THE KING DREAMS OF MARRIAGE: HENRY VIII AND HIS WIVES

CAROLE LEVIN
FROM AN IDEA BY ELAINE KRUSE

CAST

(as performed for the Queen Elizabeth I Society meeting, New Orleans, April 2003):

Will Somers, Henry VIII’s jester (Donald Stump)
Henry VIII (John Watkins)
Catherine of Aragon (Carole Levin)
Anne Boleyn (Michele Osherow)
Young Elizabeth, her daughter (Anya Riehl)
Jane Seymour (Ilona Bell)
Anne of Cleves (Christine Couvillon)
Catherine Howard (Shannon Meyers)
Catherine Parr (Richardine Woodall)

Scene: Henry VIII’s bedroom, 1546. Henry is in bed.

Enter Will Somers.

Will: Oh, being Will Somers, the King’s jester, is not the easiest job. Sometimes I have to check in on King Henry at night, and if he’s having bad dreams, wake him and provide entertainment. He confided in me today that he is planning to have his current wife, Catherine Parr, arrested and put in the Tower of London in the morning. I wonder if he has wife number seven all picked out. Catherine of Aragon, Anne Boleyn, Jane Seymour, Anne of Cleves, Catherine Howard. I’ve seen them all come and go. Mostly go. Making the decision about Catherine
Parr, wife number six, has made the King a bit restless. I better have good entertainment planned in case I need to wake him up. Oh, here is Henry having a dream now.

*Will drifts away.*

**Dream One.**

*Enter Catherine of Aragon.*

**Catherine of Aragon:** Henry, I hear you're planning to get rid of another wife—outrageous!!

**Henry:** Catherine! But I thought you were dead—died three years after our divorce.

**Catherine of Aragon:** Do you think being dead will stop me refusing to accept the divorce? Divorce? Divorce? What divorce? I never accepted the idea that our marriage was invalid. I was your devoted and loving wife from the day of our marriage in 1509. And I thought you were devoted to me as well. Didn't you call yourself “Sir Loyal Heart” and wear MY colors in your tournaments. I encouraged you to support learning at your court. And then YOU'RE upset when all our babies die except Mary. How do you think it made me feel? And why can't a woman rule? My mother Isabelle of Castille even led the troops into the battle – and sent that crackpot Christopher Columbus to sail west to get to the Orient. If Isabella could rule, so can our daughter Mary. After twenty years, TWENTY YEARS, you suddenly claim our marriage was never valid in the first place—that we've been living in sin all that time and our daughter Mary is a bastard. I DON'T THINK SO! It's you, my husband Henry, who's been acting like a bastard when you say this.

**Henry:** I needed a son to rule after me.

*Enter Anne Boleyn.*

**Anne:** All this "need a son, need a son" business.

**Catherine of Aragon:** Hey, Annie, great to see you!