

MY BOYHOOD DREAMS



A musical fantasy in two acts

**based on the short story by
Mark Twain**

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Great Stage Publishing

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SUMMARY OF SCENES

Saint Louis, Missouri 1900

ACT ONE

- Scene One - Morning, the bedroom of Frank Writeaway**
- Scene Two - The same, half hour later**
- Scene Three - The same, four hours later**
- Scene Four - The same, five minutes later**
- Scene Five - The same, an hour later**
- Scene Six - A ring under a Circus “Big Top”**

ACT TWO

- Scene One - The same, an hour later**
- Scene Two - The Wheel House a Mississippi Sternwheeler**
- Scene Three - Lady Loretta’s Dressing Tent**
- Scene Four - On an asteroid somewhere deep in Outer Space and a country church somewhere in St. Louis**

MY BOYHOOD DREAMS

ACT ONE SCENE ONE

AT RISE:

1.1

MUSIC #1: "OVERTURE"

The year is 1900 in HANNIBAL MISSOURI on LEAP YEAR DAY which is February 29th on the calendar, a date that falls on the calendar only every four years. This is the first leap year of the Twentieth Century. We find ourselves in the executive mansion bedroom of millionaire FRANK WRITEAWAY, a very prosperous older man in his seventies. He is propped up in bed eating his breakfast. A chamber maid by the name of MRS. POTTERVILLE is dusting the furniture in the room very efficiently. The curtains are closed and there is an abundance of early electric lamps burning throughout the room. There are touches of elegance throughout this master bedroom. FRANK is eating his breakfast but not too happy at the plainness of its taste.

MUSIC #1: OVERTURE ENDS THEN...

MUSIC #1A LEAP DAY ON LEAP YEAR 1900

(As THE LEAP THEME plays, MRS. PORTERVILLE goes to open the blinds. As she does, she says her first line and THE LEAP YEAR THEME ends.)

PORTERVILLE

Good Morning, Mr. Writeaway.

FRANK

What's good about it?

PORTERVILLE

It's Leap Day, sir. February twenty-ninth! It's the first Leap Year of the new century, sir.

FRANK

Well I won't be leaping out of this bed any time soon!

PORTERVILLE

Probably not, sir. But it can be a bit of magic, almost a special day.

FRANK

Well certainly not for breakfast! Good Lord, who made this oatmeal?

MRS. POTTERVILLE

I did sir. Anything the matter with it?

FRANK

There's no sugar.

MRS. POTTERVILLE

You can't have sugar. It's bad for your heart.

FRANK

It has no cinnamon.

MRS. POTTERVILLE

You can't have that ether. That disagrees with your liver.

FRANK

It has no apples or raisins in it.

MRS. POTTERVILLE

That would do your stomach in for sure.

FRANK

Then what's the point of eating it?

MRS. POTTERVILLE

You need nourishment, sir.

FRANK

There is no nourishment in something that is bad to taste.

MRS. POTTERVILLE

It's not bad to taste, sir. It's simply plain to the taste.

FRANK

I see damn little difference.

MRS. POTTERVILLE

You don't see differences at all. In any thing. Or in anybody. You've been that way since the day you hired me. That was thirty-six years ago, kind sir. That was a Leap Day also.

FRANK

That long I've been putting up with you?

MRS. POTTERVILLE

And that long I've been putting up with you!

FRANK

Nobody forced you to stay.

MRS. POTTERVILLE

And nobody said you had to be a grouch every single day of your life.

FRANK

I am not a grouch. I am simply disagreeable.

MRS. POTTERVILLE

Six of one, half a dozen of another.

FRANK

I hate that expression.

MRS. POTTERVILLE

Because it encourages people to consider themselves and their lives equal with one another.

FRANK

You are not equal with me, madam! Not by any stretch of the imagination.

MUSIC #2: "MR. WRITEAWAY"

(MRS. PORTERVILLE begins to sing the song "MR. WRITEAWAY". The song is very quickly paced.)

MRS. POTTERVILLE

YOU HAVE NO IMAGINATION THAT REMAINS
MR. WRITEAWAY
NOTHING THAT IN LOGIC THAT EXPLAINS YOU,
MR. WRITEAWAY
NOTHING IN SCIENCE, NOTHING IN BOOKS
NOTHING EXPLAINS HOW YOU WORK AND COOK
THERE IS NOTHING VERY LOGICAL IN YOU
MR. WRITEAWAY

AND AT TIMES YOU CAN BE JUST A BIT
PATHOLOGICAL

YOU HAD BOYHOOD DREAMS YOU'VE TOLD ME
ALL THESE THINGS FOR YEARS YOU'VE SOLD ME
YOU HAVE NO IMAGINATION THAT REMAINS
YOU'RE PERSONA IS ONE THAT JUST COMPLAINS
YOU HAVE IMAGINARY ACHES AND PAINS
NO IMAGINATION LEFT
IT TOOK A POWDER: IT'S NOW DEFT
NEVER TREATED IT SO WELL
LIKE A BAT RIGHT OUT OF HELL
MR. WRITEAWAY, MR. WRITEAWAY
YOU MAY BE THROUGH
MR. WRITEAWAY
THERE IS NOTHING MORE TO DO FOR YOU!

FRANK

It took off like a bat out of Hell, did it? And how
would you know that?

MRS. POTTERVILLE

I watched it leave.

FRANK

Nonsense, woman. You can not witness the flight
of imagination.

MRS. POTTERVILLE

Oh yes, you can. Just like you can witness the
flight of humor, wit, poetry and desire to live.

FRANK

I have no desire to live.

MRS. POTTERVILLE

There you are. I told you so.

FRANK

I've lived enough.

MRS. POTTERVILLE

Have you really?

FRANK

I'm seventy-five years old.

MRS. POTTERVILLE

And Noah was two hundred.

FRANK

Who in hell fire damnation would have wanted to be him? Work hard all your life and suddenly at the oldest age imaginable God asks you to save the world with an ark! When it was bloody He who wanted to destroy it in the first place.

MRS. POTTERVILLE

Because every one in the world was a sinner.

FRANK

Without commandments, I might remind you. What can God expect of poor mortal man if at that particular moment in biblical history, he hadn't given "God's chosen people" the very commandments that any living and breathing people would require to lead a good life?

MRS. POTTERVILLE

Why would a man with a conscience need commandments?

FRANK

Because you need stated rules. Only animals don't need stated rules of conduct. They go by instinct.

MRS. POTTERVILLE

Man has both reason and instinct. He knows right from wrong.

FRANK

Even Lincoln made grave mistakes.

MRS. POTTERVILLE

And went to his grave because he didn't have the sense to have a proper body guard that fateful night.

FRANK

Can you bring me some fruit instead of this dreadful sludge?

MRS. POTTERVILLE

I could do that.

FRANK

Give this oatmeal to the mice downstairs. That should kill them off.

MRS. POTTERVILLE

I'll bring you some cantaloupe. The doctor will be here any moment now.

FRANK

Which doctor is that?

MRS. POTTERVILLE

Doctor Shore, of course.

FRANK

Elwood P. Shore! That old humbug?

MRS. POTTERVILLE

He is no more humbug than you, sir.

FRANK

But of course he is. He should have cured me by now.

MRS. POTTERVILLE

He should have given you up by now. You've been playing cat and mouse with death for the last five years.

MUSIC #3: "REFLECTION"

FRANK

I don't play at anything.

MRS. POTTERVILLE

And haven't for years.

FRANK

Why can't I be the way I want to be?'

MUSIC #2: REFLECTION

FRANK

WHY CAN'T I BE, THE WAY THAT I WANT TO?
A LITTLE IMPROMPTU, IMPROVISING, SURPRISING
EVEN MYSELF
DESPITE ALL MY LUCK AND MY FANTASTIC
WEALTH.
WHAT HOLDS ME BACK? WHAT STANDS IN MY
WAY?

WHY CAN'T I BE THE WAY THAT I WANT TO,
TODAY.

I USED TO COMMAND GREAT FLEETS ON THE
OCEAN
HELD THE DEVOTION, GRATEFUL EMOTION OF
ALL OF MY PEERS
DESPITE ALL THE POWER, I HOLD TO THIS HOUR
WHAT HOLDS ME BACK? I DEFY MY DEMISE
WHY CAN'T MY LIFE BE THE WAY THAT I WANT?
A SURPRISE.

MY LIFE IS NO MYSTERY, MY DAYS HAVE MADE
HISTORY
I TOOK EVERY CHANCE, DREAMED OF DARING
ROMANCE
EVEN FLYING THROUGH AIR
IN MY DREAMS I CLIMBED CLOUDS WITH NO
ANGELS AROUND.
AND NO LOGIC WAS FOUND IN WHAT I
PROPOSED
OH THE YEARS WAY BACK WHEN, NOTHING
STOPPED ME BACK THEN.
I OPENED EACH DOOR THAT WAS CLOSED, OH
MY ME.
DIDN'T HAVE ME THE KEY. I JUST WILLED IT TO
BE.
AND THEN IT WAS SO.

WHY CAN'T I BE, THE WAY THAT I WANT?
UNDAUNTED I'LL HAUNT EVERY QUESTION I
FIND
LEAVING ALL DOUBTS OF MY PAST ALL BEHIND
MY GREAT SPOOLS OF THOUGHT WILL START TO
UNWIND

EVERYWHERE
WHY CAN'T I BE, THE RIGHT TO BE FREE
WHY CAN'T I BE THE WAY THAT I WANT TO BE?

MRS. POTTERVILLE

The answer to your question, dear sir is your health. Fragile, now, sir.

FRANK

But if I already lived a grand life. Why shouldn't I take chances? What's the point of staying in this bed and simply existing for the point of sheer existence? What fun is that?

MRS. POTTERVILLE

Fun? Aren't we a little old for fun?

FRANK

Are you?

MRS. POTTERVILLE

More than you know.

FRANK

But that shouldn't be. Life is for living not simply sitting around like a great tree waiting for a forest fire to burn it down.

MRS. POTTERVILLE

But you are the forest fire, yourself.

FRANK

Then I should burn with excitement and adventure. Not wadded up news print to make it appear that I wish to seem to burn brighter and longer.

MRS. POTTERVILLE

I wish I could afford that.

FRANK

Don't I pay you enough?

MRS. POTTERVILLE

I haven't had a raise in ten years, sir. I just never asked for any kind of increase in pay given your reputed temper.

FRANK

Reputed? Bad temper? Me?

MRS. POTTERVILLE

Yes, you, sir. A very bad temper, sir.

FRANK

Who told you this?

MRS. POTTERVILLE

The cook. The butler. The gardener. The downstairs chamber maid and oh yes, the grocer.

FRANK

The grocer? I haven't seen the grocer in three years.

MRS. POTTERVILLE

Trust me, sir, he has enough bad memory of your last visit to last him enough for the next ten years.

FRANK

Well I never liked him to begin with. He sells old eggs from dying chickens. And all the others? Well they're just plain wrong.

MRS. POTTERVILLE

Are they, sir?

FRANK

I'll prove that I'm misunderstood. (A BEAT) I'm doubling your salary, Mrs. Porterville. That should tell you how wrong they all are!

MRS. POTTERVILLE

Double?

FRANK

Did I impress you?

MRS. POTTERVILLE

No, because I don't think I heard you correctly!

FRANK

Plus a paid vacation. Do you hear me now?

MRS. POTTERVILLE

Oh merciful God! What's a vacation?

FRANK

It's what you're going to have right now. Where would you like to go?

MRS. POTTERVILLE

London to see my sister, but.

FRANK

Then to London you shall go! I'll order the steamship tickets right away. First class!

MRS. POTTERVILLE

First class?

FRANK

First class. The same way that I will demand to go to heaven!

MRS. POTTERVILLE

Won't the angels be surprised at that?

FRANK

They just might.

(We hear the DOORBELL ring downstairs)

MRS. POTTERVILLE

That will be Doctor Shore. I'll go bring him up. But you must tell me, sir: Have you been drinking?

FRANK

Not yet. Perhaps it is something I should try.

MRS. POTTERVILLE

Perhaps you're right. Perhaps you should try anything you fancy.

FRANK

If I'm going to die, I might as well do it with a flair.

MRS. POTTERVILLE

Yes, sir - a flair! Indeed.

FRANK

Well go pack and I'll get this going.

MRS. POTTERVILLE

I'll bring the doctor up.

FRANK

And tell him not to wear his usual "It's almost over now!" scowl.

MRS. POTTERVILLE

Does he do that?

FRANK

I think he rehearses looking morose and grim as he walks up these stairs each time he visits!

MRS. POTTERVILLE

I hadn't noticed.

FRANK

Of course not. He's not coming to see you.

MRS. POTTERVILLE

Well I'm happy he isn't!

FRANK

And I'm unhappy that he is - the old quack.

MRS. POTTERVILLE

I understand that.

FRANK

Let him in and then go and pack.

MRS. POTTERVILLE

I must do something first.

FRANK

And what is that?

MRS. POTTERVILLE

I'm going downstairs and fixing your oatmeal-- just the way you like it.

FRANK

Thank you dear heart. Just don't tell the doctor, will you?

MRS. POTTERVILLE

It will be our little secret.

FRANK

Good.

(An overjoyed MRS. POTTERVILLE beams as she opens the bedroom door, all smiles.)

MRS. POTTERVILLE

Thank you, sir.

FRANK

Thank you, for the faithful service all of these many years.

MRS. POTTERVILLE

I just hope you'll still be alive when I return.

FRANK

I wouldn't let it be any other way.

MRS. POTTERVILLE

I might have guessed that answer.

FRANK

Not very likely, my dear: not very likely at all.

MRS. POTTERVILLE

Of course.

FRANK

And stay a month.

MRS. POTTERVILLE

A whole month, sir?

FRANK

Of course! You haven't seen your sister in how long?

MRS. POTTERVILLE

Twelve years, sir.

FRANK

Twelve years. Go quickly, else you may never recognize her when you get there.

MRS. POTTERVILLE

Yes, sir. And thank you, sir!

MUSIC #2A: GOOD OLD ELWOOD SHORE

(MRS. PORTERVILLE smiles and opens the door only to find Doctor Elwood P. Shore. Physically he looks like a shorter version of WILLIAM FRAWLEY, balding but his hair is combed over his bald spot. He almost reminds you of The Narrator in the classic play "OUR TOWN." He looks like an old country doctor: the typical doctor you would find in a Norman Rockwell painting. He has a 1900's style stethoscope around his neck and a black and well worn doctor's bag in his hands.

MRS. POTTERVILLE

Ah, there you are, Doctor. Good to see you again.

ELWOOD

Good to see you as well, Mrs. Potterville. You look very happy today.

MRS. POTTERVILLE

I should be.

ELWOOD

Never seen you this happy before!

MRS. POTTERVILLE

I've never planned a vacation before.

ELWOOD

A vacation. To where?

MRS. POTTERVILLE

London. To see my sister. Mr. Writeaway is funding the excursion.

ELWOOD

Is he, now?

FRANK

Yes, I am. People have always called me a cheapskate before and I am anything but!

ELWOOD

Did he bump his head lately?

FRANK

(CALLING OUT) No, Elwood, I did not bump my head lately.

ELWOOD

Maybe his guardian angel appeared to him.

FRANK

What angel would ever be patient enough to stick around the likes of me?

ELWOOD

He has a point there.

MRS. POTTERVILLE

I need to call the agency and find a replacement. None of the girls downstairs will venture here upstairs.

ELWOOD

Really?

FRANK

That's why you're getting the paid vacation and not them.

ELWOOD

Ah, hah! I knew it wasn't quickly obtained generosity.

FRANK

Nothing should be, unless it's earned.

MRS. POTTERVILLE

Take good care of him, Doctor Shore. Would you please?

ELWOOD

I will do my best, dear lady, my very best.

MRS. POTTERVILLE

Thank you, doctor. I need also to make some oatmeal.

ELWOOD

Plain I hope.

MRS. POTTERVILLE

(SMILING-- SHE KNOWS BETTER) just the way he likes it.

(MRS. PORTERVILLE curtsies and leaves the room.)

ELWOOD

Oatmeal the way you like it, is it? That, Mr. Frank Writeaway could be trouble.

FRANK

No more trouble than you, Elwood!

ELWOOD

(SITTING) One day... One day, doctors will be appreciated.

FRANK

Well don't start rehearsing for it now.

ELWOOD

If you don't start posing for the statue you expect in Meadow Park one fine day, I won't start hoping that doctors will someday be revered.

(ELWOOD starts to examine FRANK. WE HEAR His THEME AGAIN..)

MUSIC #2B GOOD OLD ELWOOD SHORE
(REPRISE)

FRANK

Revered? Saints and angels are revered. Not flesh and bone quacks like you.

ELWOOD

I've always taken good care of you.

FRANK

Because I pay you well.

ELWOOD

But never in a timely manner.

FRANK

You can't have everything. You can't have double the money and expect it to be on time. It wouldn't be natural.

ELWOOD

God forbid, generosity could be normal.

FRANK

Bah!

ELWOOD

So... (LEANS FORWARD) How do you feel?

FRANK

Ornery.

ELWOOD

(LEANS BACK AGAIN) That isn't any different.

FRANK

Do I need to be different?

ELWOOD

It might be refreshing.

FRANK

You want refreshing? Drink lemonade. And when you get to the distinctive tart taste, that you most assuredly will, you can then at that moment, think of me.

ELWOOD

I think of you when I relieve myself. It's a great comfort, I assure you!

FRANK

Are you going to examine me or are you going to sit there and fling slings and arrows.

(ELWOOD goes over to the bed and opens his bag.)

MUSIC #3: "YOU BAPTISTS KILL ME!"

ELWOOD

Since I have more outrageous fortune than I care to admit, I deal only in well aimed barbs. Slings and arrows almost always miss their target. (A BEAT) And they will simply cower away from the likes of you.

FRANK

Is that a fact?

ELWOOD

Gospel true.

FRANK

(sings)

YOU BAPTISTS KILL ME! YOU REALLY DO!
COMPLAIN. CONDEMN AND WITH THAT THEN
YOU WILL NOT BUDGE
FROM ALL YOUR JUDGING OF THE WORLD
YOU BAPTISTS KILL ME! YOU SLAY ME SO
THERE IS NOTHING OF PURE FUN
YOU WANT TO KNOW

YOU COMPLAIN WITH EVERY BIT

YOU HAVE NO LAUGH, YOU HAVE NO WIT
AND EVERY "DOOM AND GLOOM"
IS "GOSPEL TRUE!"

YOU WON'T DANCE ON YOUR BIRTHDAY
YOU WON'T PLAY A WHEEL OF CHANCE
THERE'S SIMPLY NO ADVENTURE IN YOUR SOUL

ELWOOD

YOU HAVE NO FAITH

FRANK

I HAVE ENOUGH
THOUGH I'M CANTANKEROUS AND ROUGH
AT LEAST I PUT SOME LIVING INTO LIFE I'D SAY

ELWOOD

YOU HAVE NO FAITH, YOU DO NOT PRAY

FRANK

AND YOU CHASE LAUGHTER ALL AWAY
YOU BAPTISTS KILL ME
YOU REALLY KILL ME

ELWOOD

YOU HAVE NO FAITH, YOU HEATHEN.

FRANK

TODAY!

FRANK (CONT'D)

If I had no faith, I'd be convinced that you've been
doing nothing for me for years.

ELWOOD

Is that so?

FRANK

If I had no hope, I wouldn't think that doctors were still only "practicing" after five hundred years. Look at poor deceased President Garfield. The poor man was shot and every doctor including Alexander Graham Bell prodded and pushed and injected the poor man to the point of ad nauseam, and their total incompetence was really Death disguised as great medical wisdom.

ELWOOD

Never liked that man!

FRANK

You preferred Chester A. Arthur?

ELWOOD

I did.

FRANK

That's like preferring squash when you have an apple pie in mind?

(*Elwood begins his examination.*)

ELWOOD

There you go again wishing for something you can't possibly enjoy unless you'd like death to visit you for sure.

FRANK

He could visit all he likes as long as he doesn't demand samples.

ELWOOD

Well I'm afraid that he will and I am also afraid that this is my last visit to you.

FRANK

Why? Can't take a little truth.

ELWOOD

You want truth, Frank Writeaway? (THROWS HIS STETHOSCOPE BACK INTO HIS BAG) Here's the truth. Your heart is shot. Your lungs have almost given up. And your liver is ready to commit it's very own suicide. I can't operate on you because you'll never survive the surgery. You take more medication than an army of war veterans. You have medication to wake up with, go to sleep for, breathe correctly and one so you can still urinate.

FRANK

Did any one ever tell you that you have an absolutely charming bedside manner?

ELWOOD

I have no manner at all, sir, that isn't truthful. I refuse to say kind words to you just to make you feel better. I am not your mother.

FRANK

Medicine doesn't excite you any more?

ELWOOD

That stopped when I was forty. Right now medicine is so far behind the times, it keeps running ahead to see if it can possibly find something more that we already know. And it won't. We aren't much ahead of "Wagon Train" Lewis and Clark type medicine.

MUSIC #4: "THERE ISN'T ANYTHING AT ALL!"

FRANK

So you're giving me up?

ELWOOD

I am giving you up. I need to focus on people I can cure.

FRANK

That'll be a short list.

ELWOOD

(sings)

THERE ISN'T ANYTHING AT ALL THAT I CAN DO
FOR YOU
THAT I CAN CURE FROM YOU OR NOW ENDURE
FROM YOU
THERE ISN'T ANY MEDICINE IN THE WHOLE
DAMN WORLD
THAT WOULD WORK FOR YOU! THAT WOULD
HEAL FOR YOU

THAT IS REAL FOR YOU
THAT IS WHAT I REALLY FEEL
THERE ISN'T ANY MAGIC SPELL TO STEAL
I BRING TRUTH. THERE'S NOTHING TO CONCEAL
THERE ISN'T ANYTHING AT ALL
THAT THIS DOCTOR CAN RECALL
I'M NOW TRYING HERE TO STALL
THERE ISN'T ANYTHING AT ALL
THAT I CAN DO, THAT I CAN DO
HANDS ARE TIED, SEE MY SIDE
DON'T JUST USE THAT STUBBORN PRIDE
THERE IS NOTHING MORE
NOT ONE THING MORE
THERE ISN'T ANYTHING AT ALL!
THERE ISN'T ANYTHING AT ALL!

THERE ISN'T ANYTHING AT ALL!
THAT I CAN DO FOR YOU!

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

And with that, sir, (PUTS ON HIS HAT) I will take
my leave.

BLACKOUT.

END OF THE SCENE

**END OF ACT 1-1: "THERE ISN'T ANYTHING AT
ALL" ENDS**

**Perusal
Only
NOT FOR
PRODUCTION**

ACT ONE

SCENE TWO

AT RISE:

1.2

(DOCTOR SHORE is preparing to leave the bedroom. He is almost out the door when he is interrupted by FRANK who can't quite believe that his long time friend and doctor is actually giving up on him.)

FRANK

You don't expect me to pay you for this little doom and gloom visitation, do you?

ELWOOD

(TURNING FROM THE DOOR) No, I don't, Frank. This visit was a freebee.

FRANK

Alert the newspapers! The doctor who is the Baptist minister on the side is throwing in the towel on an unbaptized man!

ELWOOD

You're unbaptized? In any faith?

FRANK

Does that suddenly renew your interest?

(DR. SHORE goes back over to the bed very interested again.)

ELWOOD

Well, yes, because then my medical efforts would prepare you for heaven and reward me for the effort.

FRANK

Reward you for the effort? Oh for goodness sake. Do you mean to say that there's no heaven without baptism?

ELWOOD

Not a chance.

FRANK

And therefore no further medicine for me without a dunking from you?

ELWOOD

Nope. What would be the point?

FRANK

You only save the lives of the Baptist baptized?

ELWOOD

When they are as hopeless as you, yes!

FRANK

Hopeless?

(a beat)

If you dunk me in that icy cold water Baptist font of yours, I shall die of pneumonia for sure.

ELWOOD

God protects us.

FRANK

Only if you're becoming a Baptist, right?

ELWOOD

We're the true faith.

FRANK

I'll bet you your worthless medicine bag that the Catholics and the Jews will vehemently disagree.

ELWOOD

Let them vehement. We have the repented.

FRANK

My God! That sounds like a hymn title.

ELWOOD

Maybe it is. You have nothing to lose! You will be saved.

FRANK

And then *die* because I would be compelled to start going to your church, where I would - without one doubt - be absolutely first bored to absolute crocodile tears and then done in by my rapidified demise at the thought of being a cockamamie bible thumper.

ELWOOD

(GETTING UP) Goodbye. Frank. It's time for me to leave.

FRANK

Good. Don't let the door bump you on the way out.

ELWOOD

Maybe the devil will save you.

FRANK

I'll bet he's a better doctor than you are.

ELWOOD

That did it.

FRANK

Don't just say goodbye. Leave.

(ELWOOD goes to the door!)

ELWOOD

I will! For good! Good riddance! But because we were childhood friends, I'm going to make a wish for you.

FRANK

You? A wishing fool?

ELWOOD

I have had my own wishes.

FRANK

And wasted them?

ELWOOD

A few. But right at this moment, I'm going to use whatever may be left in one shot right now. Because I was your physician and friend.

FRANK

A wish? Ah Hah! That is that what you'll be charging me for!

MUSIC #5: "JUST ONCE FOR YOU!"

ELWOOD

As I said: this is a freebee. It will also be the last thing that you will hear me say.

FRANK

I wait with baited breath. Wish for anything you'd like, my ex-friend. Let's get it over with.

ELWOOD

I wish...

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

(sings)

BEFORE YOU LEAVE THIS WEARY PLANET
TO WHAT EVER PLACE YOU ARE DEIGNED TO BE
THIS WORLD SO FILLED WITH IMPERFECTION
MISDIRECTION AND SHEER CALAMITY

I MAKE THIS ONE WISH, A SIMPLE WISH YOU SEE
I WISH THAT ONCE ALONE
IN YOUR SORRY STATE OF LIFE
AS YOU LIVE NOW ALL ALONE
CUTTING ALWAYS LIKE A KNIFE

THAT YOU'LL RETAIN ONE WISH
A WISH FROM YOUR OWN PAST
OR MAYBE JUST A DREAM
THAT YOU GAVE UP FAR TOO FAST

THOSE DREAMS YOU CAST AWAY
WHILE YOU WERE STILL A YOUTH
THOSE DREAMS THAT COULDN'T STAY
FOR YOU ONLY SAW THE TRUTH

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

(continues to sing)

AND BEFORE YOU DIE, DEAR SOUL
AND THAT YOU SURELY WILL
THAT YOU'LL ALLOW IT SOME CONTROL
IT MIGHT COME TRUE THAT WAY ...BUT STILL

YOU MUST TRY AND LET IT STAY
LET IT SPEAK WORDS TO YOUR HEART
PLEASE DON'T CHASE IT FAR AWAY
BEFORE IT HAS THE CHANCE TO START

LET IT WHISPER IN YOUR EAR
WHEN IT COMES TO VISIT YOU
SHARE SOME SECRETS, MAKE IT CLEAR
DREAMS CAN ALWAYS STILL COME TRUE
THAT YOU'LL RETAIN ONE WISH
A WISH FROM YOUR OWN PAST
OR MAYBE JUST A DREAM
THAT YOU GAVE UP FAR TOO FAST

THOSE DREAMS YOU CAST AWAY
WHILE YOU WERE STILL A YOUTH
THOSE DREAMS THAT COULDN'T STAY
FOR YOU ONLY SAW THE TRUTH

AND BEFORE YOU PASS AWAY, OLD FRIEND
AND THAT CAN'T BE DELAYED
YOU'LL AGREE TO "JUST PRETEND"
TILL IT'S PLEADING HAS BEEN MADE

THEN JOURNEY WITH THIS DREAM
TO WHEREEVER THAT MAY BE
EVEN THOUGH IT SEEMS
IT'S A SILLY FANTASY

I WISH YOU JUST ONCE
I WISH YOU ONE DREAM
JUST ONCE IN YOUR LIFE TIME
WILL COME TRUE
JUST FOR YOU JUST FOR YOU
JUST ONCE IN YOUR LIFETIME
JUST ONCE FOR YOU
JUST ONCE FOR YOU

FRANK

That's a pretty decent wish coming from a quack like you.

ELWOOD

More decent than you deserve.

FRANK

We never deserve - that's incredibly vain and pretentious. We only earn from what we've done in our lives. I haven't done as many things as I've wanted, but I also have never quit on anyone like you have to me.

ELWOOD

You just can't handle the truth, Frank.

FRANK

Neither can you, "Mister, I'll stick with you, if you get baptized in my church!" Why would you have done that?

ELWOOD

It's justified. People owe me lots of money as a doctor. They owe me nothing at the church.

FRANK

So you go where the money is?

ELWOOD

I have to.

FRANK

I'm sure heaven is delighted in hearing that.

ELWOOD

What do they care? As long as you have the faith, you're going to get in anyway.

FRANK

Then I'd rather go to hell.

ELWOOD

You and the devil can have tea.

FRANK

At least it will honestly be tea. You have never honestly been my doctor.

(ELWOOD knows just how true this is and he takes his medicine bag to the window, dumps it out that window, turns and walks out the door. AFTER A BEAT or so.

(MRS. POTTERVILLE enters with a tray of oatmeal just the way FRANK likes it with cinnamon, sugar, raisins and nutmeg. There is also a dish of cut up cantaloupe.)

MRS. POTTERVILLE

Here we are, Mr. Writeaway! Oatmeal, just the way you like it.

FRANK

Thank you, my dear. That was very thoughtful of you.

(MRS PORTERVILLE serves FRANK the tray.)

MRS. POTTERVILLE

And the oatmeal is nice and hot, sir.

FRANK

Thank you.

MRS. POTTERVILLE

Coming up the stairs, the doctor looked like death warmed over, as if he had lost his last friend.

FRANK

He has. And rapidly losing his patients as well.

MRS. POTTERVILLE

What happened?

FRANK

He said that there was nothing more that he could do for me unless I got baptized in his church.

MRS. POTTERVILLE

Not that old routine again.

FRANK

He's done this before?

MRS. POTTERVILLE

Oh, mercy yes-- just not in a while. Business must be down for medicine-- even though he's the only doctor in town.

FRANK

The only one?

MRS. POTTERVILLE

Nobody wants to pay their bill on time. Or they want to trade him a house call for a chicken.

FRANK

You could eat the chicken.

MRS. POTTERVILLE

But not pay the mortgage with it.

FRANK

True.

MRS. POTTERVILLE

I called the agency. They're sending a domestic replacement tomorrow morning and I'll be leaving at two o'clock tomorrow afternoon.

FRANK

I'll have an envelope with the cash your voyage and your vacation pay requires.

MRS. POTTERVILLE

Thank you, sir.

FRANK

Thank you. (A BEAT) Bon Voyage!

MRS. POTTERVILLE

Thank you, sir. See you in a month.

FRANK

If the doom and gloom of the doctor's prediction doesn't find me, first.

MRS. POTTERVILLE

I'm sure it won't.

FRANK

Lower the shades, Mrs. Porterville. I intend to take a nap.

MRS. POTTERVILLE

Very well, sir.

(MRS. PORTERVILLE shuts the curtains closed.)

FRANK

Thank you.

MRS. POTTERVILLE

And for dinner, sir?

FRANK

The most opulent stuffed roast chicken that you can possibly make, With candied yams and those twice baked potatoes of yours.

MRS. POTTERVILLE

Yes, sir.

FRANK

I'm going to start living for once!

BLACKOUT.
END OF THE SCENE

ACT ONE

SCENE THREE

AT RISE:

(We hear music play.)

1.3

MUSIC #5A: "DEATH DOES NERO"

(Four hours have passed and THE MUSIC reflects the passing of the hours. That should reflect about a minute or so in MUSIC time. Dear old FRANK is sound asleep in his bed. Appearing before him is DEATH, but not in a robe and scythe but in a Roman toga looking a bit like NERO complete with a violin. FRANK stirs as DEATH goes to touch his hand, but FRANK wakes up just in time.

FRANK

Who are you?

(a beat)

I get to ask that of you.

(a beat)

First, I might add.

MUSIC #5A: "DEATH DOES NERO" ENDS

DEATH

Your time on Earth's giant clock is through, Frank. Done. Completed. Finito. Struck it's midnight. Chimed it's last.

FRANK

I wasn't aware that the Earth wore a giant pocket watch.

DEATH

And we are but seconds that pass on its giant face. A mere tick of the clock. A moment in time. An hour spent too soon.

FRANK

You must be Death? You're much too cliched to be anyone else.

DEATH

I am indeed he. The great pause. The last breath. The pendulum's last swing. The shining journey man into the clouds. I thought I might take a different personality with you. Just for the fun of it.

FRANK

Death thinks about something amusing?

DEATH

Death can be the last laugh.

FRANK

The last laugh indeed.

(a beat)

What new form have you taken may I ask?

DEATH

Don't recognize dear mad Emperor Nero? Of Rome?

(a beat)

The violin didn't clue you in, huh?

FRANK

Not every violin-carrying fool is Nero. Thank God.

DEATH

Who would you prefer? Socrates. Shakespeare, Milton. Perhaps Henry the Eighth...

FRANK

Henry the Eighth? I think, you don't have the girth for him.

DEATH

Well I could choose another form just for you.

FRANK

Another cliché?

DEATH

I am no cliché. I am the most handsome final moment you will ever witness.

FRANK

I've seen far too much and far too many souls in their so called "final moments." So whatever form that you may take, I say "Not now." And that, dear Death, is no cliché.

DEATH

Here we go again.

FRANK

I'm not ready. How much plainer would you like than that?

DEATH

As the nose on your face.
(a beat)

Nobody is ready for me! But that makes no difference. (OFFERS HIS HAND) Take my hand.

FRANK

I say, I'm not ready! Besides, you are not going to make that worthless ex-doctor of mine right are you?

DEATH

What did he say?

FRANK

That I was hopeless.

DEATH

No one is hopeless, except those who choose to take their own lives.

FRANK

Well then, I want more time.

DEATH

No more minutes! No more starlight left. No more rays in your setting sun. More time? Oh no, Mr. Writeaway, that's impossible.

MUSIC #5B: MAX HIGHTOWER RETURNS

(Appearing now is MAXWELL HIGHTOWER, the Master of dreams. (Maxwell is dressed as any great god of dreams might be dressed with pure flourish and fancy outfit and hat.)

MAX

Stop! Stop! Stop! Stop! Do you always come across like that?

DEATH

Oh no you don't, Maxwell Hightower, this man's soul is mine.

MAX

Violation of the rules here.

MUSIC #5C MAX HIGHTOWER RETURNS" ENDS

DEATH

Rule over Death? No way. No clear path. No smooth sailing.

MAX

Stop! You are so corny, you remind me of breakfast.

DEATH

How dare you!

MAX

Not daring enough for someone who is very important in this weary world.

FRANK

Who is this man?

MAX

(BOWING) I'm Maxwell Hightower, the Master of Dreams. You are Frank Writeaway?

FRANK

I am indeed.

MAX

Then I have priority here.

DEATH

Priority over Death?

MUSIC #5D; "THE GOLDEN BOOK OF RULES"

(MAX produces a golden book of rules. They APPEAR with s definite FLAIR and their own THEME MUSIC.)

MAX

Check the rules out for yourself.

DEATH

I don't have time for your silly rules.

MAX

I don't care whether you have time or not. There is a wish on the table and that wish has been selected by The Great Order of Things to come true.

MUSIC #5E: THE GOLDEN BOOK OF RULES ENDS

DEATH

The Great Order of Things has interfered again?

MAX

He has the right.

DEATH

The right to what? Screw up destiny and time both at once?

MAX

Interfere again and you know what he will do.

(a beat)

(SING-SONGY) He's done it before.

DEATH

Suspend my powers?

MAX

Like he did back in the Bible days. Why do you think the Abraham's and the Noah's lived so long?

DEATH

I think that was God.

MAX

God has more to do than scheduling death.

DEATH

I will challenge him them.

MAX

Challenge The Great Order of Things?

(a beat)

Wasn't it bad enough when you did that the last time?

(a beat)

It wasn't pretty!

DEATH

I do remember vaguely a great struggle.

MAX

Vaguely? Only a great struggle? Oh, my dear Death, you slay me! Even though you really can't!

DEATH

Very droll, Max, very droll!

FRANK

All of this big fight is over me?

MAX

Yes, Mr. Writeaway. A man who has never made a wish for anyone but himself has finally made a sincere wish for another individual.

FRANK

Trust me, I was surprised at the old humbug's effort.

DEATH

So what? Why care? Why bother?

FRANK

I think we got you with your first question.

MAX

We can not ignore that an otherwise hypocrite of a man suddenly had the inspiration to make a totally unselfish wish.

DEATH

Oh, for the love of creation, spare me!

MAX

Like it or not.

DEATH

I could fight you all the way to...

MAX

Why bother?

DEATH

Because it's important to me that the schedule of things are maintained, damn-it-all. Nothing annoys me more than being made to change my schedule.

MAX

Not very flexible, huh?

DEATH

Since when is death flexible?

MAX

Well it needs to be from now on or, you'll pardon the pun, there are going to be grave consequences.

FRANK

Very witty. I'm in stitches!
(*a beat*)
Grave consequences.

DEATH

How droll.

FRANK

There must be a solution.

MAX

I do have a counter proposal.

DEATH

I suggest you make it good, Max. You wouldn't want to piss off Death. I might just try to compensate.

MAX

You mean overcompensate?

DEATH

Whatever.

MAX

The wish that was made on Mr. Writeaway's behalf calls for multiple dreams coming true.

DEATH

And that's where we disagree. How much time do you think I have here?

MAX

I propose a bet.

DEATH

A bet? A common wager? Have you gone mad?

MAX

It sure beats a conflict with "The Great Order Of Things." He has a nasty temper.

DEATH

Not like mine, Maxwell Hightower. Not like mine!

FRANK

All of this fuss over me?

MAX

It's important. If we break this up, nobody will ever believe in their dreams again.

(a beat)

So then, I propose we settle this with these...

MUSIC #5F: "THE DICE OF DREAMS"

(With an elaborate MUSIC, dear MAX produces a fancy pair of dice with a flair and presents them.)

FRANK

Dice?

DEATH

A common pair of dice? Are you crazy?

MAX

Not at all! I propose that we simply roll these dice. Whatever number comes up is the number of leftover "boyhood dreams" that Mister Frank Writeaway will experience before his demise.

MUSIC #5F: "THE DICE OF DREAMS" ENDS

DEATH

Do you know how long that could take?

MAX

I said "experience them" not "live them".

DEATH

A temporary manifestation?

MAX

Indeed.

DEATH

I might go along with that. But there must be some danger. There must be some risk involved.

MAX

Why must there always be risk with Death?

DEATH

Because there is all kinds of risk with life.

FRANK

He does have a point there.

DEATH

(TO FRANK) Thank you.

FRANK

Your welcome.

MAX

Always the spoil sport! What kind of risk would you like this time?

DEATH

A little reverse on "Parcheesi".

MAX

Parcheesi? Lovely. What little twist would you care for?

FRANK

I love that game!

DEATH

Good for you. In my version you really get to "go home" again!

MAX

What's the twist?

DEATH

No doubles.

MAX

No doubles? I can't make the numbers different on each die, you pea brain.

DEATH

Who are you calling a pea brain?

MAX

You are.

FRANK

Stop. Please. Let's give Death a voice and a chance here.

MAX

Oh very well. You are much too kind.

FRANK

I am simply fair minded.

MAX

I suppose.

DEATH

I appreciate your sense of fairness, Mr. Writeaway.

(a beat)

I propose that the rolling of doubles will disqualify him from any dreams coming true.

MAX

Maybe.

FRANK

That does sound fair.

MAX

And you would live with the agreement?

DEATH

I never go back on my word, Max.

MAX

You fight like hell about it.

DEATH

Sometimes.

MAX

That's a laugh.

FRANK

Let's just do it, gentlemen, and get it over with.

MAX

Mr. Writeaway are you willing to take the chance?

FRANK

I would.

(a beat)

I never expected that old Doctor Humbug to make a sincere goodwill gesture at all.

MAX

True.

FRANK

Give me the dice.

MAX

(HANDING THEM TO FRANK) Here they are, Mr. Writeaway. I do wish you the best of luck.

DEATH

There is no such thing as luck.

MAX

Something else, we've argued about over all these centuries.

DEATH

Roll the damn things!

MAX

Don't rush him.

DEATH

I'll do what I please. Just as Nero did.

MAX

Nero! The greatest fool of the Roman Empire.

DEATH

He was not.

MAX

He was too.

FRANK

I'm rolling the dice now.

MAX

Good.

MUSIC #5H: IT'S AN ELEVEN

(With the MUSIC playing, FRANK takes some time rolling them around in his hands, but he finally rolls the dice. It's an eleven.)

FRANK

Look at that!

DEATH

Oh my stars! Not an eleven.

MAX

That's wonderful.

MUSIC #5H "IT'S AN ELEVEN" ENDS

MUSIC #6: "MY BOYHOOD DREAMS"

DEATH

What if he doesn't have eleven "boyhood dreams?"

FRANK

But I do.

DEATH

You really do?

FRANK

(sings)

WHEN I WAS A BOY OF SEVEN OR SO
I WANTED TO FLY THROUGH THE AIR
I DREAMED OF BECOMING A BIRD OH MY
AND MAYBE THE WIND WOULD SHOW
THE SECRET TO MY GREATEST DREAMS
ON A PATHWAY THROUGH THE SKY
WHERE NOTHING WENT AWRY
JUST PAST THE RAINBOW AND OVER THE MOON
BUT THEN MY DEAR CHILDHOOD WAS OVER
TOO SOON.

ALL MY DREAMS, MY BOYHOOD DREAMS
WHERE DID THEY GO? WHERE DID THEY RUN?
WHERE WINDS MAY BLOW AND PAST THE SUN?
MY BOYHOOD DREAMS WHY DID THEY RUN?
WHY COULD THEY NEVER SIMPLY STAY?
INSTEAD THEY SEEMED TO ALWAYS DRIFT
AWAY

MY BOYHOOD DREAMS. I MADE A LIST.
I MADE MY SCHEMES AND I'D PERSIST
TO MAKE THEM ALL REMAIN AROUND
I THINK PERHAPS INSTEAD THEY FOUND
ANOTHER CHILD, ANOTHER HEART

AND FLEW SO FAR AND KEPT APART FROM ME

ALL MY DREAMS, WHERE DID THEY GO?
I LOVED THEM ALL, THAT YOU SHOULD KNOW.
AND WE AS FOOLS DON'T KNOW THE RULES
NOT TAUGHT IN LIFE OR ANY SCHOOLS
WHAT HAD I DONE? WHY DID THEY FLEE?
MY BOYHOOD DREAMS. WHY DID THEY RUN
AWAY FROM ME?

THEY WERE SO GRAND, MY DREAMS BACK THEN
I SHOULD HAVE PLANNED OH WAY BACK WHEN
TO KEEP MY SCHEMES AND BOYHOOD DREAMS
ENTICE THEM ALL, GET THEM TO STAY

SO NOT ONE DREAM, NOT EVEN ONE
WOULD EVER RUN AND SIMPLY FLY AWAY.
MY BOYHOOD DREAMS, I MISS THEM ALL EVEN
TODAY!

*(DEATH seems impressed and MAX smiles from
ear to ear as there is a.*

BLACKOUT.

**END OF THE SCENE MUSIC #6 "MY BOYHOOD
DREAMS AND ACT 1-3 ENDS**

MY BOYHOOD DREAMS

Leap Year Day, 1900. Grumpy millionaire Frank Writeaway is near his end and Death (Seymour) is watching carefully - dressed as Nero! Dr. Shore has had enough and can do no more, but he would certainly like to make a convert of Frank. That would make him look even better when it is his turn at the Holy Gates. So, he makes a last minute wish for Frank to have one of his unfulfilled boyhood wishes come true.

That does it! Now Max, a.k.a. known as the Merchant of Dreams, can step in and insist that death be delayed. What happens then is ... well, the rest of the story!

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