told her
it was okay.

DAVID. You know, Cassandra, as much as you stay over, you might as well move in. You could have my room.

SHANE. That's true. Lord knows David doesn't want it anymore.

ANGELA. *(to SHANE, quickly)* How would you know what the Lord knows? *(Backing up.)* I mean, considering you don't pray to him, how could you possib---

ANNE. *(shrieking, scolding, sternly)* ANGELA DIANE STONE!

SHANE. *(provoked, loud)* That's enough, Angela! I told you once. *(More calm, still indignant.)* Now, I don't want to hear another word about praying for Boots!

ANGELA. *(angry)* Why not?

ANNE. *(to ANGELA)* Eat your dinner. The food's getting cold.

ANGELA. *(to ANNE)* How can you sit there and let him do this?

SHANE. *(quick)* Don't sass your mother!

ANGELA. *(quicker)* I'm not sassing!!

SHANE. *(sharp and stern)* And don't talk back to me!!! *(Half-beat. Then softer.)* I don't know what gets into you, Angie. You don't go pushing your way on people. Especially on your father. If I don't want to pray for Boots, then I don't want to pray for him. Everyone else at the table is fine with it. But you just keep badgering. Now that's the end of this conversation. That's it. Finished. Do as your Mother said and eat some dinner.

ANGELA. *(mumbling)* I-don't-think-everyone's-fine-with-it.

SHANE. *(immediately)* What did you say?

DAVID. I see some things haven't changed.

{ANGELA pushes her plate away in protest. Her anger grows stronger.}

ANNE. *(reprimanding him)* David. Don't interfere.

SHANE. *(to DAVID)* What would you know about anything, anyway? You come to town sometimes and don't even drop by to see your family.

DAVID. I knew it! *(He pushes his chair back from the table and stands up as if he has been challenged to a brawl.)* I knew that you would find a way to throw that up in my face! I can't believe---

ANNE. ---David! *(She waits for DAVID to sit down again.)* I won't have any bickering start up at my table. *(to SHANE.)* From either of you. *(to BOTH)* We've got

ANNE (cont'd). company for pete's sake.

ANGELA. Ooohh! (*She is fuming. Never before has she known her best friend to be considered company. Her words become malicious.*) I'm sick and tired of living in this family!

SHANE. (*exasperated*) Angela...

ANGELA. (*annoyed*) What, Dad? Go ahead and tell me to go to my room. Isn't that what comes next? Because being in my room will keep you from having to physically show your resentment toward me, right?

ANNE. (*scolding*) ANGELA!!

ANGELA. Don't 'Angela' me, Mother. (*Her fury grows with every word.*) All I'm doing is expressing how I feel. What's wrong with that? You don't even care about my feelings, anyway! But when it comes to Cassandra, you--oh!--Why are Cassie's feelings more important than mine? (*More incensed.*) How come you let Dad—and David—say whatever they want when it comes to me, but for Cass it's entirely different?

CASSANDRA. Listen, I didn't mean to---

SHANE. ---No, no, Cassandra. You've done nothing wrong. Angela is just feeling sorry for herself.

ANGELA. (*fuming*) Oh, I don't believe this. Is that what you think this is all about?

SHANE. Apologize to your mother. And to David.

ANGELA. (*jaded*) What?! To David? What for?

SHANE. This is his first time home in months, and he worked it out special to be here for your graduation. His first meal with us shouldn't be like this.

ANGELA. (*upset and ready to rumble*) You hypocrite!

ANNE. (*rebuking her*) ANGELA!!!

ANGELA. Oh, c'mon, Mom! The first thing Dad did when he sat down was rag on David. And now he's acting as if---

{SHANE's fists swiftly strike the table top with such force that the impact jolts the dishes.}

SHANE. (*as he hits the table*) ANGELA!!! Not another word!!!

ANGELA. Can't I at least--

SHANE. (*instantly*) --NO!!

{*SILENCE controls the stage. Several beats pass as the ENSEMBLE—except for ANGELA—eats their meal. ANGELA, regaining her composure, sits still.*}

ANGELA. (*eventually*) May I be excused?

SHANE. No.

ANGELA. (*after a few beats*) May I please be excused?

SHANE. No. (*A beat.*) You haven't even touched your food.

{*ANGELA picks up her fork and takes a bite of casserole. She then stabs at every other item on her plate with the fork and sets the fork back down.*}

ANGELA. ...Now may I be excused?

SHANE. (*peevd*) I've really had it, now. That's it. I'm going to tell you something young lady...

DAVID. Let her go, Dad!

ANNE. (*correcting*) DAVID!!

SHANE. What did you say? What did you just say to me?

DAVID. (*to SHANE*) You heard me. Let her go. If she wants to be excused, then let her go.

SHANE. This doesn't concern you, son.

DAVID. This whole thing got out of control because you made Angie feel stupid for wanting to pray for Boots.

ANGELA. (*feeling vindicated*) Thank you, David.

SHANE. I said that particular discussion was over.

ANGELA. (*to DAVID*) Which was just before I said I was tired of living in this family.

SHANE. (*Quickly, to ANGELA.*) Do you want out of it?

ANGELA. (*irritable*) What I WANT...is to be excused from the table.

SHANE. No!

ANGELA. (*insistent*) I want to go to my room.

SHANE. What for?

ANGELA. (*loud*) So I can pray for Boots!!!!

SHANE. (*tossing his fork down*) Enough! That's enough! I can't believe this. And I'm not going to have it. (*He wipes his mouth with a napkin.*) You wanna pray for Boots? (*He rises and x's to the wing chair.*) You want us all to pray for him? (*He removes a Bible from the magazine rack.*) Will one prayer be enough, or should we throw in a Bible verse, too? (*He x's back to the table.*) Should we sing songs? Maybe even go down to Ellis and lay hands on him? (*He tosses the Bible on the table in front of ANGELA. ANGELA picks up the Bible and quickly begins to turn its pages in search of a scripture verse. Eventually, with Bible in hand, she stands, x's to her FATHER and BROTHER and begins reading the scripture simultaneous with—and in spite of—the building argument between SHANE and DAVID.*)

DAVID. (*rising*) Why do you have to do that? Huh? Why do you do that to her? (*He x's to him.*) What is so terrible about her wanting to pray? Would it make you too uncomfortable?!?!?

SHANE. You stay out of this! It has nothing to do with me being uncomfortable. I just think it's---

DAVID. (*interrupting him*) Oh, please, Dad! It has EVERYTHING to do with you being uncomfortable. (*He x's LEFT.*) You sit here every Sunday morning in that recliner refusing to go to church in praise of your personal ongoing Spiritual protest!

SHANE. (*xing to him*) What do you know about Sundays, son? You haven't been here on a Sunday morning for nearly a year!

ANNE. (*rising*) Stop it! (*She x's up.*)

DAVID. Why won't you even talk about it? You can't even admit what it is that eats away at you. You think you're the only one suffering, and the rest of the family is miserable because of it. Especially Mom! You never go to church with her and you never even give her a reason why!!

SHANE. (*quickly*) Don't you dare ask me why! You of all people should know how I feel about going to church.

ANNE. Both of you! (*She x's down.*)

DAVID. (*xing u.s.c.*) Yeah? How? How am I supposed to know how you feel about anything? You never share anything personal, Dad!

SHANE. (*xing to c.s.*) Of course I don't share anything personal. Why should I? You always shared personal stuff and all it did was drive me nuts!

ANNE.
Both of you stop this bickering now! Angela! Stop that!

ANGELA. (*reading loudly*)
“Fathers, do not provoke or irritate or fret your children-do not be hard on them or harass them; lest they become discouraged and sullen and morose and feel inferior and frustrated; do not break their spirit.”

DAVID. (*offended*) Oh, I'm sorry. (*He x's down.*) How silly of me to think that YOU could be personal about anything. Don't you have any desire to deepen our relationship?

ANNE. Do I have to get mean about it? All three of you stop it!

SHANE. Of course, I have. (*He x's to DAVID.*) But why don't you tell me how it's going to happen with you PLAYING in a ROAD BAND!!!

{ANNE suddenly bellows out a belligerent “SHANE-DAVID- ANGELA- ALL-OF-YOU-STOP” scream. The ENSEMBLE reacts to ANNE's outburst accordingly and respectively. After their initial reaction, they each stare at her.}

Dialogue Clip #2 • From Act Two

The tension, which is so strong in the scene above, is countered throughout the play by other scenes that are seasoned with comedy and intriguing character situations. As the play continues, the audience is drawn deeper into the story as they witness Shane, his family, two family friends, and the next door neighbor deal with family dynamics, life-changing decisions, and ultimately, the death of Shane's friend. Here's a scene from the concluding minutes of the play, culminating Shane's urgency to make decisions about how he wants to mend all the important relationships in his life, including the relationship with his son, symbolized by a broken fence.

DAVID. (*xing to him*) Dad, wait. I wanted to... (*He searches for words.*)

SHANE. ...What?

DAVID. *(turning, xing down)* I have an idea. *(A beat.)* Why don't we go out to the hunting land this morning?

SHANE. *(instantly)* Are you kidding? You heard your Mother. She's got so many things for us to do, we won't be able to blink.

DAVID. *(immediately)* She'll be fine, Dad. *(He x's to the window.)* Look outside. The sun is JUST NOW coming up. Mom was working on that party stuff all day yesterday. *(He turns back and x's to SHANE.)* And it's obvious Maria will be helping her pick up the house and hang decorations.

SHANE. Forget it. *(He x's toward the HALL.)* There just isn't time.

DAVID. *(boldly)* Then why don't we MAKE time?!?! *(His FATHER stops instantly. He stands for a beat, maybe two, then turns to face him.)* We haven't been out there in over two years, Dad. After the night you've had...maybe it would do us both some good. *(He pauses, takes a deep breath, then:)* Maybe we can see how that fence is holding up.

SHANE. *(quiet)* Maybe you and I could talk about that fence while we are out there.

DAVID. I'd like that. Maybe we could talk about other things along the way. It's a long drive out there and back. We could talk about so many things. *(He smiles.)* We can even talk about how much we hate going to graduations.

SHANE. *(picking it up)* And how much we expect one of our relatives to embarrass us at the commencement.

DAVID. Are you thinking of cousin Larry?

SHANE. *(nodding)* That boy has spoken so *(He imitates.)* nasally ever since that fork tore through his nose. *(DAVID laughs.)* Maybe we could get away for an hour or two. The two of us haven't talked...really talked...in a long, long time.

DAVID. Let's do it, Dad. There are some things I'd really like to talk about. Things that I haven't felt like we could talk about.

SHANE. Well...I haven't been too easy to talk to. *(He pauses.)* I tried so hard—so very hard—not to cry earlier. It took all of my might to try and prevent it, but it was useless. It was like all of my strength was as light as a feather...and God just blew it out of the way. Feeling him do that made me feel so small...and weak...and frightened.

DAVID. I never figured you to be afraid of anything.

SHANE. I could have been a better Father to you. I hope that you don't hate me for that.

DAVID. ...I love you, Dad.

SHANE. (*xing away from him*) I was out here all night...thinking about my entire life...and I replayed so many things that happened between you and me. (*He turns back.*) I kept thinking that...(He pauses—for several beats. Then, with grief in his voice.) ...I'm sorry, David.

DAVID. Hey, listen...(He x's to him and grabs his shoulders.) We both did our share of abuse to each other...But, today is a good day. We can just pick up from here and move forward. We'll get there, Dad. We'll get where we need to be. And we can forget about what is past.

SHANE. I'm not sure it's that easy.

DAVID. Yes. It is. Especially if you can learn to trust in God.

SHANE. You know it really makes me angry how you and your Mother and Sister are always trying to get me to turn to God.

DAVID. Why?

SHANE. Because... (*He searches for a reason.*) Because I'm an angry person. That's why. (*He x's down and elaborates.*) I've been an angry person for a really long time. Angry with God. Angry with life. (*He pauses.*) Maybe I shouldn't be angry anymore. (*Two beats.*) It's starting to be a real drag. (*He thinks for a moment.*) You want me to trust in God. Angela asks about my belief. (*He pauses.*) I believe in God. Always have. I've just always picked and chosen WHAT to believe...until now. (*He pauses again.*) And I guess on the bottom line I believe that Jesus is the Christ—but that's all I believed about him...until now. Living in this house, you learn things, and see things, and I've seen what a relationship with Jesus means to you...your Sister...Anne. I've never had that. I've never wanted that...until now.

DAVID. Then why not begin that relationship right now?

SHANE. Because I know what it costs. And I'm not ready. (*He sits down in the recliner.*) I've lived a lot of years, and I've been in control of everything—the good and the bad. My family, my anger, my resentment toward some people, being a cynic, doing things out of spite, telling Anj she can't pray. All of my ways, whatever they are, are my ways. You tell me to trust in God. You ask me to give my life to Jesus. (*He takes a deep breath.*) If I'm going to do that, I've got to do it all the way. And I'm not ready to do that.

DAVID. How can you say that after what happened to you tonight? You said that you actually felt your anger and resentment being lifted from you—that you felt peace.

SHANE. I like control, David. Believing in God and allowing Jesus to take charge of my life...that is so scary to me. *(He pauses again for several beats.)* But right now it seems that everything—and everyone—I’m basing my life on is being ripped out from underneath me. *(He takes a deep breath.)* And that seems so much more frightening.

DAVID. *(a little miffed)* So, what are you going to do then? Feel the power of God work for a moment in your life, and then abandon all that it meant? Are you just going to ignore it? You’re not ready?...Not willing?...Don’t you think that all of this has happened in order to bring your life to God?

SHANE. I think it has, but I’m only willing to come to God one step at a time.

DAVID. *(more miffed, riled)* You may not have the time, Dad. There is a verse in the Psalms that says, “Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.”

SHANE. Why don’t you skip this next jaunt with your band—stay at home for a while and take some time off?

DAVID. We talked about this last night. DON’T CHANGE THE SUBJECT!

SHANE. I’m NOT changing the subject. I want you to stay here for a while.

DAVID. Dad, we have been over this I don’t know how many times.

SHANE. So what’s one more time, huh?

DAVID. Give me one good reason why I should stay.

SHANE. I’ll give you two. *(He counts on his fingers.)* You and I aren’t going to “get where we need to be” if you aren’t here, and I need you around to teach me those scriptures you know that will help me take my steps toward God a little faster.

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If you’re looking for a satisfying Drama to put on your stage, this is the play that won’t disappoint. Your audiences will be captivated from the opening of the curtain until the moving conclusion. It has been proven that one can’t experience “The Heart of Stone” without having his or her own heart affected.