

What Dreams May Come

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Dedication

To my loving wife and my son

Acknowledgements:

Special thanks to all members of the LHS Theatre Arts Club.

2009

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What Dreams May Come
DRAMATIS PERSONAE
In order of appearance

William Shakespeare	A playwright
Horatio	A nobleman from Denmark
Ophelia	A noblewoman from Demark
Jaques	A melancholy nobleman
Hamlet	A prince of Denmark
Katherina	A noblewoman from Padua
Petruchio	A nobleman from Verona
Gentleman 1	A gentleman from Verona
Gentleman 2	A gentleman from Verona
Henry V	The King of England
Hamlet's Father's Ghost	A former King of Demark
Tybalt	Lady Capulet's Nephew
Mercutio	Kinsman to the prince of Verona
Bianca	Katherina's sister
Twin 1	A lady from Syracuse
Juliet	A lady from Verona
Nurse	Juliet's Nurse
Chorus	Members of a chorus
Puck	Servant of Oberon
Fairy 1	Handmaiden to Titania
Witch 1	A weird sister
Witch 2	A weird sister
Witch 3	A weird sister
Oberon	King of the Faerie
Titania	Queen of the Faerie
Lady MacBeth	Queen of Scotland
Twin 2	A lady from Ephesus
Lord MacBeth	King of Scotland
Malvolio	A Majordomo
Sir Toby Belch	A lord of Ilyria
Maria	A maid
Beatrice	A lady of Messina
Hero	Beatrice's cousin

Ursuala	Hero's lady in waiting
Viola	A lady disguised as a man
Olivia	A countess in Ilyria
Sebastian	Viola's twin brother

Casting

12 Men
18 Women
4 Either

In truth many parts can be doubled, or swung. The Twins were written as female to accommodate the available actors at time of writing, but could be easily rewritten as men, as they were intended by Shakespeare.

The two Gentlemen play several parts:
Gentleman 1/Mercutio/Roman Solider/Sir Toby Belch
Gentleman 2/Tybault/Roman Solider/Malvolio
This is done deliberately, and should not be divided.

Suggested Doubling

Petruchio/Gentleman 2
Henry V/Lord MacBeth
Jaques/Sebastian/Gentleman 1
Ghost/Oberon
Bianca/Beatrice
Juliet/Maria
Nurse/Olivia
Fairy/Hero
Any Witch/Ursula

The stage is empty save for a lone desk and chair. The chair's occupant is writing with a quill pen. He is dressed in casual Elizabethan style: breeches, loose shirt. He is obviously not any kind of gentleman or wealthy.

He writes for a moment, then stops, and then crumples up the page, throwing it on the floor, where it joins several others already on the floor.

He starts again, and a moment later, he crumples it up as well.

He stares at a blank page for a moment, then crumples it up. The idea was bad, apparently. He sighs, and lowers his head to his arms on the desk. The lights fade, till only a spotlight is left on the man at the desk.

A man enters. He calls from the darkness. As he does so, the spot light finds him.

HORATIO: Hello? Is anyone there?

There is only a silence. Horatio spots the man asleep at the desk. As he crosses.

HORATIO: Hello? I say, are you all right? (*Horatio attempts to stir the man*) Hello!

OPHELIA: He can't hear you, you know.

At this, the main lights fade up, and the spotlights drop. Ophelia enters from where Horatio came from. She is dressed in period, but in a way that screams "femme fatale". Her movements are smooth and fluid, almost seductive.

HORATIO: (*Startled*) Why ever not?

OPHELIA: Because you don't really exist.

Ophelia saunters to Horatio, and gives him an appraising look. Horatio is unnerved, self-conscious.

HORATIO: What? What do you mean?

OPHELIA: You're a figment of his imagination. *(She runs her hand over Will's shoulders and toys with his hair.)* Isn't that right Will?

HORATIO: A figment...what? *(Horatio is very confused.)*

OPHELIA: You. *(She points to Horatio.)* Only exist in his *(She points to Will)* imagination.

HORATIO: And who's he?

OPHELIA: Will Shakespeare. He's a playwright.

HORATIO: And who are you?

OPHELIA: I'm Ophelia. *(She leans on the edge of Will's desk, facing Horatio.)* Who are you?

HORATIO: *(Hesitating)* I...uh...I'm...

OPHELIA: *(groaning)* Not another one!

HORATIO: Another one what?

OPHELIA: Another nameless one. Half of us here are nameless.

HORATIO: There are more here?

OPHELIA: Dozens.

HORATIO: Oh, well... *(Suddenly)* I'm Horatio!

OPHELIA: (*relieved*) Oh good, you've got a name. Wait, Horatio? I think I know you. You're friends with *him*.

HORATIO: Who?

OPHELIA: Him. (*Pointing beyond Horatio*)

A man enters. He is dazed, wandering aimlessly. He holds a dagger in his hands, and he is contemplating it.

HAMLET: Oh happy dagger! To sleep, per chance to dream. (*He stops*) No, that isn't right, is it? (*He turns to Ophelia hopefully. Ophelia shrugs and shakes her head. Hamlet is downcast*)

HORATIO: (*Recognizing Hamlet*) My lord...uh...um...I'm sorry, what's your name again?

HAMLET: (*in despair*) I don't know! I can't decide...Lear? Exeter? Falstaff? Antonio? What about Horatio?

HORATIO: My lord, that's *my* name.

OPHELIA: (*Soto voce*) He does this.

HAMLET: Oh. Maybe it's Mercutio.

Horatio and Ophelia shake their heads. Hamlet groans.

HAMLET: A name, a name, what's in a name? Would a rose by any other name smell as sweet?" (*Hamlet exits the way he entered, mumbling about names and idly fidgeting with the dagger.*)

HORATIO: (*shaking his head*) So what you're telling me, is that we, (*he gestures with his hands*) are all figments of his (*he*

points) imagination, and some of us don't even know who we are, or what we're supposed to say?

OPHELIA: That's about the size of it.

Horatio crosses to the desk, shakes Will gently.

HORATIO: He's asleep. This is all a dream?

OPHELIA: We are the stuff as dreams are made on. (*Shrugs*)

HORATIO: Hey, that's pretty good stuff.

OPHELIA: Too bad it probably won't make it into print. He's great with the dreams, but most of his written stuff isn't so good. (*She crosses back to the desk and pulls up a sheet of paper and reads*) "A History of King Henry the VI, Part I." (*She crumples the sheet and throws it at Will*)

HORATIO: Sounds...thrilling. (*Sarcasm*)

OPHELIA: Indeed. So we wander around here, and then... (*Shrugs*)

HORATIO: The rest is silence.

OPHELIA: Yes. (*Pause*) Too bad. That's a really good closing line.

HORATIO: He doesn't get any of us out on paper?

OPHELIA: No. We're trapped here. We all want to get out. The problem is many of us aren't even sure what we're supposed to be doing.

HORATIO: But sometimes, you can tell when something isn't right for you?

OPHELIA: It's like this vague, nagging doubt in the back of your mind. We can tell what sounds right, and what doesn't. We just may not know the exact details all at once. I mean, we've got people wandering around without names. We've got people whose names have changed, and some people have just up and disappeared.

HORATIO: Oh. (*Considering*) So, for example, you and I know we're supposed to know Lord Whats-His-Name, but we don't know exactly what our relationship is with him, and we don't know what his problem is?

OPHELIA: Correct.

HORATIO: But what if we didn't have to wait for him? (*gestures to Will*) What if we could take charge for ourselves?

OPHELIA: (*Thinking*) I don't know if anyone's ever tried that before.

HORATIO: First time for everything, right? (*He furrows his brow, and then hesitantly crosses to the desk. He picks up a sheaf of paper and a quill. He writes experimentally. He looks at Ophelia.*)

OPHELIA: (*Shrugs*) Go for it.

Horatio begins to scribble notes on the paper.

HORATIO: Let's start with our confused friend. What's got him all worked up?

OPHELIA: Maybe someone killed his dog.

HORATIO: (*Shaking his head*) No...he's too far off balance for that. How about his dad? Hmm.

As he begins to write, pausing occasionally, to think.

HORATIO: This playwriting is harder than it looks. It's certainly easier to be on stage and just take direction.

OPHELIA: I don't like the idea that we're all just characters on a stage.

Jaques enters, staggering, carrying wine bottle.

JAQUES: (*Announces loudly*). All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players:
They have their exits and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts.

Horatio and Ophelia looks at him.

JAQUES: What?

HORATIO: Who are you?

JAQUES: (*Shrugging*) I don't know yet. I don't even have a story yet.

HORATIO: That speech you gave there, it was quite good.

JAQUES (*Sadly*) I suppose it was at that. But it is sad, when you think of it, is it not? We are all just tools, puppets, playthings for the cosmos.

OPHELIA: That does seem very melancholy. I don't think I'd like to live like that.

JAQUES: As you like it, my lady.

He wanders off. Ophelia and Horatio exchange another look and shrug. Horatio goes back to his writing, muttering to himself. Ophelia gets bored, and then saunters across to him.

OPHELIA: *(Seductively)* So, are you here...with anyone? *(She brushes against him, running a hand over his shoulders)*

HORATIO: What? *(Startled, backs up against desk, drops quill and parchment)* No! I mean...I don't think so.

OPHELIA: *(Disappointed)* Darn. I just...I mean, I feel like I should be with somebody. I mean...*(horrificed)*...oh not again!

Ophelia runs off.. Sound of retching, Horatio crosses to the edge of the stage and calls off.

HORATIO: Ophelia, are you all right? Ophelia?

Ophelia re-enters. She crosses to Will, determined.

OPHELIA: Will you just make up your damn mind! *(She pounds on his back. He doesn't move.)*

HORATIO: What's wrong? *(He follows her over as she continues to beat on Will.)*

OPHELIA: This idiot can't decide if I'm pregnant or not!

HORATIO: Pregnant? *(Taken aback)*

OPHELIA: It comes and goes. *(She gives Will a final shove)*
Vile beast.

HORATIO: So you're not sure if you're pregnant, and you're not sure if you've got a man?

OPHELIA: *(Shakes her head)* Nope.

HORATIO: (*Picking up parchment*) Well, this seems like a good place to test our theories, then... (*He starts to write*) So, do you want to have a man?

Before Ophelia can answer, there is a shriek from off stage.

KATHERINA: *Leave me alone!*

Katherina enters and storms across the stage.

KATHERINA: If you're smart, you'll say no to that question. You could be stuck with someone you can't stand.

Ophelia nods sympathetically.

OPHELIA: Katherina, this is Horatio, he's new here. Horatio, Katherina.

HORATIO: A pleasure, madam.

KATHERINA: (*She drops a quick, polite curtsy*) Indeed, my good sir. (*Pause as she regards him coolly.*) You're not friends with Petruchio are you?

HORATIO: Who?

KATHERINA: *Him.*

PETRUCHIO: (*from off stage*) Kiss me Kate, we will be married o'Sunday.

Petruchio bounds in, full of energy, and excited, mooning over Katherina. She fends him off.

KATHERINA: If I ever did dream of such a matter, abhor me!
(*Angrily*)

Katherina and Petruchio move offstage, arguing all the way.

HORATIO: That's a good line. *(He writes it down)*

OPHELIA: Yes, but I don't think it belongs to her. Maybe for someone else.

HORATIO: *(Nodding)* You're right. It doesn't quite fit her....hmm. Suddenly I'm thinking of a Moor in Venice. Does that make any sense to you?

OPHELIA: Not a wit.

A voice from offstage is heard.

GENTLEMAN 1: Oh foul fiend, do you bite your thumb at me?

OPHELIA: *(Groaning)* Oh no. Here come the two gentleman of Verona.

HORATIO: Why is this bad?

OPHELIA: They're always fighting, you see. Frankly, I think he *(points to Shakespeare)* uses them to practice his insults.

Horatio is writing as she speaks. The two gentlemen enter.

GENTLEMAN 2: No sir, I do not bite my thumb at you, but I bite my thumb!

GENTLEMAN 1: I will give your carcass to the dogs!

GENTLEMAN 2: Cry havoc, and let slips the dogs of war!

GENTLEMAN 1: Get you gone you dwarf; you minimus of hindering knot-grass made; you bead! You acorn!

GENTLEMAN 2: Away, you Ethiopie!

GENTLEMAN 1: Draw if you be a man! (*They draw swords*)

GENTLEMAN 2: Lay on then! And damned be him who first cries, hold, enough!

Horatio writes frantically as they fight across the stage and out.

HORATIO: (*Repeating, as if trying to hold the lines in his head*) ...and damned be him who first cries, hold, enough. (*Pausing, looking at Ophelia*) What rhymes with 'enough'?

OPHELIA: I don't know...stuff? (*She wrinkles her nose as they both shake their heads.*) Maybe a name. Somebody calling out someone.

HORATIO: It should have two syllables. Fits the rhythm better that way.

Ophelia nods. Katherina re-enters

KATHERINA: Finally! I lost him.

OPHELIA: Where?

KATHERINA: In the woods near Athens, next to those idiots putting on that silly play.

HORATIO: What play?

KATHERINA: Oh, I don't know. The moron seems to like doing this whole 'play within a play' thing. (*She slaps Shakespeare on the back*) I think he turned one of the players into an ass. If you ask me, he ought to be turned into an ass. (*Looking over Horatio's shoulder*) What are you two up to?

HORATIO: I'm taking notes.

OPHELIA: He's trying to write a play from this mess.

KATHERINA: (*Intrigued*) Really? How's it going?

HORATIO: Well...not so good. So far. I've got a lot of great quotes, but...

OPHELIA: No plot.

KATHERINA: (*Considering*) Well, what play is he writing now?

OPHELIA: (*Peruses Will's notes.*) Another history play, I think, I'm not sure. It might be a sequel to the first one...

King Henry V enters. He is holding a drawn sword, and looking defiant.

HENRY V: Once more unto the breach, my friends!

OPHELIA: Or a prequel...

HENRY V: We few, we happy few, we band of brothers...for he who sheds his blood with me this day shall be my brother. Be he ne'r so vile, this day shall gentle his condition. And gentlemen in England now abed, shall think themselves accursed they were not here, and hold their manhood cheap whilst any speaks that fought with us upon Saint Crispin's day

HORATIO: (*X-ing to Henry and tapping him on the shoulder*) That's a great line, but could you just repeat that last part, I had trouble getting it down.

HENRY V: (*Confused*) And hold their manhood cheap whilst any speaks that fought with us upon Saint Crispin's day?

HORATIO: (*Writing*) ...on Saint Crispin's day. Got it, thank you.

HENRY V: An honour, good sir. But I must be off. The French dogs await my steel! (*He charges off*) For England, and St. George!

KATHERINA: Who was that?

OPHELIA: King Henry V, I think. He comes before Henry VI.

KATHERINA: I knew that. (*Glares at Ophelia*) So what's it going to be, Horatio? What's the plot?

HORATIO: Well, I don't think we're in the same play, are we? I was going to try and write the one Ophelia and I are in first. But tell me about yours, too.

KATHERINA: Well, you could write about a beautiful maiden who resolves never to have anything to do with men.

OPHELIA: How would it end?

KATHERINA: She learns to live free from the demands of male society and finds happy independence on her own.

HORATIO: (*Snorts in derision*)

KATHERINA: (*Rounding on him angrily*) What was that?

HORATIO: (*Clearly intimidated*) Nothing. Nothing, just...ah, clearing my throat. It sounds like a wonderful play.

Hamlet enters, holding a skull.

HAMLET: Alas, poor Yorik, I knew him well.

HORATIO: (*Grateful for the distraction*) How goes it, my good lord?

HAMLET: (*as if seeing him for the first time*) Well, God-
mercy.

HORATIO: (*confused*) Do you know me, my lord?

OPHELIA: (*sotto voce*) Oh, great, here he goes again.

HAMLET: Excellent well, you are a fishmonger.

HORATIO: Not I, my lord.

HAMLET: Then I would you were so honest a man.

At some point during this exchange, Hamlet transfers the skull to Horatio, who holds it awkwardly, not knowing what to do with it. Eventually, he sets it down on the desk.

HORATIO: Honest, my lord?

HAMLET: Ay, sir, to be honest, as this world goes, is to be one man picked out of ten thousand.

HORATIO: That's very true, my lord.

HAMLET: For if the sun breed maggots in a dead dog, being a good kissing carrion – have you a daughter?

HORATIO: I...what?

OPHELIA: (*she's had enough. To Hamlet*) All right, all right, enough you. Go wander somewhere else.

HAMLET: Get thee to a nunnery!

OPHELIA: Why you little... (*Advances on Hamlet*)

Horatio and Katherina restrain Ophelia, while Hamlet dodges out of reach. A Ghost enters.

HAMLET: Father!

The others stare.

HORATIO: Your father's a ghost?

OPHELIA: No wonder he's messed up.

GHOST: Avenge me! Avenge me!

HAMLET: I'm trying father!

HORATIO: Hey, if you're his dad, do *you* know what his name is?

GHOST: Of course not. I'm just a secondary character. He's got to decide that for himself.

OPHELIA: Small chance of that.

GHOST: (to Hamlet) Is that the girl you got with child?

HAMLET: No. Yes. Maybe?

GHOST: Art thou lying with her?

HAMLET: (*meekly*) Maybe?

GHOST: Are you mad?

HAMLET: (*Pause for thought*) Maybe?

GHOST: *(Throws his arms in disgusts)* No wonder I can't get any vengeance around here. *(Begins to walk off stage)*

HAMLET: Father no! Wait! *(Follows father off stage)* I'll avenge you...I think!

Horatio, Ophelia and Katherina watch Hamlet chase his father off stage. Horatio and Katherina turn slowly to Ophelia, who is a tower of shaking rage.

HORATIO: *(pointing off stage and back at Ophelia)* You...

OPHELIA: DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT IT!

Horatio wisely remains silent. Finally Ophelia cracks, shrieks and begins to hammer on Will.

OPHELIA: I HATE YOU, YOU MORONIC IDIOT! I HATE YOU I HATE YOU I HATE YOU!

Horatio and Katherina grab Ophelia and try to restrain her.

KATHERINA: Ophelia, stop! Let it go! There's nothing you can do!

OPHELIA: I WANT TO KILL HIM!

HORATIO: You can't! You're only in his imagination, remember?

OPHELIA: I DON'T CARE! *(She stops suddenly, clutching her belly and clamping a hand over her mouth.)* OH GOD. Not again. *(She rushes off stage)*

An awkward silence follows. Katherina finally breaks the silence.

KATHERINA: I'll just...go...make sure she's okay.

HORATIO: (*Nodding in relief*) Good idea.

Katherina exits, following Ophelia.

Horatio wanders back to Will's desk, and picks up some of the crumpled sheets of paper. He begins to read.

HORATIO: If laughter be the food of love, play on. (*He frowns*) That's not so good. (*He takes the quill to the parchment*) How about if...*music*...be the food of love. (*He pauses*) Much better. (*He takes up another sheet of parchment and smoothes it out.*) The History of Cardenio? (*He reads for a moment*) This is terrible. No one should ever see this. (*He crumples it up and tosses it on the floor. He reaches for another sheet, but as he does so, the two fighters return, wearing different tunics*)

GENTLEMAN 1: Tybalt, you rat-catcher, will you walk?

GENTLEMAN 2: What wouldst thou have of me, Mercutio?

GENTLEMAN 1: Good king of cats, nothing but one of your nine lives; that I mean to make bold withal, and as you shall use me hereafter, drybeat the rest of the eight.

GENTLEMAN 2: I am for you!

They start to swordfight across the stage, Horatio gets out of their way, but they bump into Will's desk. Will starts to slide out of his chair, and Horatio grabs him.

HORATIO: Gentlemen! Please!

GENTLEMEN: Your pardon, good sir.

They return to swordfighting. Gentleman 1 is wounded just before going off.

GENTLEMEN 1: I am hurt! A plague o'both your houses!