

DREAMERS

Tales of Order and Disorder

by

Roy Schreiber

DREAMERS

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Personal Statement

A while back I came to the conclusion that things only go as planned in fiction. In real life they seldom do. In the spirit of irony I'm using *Dreamers*, a work of fiction, to illustrate that opening statement about real life.

It also seems to me that the futility of expecting all to go as planned runs across different types of people and different time periods. Especially when those individuals plan to become famous. *Dreamers* illustrates this idea by using widely different people as its chief characters: Samuel Pepys, a 17. century naval bureaucrat, William Bligh, an 18. century explorer/naval officer and Paul Gauguin, a 19. century artist.

One further point of the play: The men are the dreamers. The women in their lives are the realists.

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CAST:

Prolog 1 Man
Act 1 9 Men/2 Women
Act 2 7 Men/3 Women
Act 3 5 Men/7 Women

Act 1

PEPYS	20s to 30s, ambitious
KING (CHARLES I)	40s
MONTAGUE	40s, dignified, experienced
MRS. PEPYS	20s to 30s, proud, aristocratic
WARREN	50s, calm, practical
KILLIGREW	30s, witty drunk
CHARLES II	30s, cynical
COACHMAN	Any age
MAYOR	50s, desperate
WILLET	Teens, sexy, clever
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT	Any age

Act 2

BLIGH	30s to 40s, resentful, frustrated
MRS. BLIGH	30s to 40s, practical
COOK	50s
TAHITIAN KING	40s, dignified, suspicious
TAHITIAN QUEEN	40s, clever, practical
CHRISTIAN	20s, desperate
ISLAND CHIEF	40s to 50s
MUTINEER'S MOTHER	50s, grieving
CHRISTIAN'S BROTHER	40s
BANKS	50s, charming

Act 3

GAUGUIN	40s, frustrated, idealistic
META	40s, angry, sarcastic

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TAHITIAN QUEEN	40s, realistic, practical
TAHITIAN PRINCESS	20s, charming, knowledgeable
TAHITIAN MODEL	20s
ELDERLY WOMAN	50s
TAHITIAN WIFE	Teens, no nonsense
TAHITIAN FISHERMAN	30s
AMERICAN WOMAN	50s, knowledgeable, haughty
DEGAS	50s
POLICEMAN	20 or more, authoritarian
PRIEST	40s, priggish, angry

Casting Note: For a professional theater DREAMERS is designed as a solo show. For a community theater company, college or university drama program DREAMERS will enable multiple actors to play the roles. Characters speak as little as a single word or as much as extended monologues. There are never more than two characters in a scene.

The male and female characters may be played by actors of any gender.

Time: *Act 1* 1649-1669, *Act 2* 1779-1805 *Act 3* 1894-1899

Settings: *Act 1* London *Act 2* London, Hawaii, Tahiti

Act 3 Tahiti, Paris, Marquesas Islands

All of the Gauguin paintings needed for Act 3 are available from Google Images.

Since each character lived in a different century and since they traveled to different parts of the world, the audience will find it useful to be able to see maps and an indication of the era.

The scene descriptions in the script describe sets at their optimum. Two intermissions are necessary between the first and second and second and third acts to change the sets and costumes.

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A basic production only needs some sound effects, 2 hats (18th century tri-corned naval officer's and a straw hat), a Restoration (late 17th century) wig, 3 canes/walking sticks, maps on an easel, a sketching pad and a high, backless stool.

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ACT I
SCENE 1
PROLOGUE

Bare place at the front of the stage illuminated by a single spotlight. A single actor, dressed in a black body suit, walks into the spotlight. As he after saying his first line, he walks over to where the Pepys costume hangs and puts it on as he delivers his lines.

ACTOR. I will bring to you three men, Samuel Pepys, William Bligh and Paul Gauguin. Born in different centuries, engaged in different professions, they do not seem to have much in common. But they do. They dreamed of becoming famous. Two dreamt of fame by bringing order to a disorderly world. The other dreamt of it in disorder. Although Pepys, Bligh and Gauguin lived at least a century before all of you were born, you probably recognize at least one of their names. Does that mean they achieved their dreamed of fame? Wait and see. Wait and see.

Now dressed in dressed in brown, knee length pants and a long-sleeved white linen shirt, the lights change gradually as Pepys seats himself at a desk. Lights then reveal a bare room. On the desk, facing away from the audience, there is a the bust of a woman, half-circle reading glasses and a visor with cardboard tubes attached at eye-level. He has an open notebook in front of him. There is a large map of London.

SCENE 2

PEPYS. I am Samuel Pepys, here to tell you a story. Who is Samuel Pepys? I am not surprised you ask. I am a young man who periodically needs advice and support. Why should you bother? I tell you this. One

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day all England will know my name. And my fame will be reflected on you.

Where to begin? Why with a sad tale of the fate of our king. They've put our king, on trial for his life. I should have written it down at the time, but even so, I still picture him, sitting there, dressed all in black with a white lace collar. Charles I, a sad-eyed little man with a pointy beard who sits on a red velvet chair raised high off the floor. His feet barely touch. (*Pepys gets up, picks up the gold headed cane, returns to his seat facing the audience, puts the cane in front of him, then places both hands on the gold head of the cane.*) I saw him listen to his fate, both hands resting under his chin, as he leans on his cane. (*He drops the cane.*) You can hear the loud clatter as it comes to rest on the stone floor. I remember him as he looks from person to person, subject to subject. No one moves.

CHARLES I. Well.

PEPYS. He climbs off his chair and picks it up. (*He picks up the cane.*) They take King Charles out on a balcony of his banqueting house at Whitehall palace. Before thousands of us, the ax falls and so does his head. Into a basket. A mob rushes below the balcony, some holding tiny white handkerchiefs. They catch drops of his blood dripping toward the ground. Schoolboy that I am, with the world in disorder, I cheer. Perhaps you think cheering a king's death is not the way forward in the world. Do you know what? You are right. The time came to stop cheering and take stock. For a poor tailor's son to make his way upward, I must find opportunities. To better myself, I have to find a path that brings back order to the nation. You realize, of course, that I cannot do that in one leap. As a first step I must shine before my peers and competitors. That means I must first find the means to acquire my own little nation that contains a well-governed family. When I keep order in it, I show my talent and worth to the wider world. (*Stage lights dim and a spot shines the bust of the woman.*) Now I will confess to you, as an ever so young man, I do not always use my opportunities to their best advantage. Take my marriage. For a man such as myself to move up in the world, as you surely know, I need a well-selected wife. One with a large dowry, one with the right family connections. A wife who charms

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guests, who publicly and faithfully follows where her husband leads. One who can rule my little nation when I am not there. But my choice does not aid my way upward. Even though she has parents better than my own, my wife, Elizabeth, brings no dowry. No, not a single groat comes my way. And connections? The daughter of an exiled French Protestant nobleman and the widow of an Irish knight comes with no connections. You ask, why marry so? I cannot resist beauty. (*Walks around the desk and, facing the audience, views the front of a bust of a woman.*) My wife pulls her long dark hair back on her head and then lets it fall in ringlets. Her black eyes hide I know not what desires. Each of her breasts fits perfectly in one of my hands. And her voice, her voice blends the music of France and Ireland. They say in my family the men only marry ugly women. Those who say so have not met my wife. (*Spot fades and stage lights come up. Walks back and sits.*) Would you like to know the price I pay for my weakness? No house in London, but only a small room near Whitehall. In it, like a serving girl, my wife cooks my meals and washes my clothes. I doubt that it surprises you to learn that this does not please her. I do not please her. But, ever so slowly, I do.

SCENE 3

I have gentlemen for ancestors. But my father, a second son of a second son, had to become a London tailor to survive. He puts his only son on the path to something better. He asks my cousin, Lord Montague, to find work for me. My Lord knows, even though no one says it out loud. At least not at first. To make the world right side up, to keep order, we need a king. With the consent of the House of Commons, in a great ship, My Lord, the most powerful admiral in the English navy, sails to the Low Countries to fetch a king. (*Stands and picks up his cane.*) After King Charles II makes My Lord an earl and this new earl says to me:

MONTAGUE. I will find you a place in the government. If you are clever enough, from there you will prosper.

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PEPYS. Thank you, My Lord. Do you know what? I say that to him, knowing full well the post he finds me will be one where I can look after his own best interests in the navy. So, I have become a Navy Board member and its record keeper. I am now Clerk of Acts. Clerk of Acts? Perhaps that title does not impress you. You under-rate my ambition and My Lord's influence. This post means that I now occupy a house on Seething Lane in the City of London. The king grants it to me, at his expense. My little nation can take shape. Beyond my own little nation, from my new position, I will help England keep the Dutch and the French navies at bay, and protect our trade from their privateers. What do you think of the Clerk of Acts now? To do my job properly, I will need to find a way for our sailors to have well-made ships. And see to it that those ships are better manned than those of any other nation's. That means I must bring in an orderly system. A dreamer's fantasy, you say. You wait and see. Wait and see. I presume you wonder how I can perform this feat. I'll show you. First, I keep an exact record of all that goes on around me. Every day I will record my achievements for you to see and for me to have the information I need to defend my actions from the ill-informed. (*Writes in his notebook as he speaks.*) So, beginning in this year of our Lord 1660, my twenty-seventh year, I write down everything that happens to me. To mark my progress through an orderly world turned up the right way. (*Stops writing. Goes over to the brown jacket and puts it on.*) Today I have my first meeting with the other Navy Board members. As we sit around the table, I take the measure of those who, like me, live on Seething Lane. In confidence I now tell you "Their Worships" leave me unimpressed. A toothless Royalist, who kissed Queen Elizabeth's hand a hundred years ago. A man who changed sides in our civil wars twice in the same week. A former admiral sent out to capture the rich island of Cuba who instead captured Jamaica, home of wild cattle. Would you like to know how I fit with this sad group? Right now I fit very well, all too well. What do I know about the navy or naval affairs? Nothing. I must learn about the navy. I must learn what is necessary to make its ships sail. (*He picks up the pieces of canvas, wood and cord and brings them to his desk and sits.*) I discover that through indifference these men have favored

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suppliers of canvas too thin for sails in a strong wind. (*Rips the canvas, puts it down canvas and picks up wood.*) wood for masts that is rotten, (*Snaps wood, puts it down and picks up cord.*) lines that break. (*Breaks cord and puts down pieces.*) If the king continues to rely on Their Worships, order will not be restored and his navy may never leave our shores. But first, I must deal with the affairs of my little nation. I possess 40. As Clerk of Acts, the king will pay me a salary of 350 a year. It may seem a vast fortune to you, yet I do not know if it will do. My wife hires a chamber maid and a cook maid. She even speaks of a live-in companion from a good family to amuse her. I must have clerks and messengers, each at 4 per year. All these people are now my family. I must dress them, feed them, house them. It is what is expected of a gentleman governing a little nation. If I am so distracted by my need for money, how I will bring order to the navy? By good fortune this morning My Lord calls me to him.

MONTAGUE. Samuel, you will find that the merchants will want you to speak up for their interests at Navy Board meetings.

PEPYS. Yes, My Lord,

MONTAGUE. To make you favorably inclined to their interests, they will offer you gifts. When you add them all together, the gifts will be worth many times what the king pays you.

PEPYS. I see, My Lord.

MONTAGUE. The merchants will not be the only ones.

PEPYS. No, My Lord?

MONTAGUE. Every ship in His Majesty's navy has a purser who receives fees for distributing supplies to the crew. The larger his ship, the more his opportunities to make a profit. They, too, will not be ungrateful for a word from you on their behalf.

PEPYS. I had not realized that, My Lord. And after My Lord left, I decided I needed to think on what he said. (*Lights dim to black and then come up again with Pepys in exactly the same position.*) I am still thinking on it. You tell me. What am I to do? Should I choose to speak up for the merchant who offers me the largest gift? What if the quality of his wares is not of the best? What of the other members of the board? What gifts do they receive? If gifts go to everyone from every

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merchant in sight, will it make for an orderly navy? For an improved navy? I think not. This afternoon the merchants begin arriving at my office. They offer gold and jewels, even shares in their other commercial voyages. Before seeing me, almost all of them stop at my house to give my wife handsome gifts and less handsome ones to my servants. Then the pursers come and the would-be pursers. They have little money. Instead, they arrive with women they call their wives, pretty women. They beg as nicely as their husbands. They do not stop by my house first to pay their respects to my wife. You tell me. What am I to do? What am I to do? (*Stops writing, lights fade, and come up again.*) One day Sir William Warren, the timber merchant, enters my office. Before I can offer him a chair, he offers me £500, if the Navy Board will buy from him. “But what if your timber is not of the best quality?” I blurt out. “What if someone can offer the same quality at a lower price?” Comes from my mouth in frustration.

WARREN. Then take his gift and grant him the contract. I do not propose to cheat the king or you.

PEPYS. What of the other board members?

WARREN. They will not suffer in dealing with me.

PEPYS. Can you see a flaw in his reasoning? I take his advice, and I do the same with the rope and canvas merchants who come knocking on my office door day, after day, after day. (*Pepys then reads, puts on glasses, writes and signs many papers.*) Sorting out the merchants who are knaves from the honest men keeps me busy at my office from early morning until late at night. My head aches and my eyes run tears. But the material is now there to build and repair the king’s ships and make them worthy of sailing for our nation. (*Takes off glasses. Goes over to the golden shoe buckles, brings them back, sits on chair and puts buckles on his shoes.*)

SCENE 4

As My Lord predicted, beyond the merchant’s golden gifts to me, I have find much compensation for my labor. And I find beauty, willing beauty comes my way.

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I have them frontwards, I have them backwards, I have them any way I want and they care not. Then I send their enriched husbands away on ships. I send them far, far away. Perhaps you wonder about my wife in all this. What if one day or one night she looks for me? What if she finds me? The new order in my little nation would vanish. But day and night, she plays the great lady with her friends and relations. You can see. She too might as well be far, far away. One morning, walking with my breath visible to all in the cold, I come to the office and I find a sealed letter. I can tell from the handwriting. My wife wrote it. I begin to sweat. Do you think I should read it? Do you think it will give her power over me if I do? What does she want? I leave it, unread. At first she says nothing. I say nothing. On the third night after, weary, as I prepare to sleep in my own room, she comes in, unbidden.

MRS PEPYS. What do you say to my letter?

PEPYS. I have not read your letter. I do not intend to read your letter.

MRS PEPYS. Have not read it! Not read it! Well, then I shall read it to you.

PEPYS. You dared to keep a copy! Give me that! Give it to me!

MRS PEPYS. Tailor's son! Prick louse! No matter how shiny the buckles on your shoes. I will leave you forever if do not treat me as I deserve.

PEPYS. She turns away from me and reads me her copy. With all of her demands for clothes, for servants. For money of her own. She berates me all night long. We do not sleep that night. "Stop! Stop! Enough!"

I threaten to beat her, but she will not stop.

I am tired beyond measure, but I tell you I have thought on all she said. She only wants to show the world that we are not penniless servants living in a single room. To show the world that her husband is more than a tailor's son. You can see. My wife and I want the same things.

The next night, we are friends. I tell her she can have an allowance for her clothes. She can even choose a companion. All I ask is that her choice sings well. What could be better ornament than a beautiful,

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musical woman? I must have music. I will have music. Why, you ask. To hear the neatness and order of the notes brings me joy and tears. It is their symmetry that draws me. Listen. (*Goes to the recorder, picks it up, and plays the first verse of "Pastime in Good Company" by Henry VIII. Replaces the recorder, Returns to chair.*) And so in my chamber, with great pleasure, to my wife. (*Lights dim to black, then come up again with Pepys now in a periwig.*)

Scene 5

The king has declared war against the Dutch. In Africa, they plunder our colonies. Near our shores they attack our fishing fleet so theirs may catch all the herring. James, duke of York, the Lord High Admiral, the king's brother, is keen to fight them. I am not so keen to fight the Dutch or anyone else. Not now, not yet. I visit the dockyards and I tell you I do not like what I still find. Decrepit old men who can do nothing and sullen young ones, seldom paid. All the fine lumber, all the strong rope that I worked so hard to get to the dockyards lies there, unused.

I will explain to you how a well-ordered navy should work. It all comes down to this: For the navy to fight and win, the king needs to press the House of Commons for money. The king has other things on his mind. If you look, you will see. He does little with the Commons. What the king does is Lady Castlemaine, often. Then he does Mistress Stewart and Moll Davis and any other pretty woman who crosses his path. The king is the father of our country, at least of a goodly number of us.

One day the king calls me to him and a drunken Tom Killigrew, his bedchamber groom, staggers in and says to his face:

KILLIGREW. There is an able man I could name that, if your Majesty would make use of him, would see to it all things were well executed.

CHARLES II. And why does he not do so now?

KILLIGREW. Because he now spends too much time employing his lips and his cock.

CHARLES II. And who might that be?

KILLIGREW. Why he who now asks me so many questions.

PEPYS. At which His Majesty laughs.

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You should wonder not that the court becomes a very disorderly place. And the royally ignored Commons gives the navy little money. (*Puts on reading glasses and writes in his diary.*)

You understand my predicament don't you? No money and the war still goes on. Today I convince the other members of the board to save what money we can. We appoint inspectors to watch the dockyards and auditors to check the pursers' books.

I also convince them that they should authorize me to go the Treasurer of the Navy and order him to take special care that the dockyard workers and sailors are paid, soon. You see. I can bring order. (*Stops writing and gets up. Takes off reading glasses.*) Everyone says this summer of 1665 is hotter and drier than any living person can remember. Even the rats in the streets seem to die of thirst. I warn you, what I now see fills me with dread. Coming home to supper, I find the house of at the bottom of the lane sealed up with a red cross painted on its door and a guard in front. The plague has come back to the City. The next afternoon I take a hackney coach to My Lord's office. The driver starts out quickly, but I could feel the coach go slower, and slower, and slower, until it finally stops. Then the coachman gets down and opens the door. The poor man can hardly stand.

COACHMAN. I don't know what is wrong with me, but I feel very hot and suddenly, cannot see.

PEPYS. But I could see, see the dark red spots growing on his forehead. Before the day is out, he will be dead. I hurry away. You tell me. What else could I do? Within the City more than seven thousand people died of the plague this past week. Can you even imagine? Seven thousand people in a week! I have often meet with corpses piled on carts to be buried. I see sick people with sores carried close by me.

I find the Angel Tavern shut up. So is the alehouse at Tower stairs. My last time in there, the keeper's wife tells me her husband is sick of the plague and she has buried a child. My waterman has buried a child. Two of my servants have buried their fathers.

My plans for improving the dockyards cannot work with the plague raging. The dockyard workers, now that they have some of their pay, flee London. Can you tell me what I should do if they never come

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back? My head is filled with the business of the navy. I don't want to leave it, but I must. It could please God to call me away, so I must find a way to have someone look after my little family. You tell me. How am I to know who will live? The New Year begins. Though I still dream about the dead, the plague is gone. But the war is not. The navy only gets worse. We lose battles, we lose good ships, we lose good men. The wages of those who remain once again go unpaid. Would it surprise you to hear that the Commons do not grant us the money we need? Instead, they form a committee to investigate the Navy Board's mismanagement.

Scene 6

(Lights change Pepys looking disheveled with soot on his face, his periwig in disorder.)

More disorder. Outside my office, the sailors riot for their pay. But I can do nothing for them. I can only pray the king will convince Commons will grant us money. I am not the only one praying. Even a year after the plague, the Godly still pray for us to receive yet more punishment for our sins. And so we have. The City burns. May God damn them all for their prayers. In the beginning, on this hot summer's night, our maids sit up 'til three in the morning. Then they pull us out of our beds. From their rooms just underneath the roof, you can see a great fire in the City. I tell them not to worry and I go back to sleep until seven. When I rise, the fire still burns. I walk to the Tower, climb to the top of the wall and find an infinite great fire. From here, I see how bad things have become. The flames and smoke spread out across the City. 300 houses gone this first night. Before my eyes, even houses on London Bridge burn. I see the poor people stay in their hovels until the fire comes near to touching them. Then they run for boats on the river to take them to the other side. I see pigeons, loath to leave their houses, hover about the windows, till some of them burn their wings and fall to the ground. You should know that I do not just stand and watch. I take a boat from the Tower to Whitehall where I search for the king. I tell him

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that unless houses in the path of the fire are pulled down, there is no stopping it. The king then takes me with him on his barge back down the river to examine the fire. All along the way people float by us with their goods piled high in boats. I wonder how many of them work in the navy yards. You wonder about my dream, don't you? So do I.

When we land, I go to find the Lord Mayor. The king commands me to tell him to gather as many people as he can and pull down houses.

Coughing mightily, I hurry through the heat of the burning houses and try to peer through the waves of black smoke that surround me. At last I find the Lord Mayor alone with a handkerchief tied about his mouth, his face blackened.

MAYOR. Lord, what will become of us? I am spent. I tell people to pull down their houses, but they will not obey me. The fire overtakes us faster than anything I can do.

PEPYS. With that, he turns and staggers away through the smoke. All I can do is shake my head. Do you know why? This is the man who looked on the fire as it began and said,

MAYOR. My chamber maid can piss it out.

PEPYS. All the while a great wind blows, and sparks of fire land on houses all about me and set them alight. Can this fire spread to the dockyards and destroy all that I have stored there? I will deal with such a catastrophe when it happens. My concerns are closer to home. My house can burn just like the rest. I hurry home. Surely you are not surprised. When I arrive, I send a messenger to find carts. Then I set my little nation to packing all our household stuff. All except wife's companion. She vanished. While we pack, the king and his soldiers pull down houses down by hand. The fire is too quick for them. So they take gunpowder from the Tower and blow up the houses. They save many, including mine. (*Sits at his desk.*) The fire burns for four days. I have been awake for almost three nights, and my eyes are worse than ever. I can hardly read and write by candle light. While the fire burned, even in the dead of night, I needed no candles. So we are back. Are you curious about what became of my wife's companion? We find her at her mother's house outside the City walls. My wife tells the girl to stay there and not return to us. Why send her away? Like a great woman,

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she expects servants to beg her permission to leave, even in the midst of a fire that burns down most of the City. My wife wastes no time finding a replacement. She sends me her favorite, Deb Willet, another beauty with a trim figure, the eyes of a doe and the smile of an angel. But I can not let her know that, can I? £5, you want £5 a year? All the other servants in this house, even my clerks, receive £4.

WILLET. Yes sir, but begging your pardon, sir, I must do things your other servants will not do, things with your wife.

PEPYS. What if I told you, I will find someone else?

WILLET. Of course you may, sir, but then what would your wife say? I hear she's not easy to please.

PEPYS. The final choice is mine.

WILLET. Of course, sir. Then perhaps I had best leave.

PEPYS. No, wait. For that additional pound, you could to look after some of my needs.

WILLET. Your needs, sir?

PEPYS. You could keep my chamber neat. You could keep me neat. My hair wants washing and combing.

WILLET. For the extra pound, sir, for the extra pound.

Scene 7

(Lights change and Pepys still at his desk.)

Do you think I have forgotten the war? It will not let me forget. Sir William Warren tells me that he has found high quality wood for spars in Norway at good prices. All he needs is some token payment and they will come to us, not our Dutch enemies. But though he finally tries, the king can get no money from the Commons, and the starving sailors will not fight without their pay. In this year 1667 we do not send the navy to fight. I imagine this does not surprise you. Instead His Royal Majesty sends ambassadors to negotiate a peace with the Dutch. We put most of our great ships in docks along the Thames. While the king's ambassadors negotiate, a Dutch fleet find our fleet and burn it. Some

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who should know say English sailors guided them to our ships. When our enemies started up the river, messengers sped to tell the king. They found him chasing a moth in Lady Castlemaine's apartment. I hope you do not laugh at me for my failed dreams. I can do that on my own. (*Stands, picks up his walking stick and stands center stage.*) Now, not many days after rescuing Lady Castlemaine from the wayward insect, the king sends for me.

CHARLES II. I'm sure you have heard. The Commons blame the Navy Board, not their miserly funding, for the loss of our ships.

PEPYS. Indeed I have, Sire.

CHARLES II. We need to put them at their ease and bring them to their senses.

PEPYS. What does Your Highness have in mind?

CHARLES II. Why you, Master Pepys, you. You shall go to the House of Commons and make the case, for the board, for the navy. And, of course, for yourself.

PEPYS. Sir, I am flattered, but why me?

CHARLES II. Because your knightly and lordly compatriots on the Navy Board are asses.

PEPYS. Very flattering. Yet do you wonder if perhaps His Majesty has taken Henry Killigrew's advice a little too much to heart? So do I. Perhaps our king wants the Commons to blame me and not him for the ills of the navy. When I face them, what do you think they will do? Will they accuse me of corruption and throw me in the Tower? If they blame me for losing the war, my head, not the king's, could end up in a basket. No one will collect my blood with tiny white handkerchiefs. You will not find it surprising that the night before I must face the Commons, I cannot sleep. I'll paint the scene of my day or reckoning for you. I enter parliament house and walk down a long corridor. At its end, two servants of the Commons, clad in black, open wide the great doors and bid me enter. I must stand in the House of Commons behind a wooden bar and face them all and their questions.

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT. Mr Pepys, the navy is in ruins, how could this have happened?

DREAMERS

PEPYS. Begging the House's pardon, but I would like to answer your question with another question.

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT. And what might that be?

PEPYS. Would the House like to hear how to prevent such a disaster from ever happening again? For a whole day I made my case I can. When I end, I fully expect end the Commons will impeach me and have me escorted to the Tower. Instead, they applaud. The duke of York tells me that I am the only Navy Board member the Commons will now trust. I will not lose my post. I will not lose my head. I shall tell you why. Practical men rule the Commons. The navy and my dreams for it are not lost. Not yet. (*Puts his walking stick back and sits at desk.*)

Scene 8

What I nearly lose is my wife and all order in my little nation. The new girl, Willet, the one who replaced Mercer, I am with her when my wife walks into my chamber. She finds me with my hand between the girl's legs, and my finger wandering. Willet scurries away. Struck mute, pausing for barely a second, my wife follows after her. I called out foolishly at her back to leave her be. That it is not how it seems. Tell me, what am I do now? That night I go to lay with my wife. She remains mute, says nothing. I finally fall asleep. At two in the morning she shakes me awake and then she says much.

PEPYS. Never again. I promise you. It will never happen again.

MRS PEPYS. No, it will not. Tomorrow you must write a letter calling her a whore and bidding her be gone.

PEPYS. Take pity on the girl. Must I send her away so?

MRS PEPYS. She will have that letter and go tomorrow, or I shall go and never return. And if I go, I will have £500 a year from you.

PEPYS. I know what you are thinking. My just desserts. You are probably right.

Weary, I agreed to write the letter and with that, fall asleep again.

I awake with a start. My wife has her hand on my cock.

MRS PEPYS. You said her name in your sleep and it grew hard. I felt it grow hard. All you can think of is that whore.

DREAMERS

PEPYS. I grab her and let my tongue wander downward on her body. I had never done that before. With her. We make love for the rest of the night. The next morning I write the letter and show it to my wife. You think me merciless. You judge too soon. I do not give the letter to the girl myself, but contrive to have my messenger do it. I put the part about her being a whore on the second page. “Only deliver the first page,” I whisper to him. After Willet leaves, I tell my still scowling wife I am to receive a royal reward. The war ended, the king has agreed that I can go abroad for a month. My wife has not been to Paris since her childhood. I promise to take her there. Then she smiles at me. All my little world is now in order. Every place I look, I find the neatness I so much desire. Just as I told you I would. Just as I dreamed. (*Puts on the visor and begins to write in diary.*) My eyes are very tired. On the last day of May 1669, I finish this, the final entry in my diary. My glory as savior of the navy and your reflection in it will have to be recorded by others. But wait and see just wait and see. (*Lights fade. Exit Pepys. Lights come up with a spotlight on a bust of Elizabeth, turned to face the audience. It has a black ribbon draped across it. From the time the spotlight comes up, a vocal recording of the Pepys/Davenant song “Beauty Retire” plays:*)

“Thou dost my pity move,

Believe my pity,

And then trust my love.

At first I thought her by a prophet sent,

As a reward for valor’s toils,

More worth than all my father’s spoils,

But now she is become my punishment.

But thou art just, power divine,

And new and powerful studied war.

I break the hearts of half the world,

And she breaks mine.” (*Pepys enters, wearing mourning clothes and holding the gold headed cane. He goes over to the desk, closes the diary, bows to the audience, and exits the stage as the music ends.*)

DREAMERS

***THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS—
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