

Executioner
George
Ellen

dream, Willie. Go ahead, let him cut your head off, it'll be a nice change of pace.

(The Executioner, who has been motionless, now moves. In a sudden gesture, he reveals the cutting block that waits for George's head. Note: In the Playwrights Horizons production, our set designer constructed a square furniture piece that doubled as a settee and/or small cocktail table during the Private Lives section. However, when the Executioner kicked the top of it, the piece fell open, revealing itself to contain a bloodied cutting block.)

GEORGE: That blade looks very real to me. I want to wake up now. Or change plays. I wonder whose yacht that is out there.

(Sarah offers him the custard again.)

GEORGE: No, thank you! A horse, a horse! My kingdom for a horse!

EXECUTIONER: Sir Thomas More, you have been found guilty of the charge of High Treason. The sentence of the court is that you be taken to the Tower of London, thence to the place of execution, and there your head shall be stricken from your body, and may God have mercy on your soul.

(Meg helps George out of the garbage can.)

GEORGE: All this talk about God. All right, I'm sorry I didn't go to the monastery, maybe I should have, and I'm sorry I giggled during Mass in third grade, but I see no reason to be killed for it.

ELLEN: Nothing to be done. That's what I find so wonderful.

(Meg puts George's head on the block.)

GEORGE: No!

EXECUTIONER: Do I understand you right? You wish to reverse your previous stand on King Henry's marriage to Anne and to deny the Bishop of Rome?

GEORGE: Yes, yes, God, yes. I could care less. Let him marry eight wives.

EXECUTIONER: That's a terrible legacy of cowardice for Sir Thomas More to leave behind.

GEORGE: I don't care.

EXECUTIONER: I'm going to ignore what you've said and cut your head off anyway, and then we'll all pretend you went to your death nobly. The Church needs its saints, and school children have got to have heroes to look up to, don't you all agree?

ELLEN: I agree. I know I need someone to look up to. Pause smile picks her nose. *(Does this.)*

GEORGE: Yes, yes, I can feel myself waking up now. The covers have

fallen off the bed, and I'm cold, and I'm going to wake up so that I can reach down and pull them up again.

EXECUTIONER: Sir Thomas, prepare to meet your death.

GEORGE: Be quiet. I am about to wake up.

EXECUTIONER: Sir Thomas, prepare to meet your death.

GEORGE: I'm awake! — Stand

(Looks around him. Sarah offers him custard again.)

GEORGE: No, I'm not.

SARAH: He doesn't know his lines.

EXECUTIONER: Sir Thomas, prepare to meet your death.

GEORGE: Line! Line!

MEG: You turn to the executioner and say, "Friend, be not afraid of your office. You send me to God."

GEORGE: I don't like that line. Give me another.

MEG: That's the line in the script, George. Say it.

GEORGE: I don't want to.

MEG: Say it.

ELLEN: Say it, Willie. It'll mean a lot to me and to generations of school children to come.

SARAH: O Hamlet, speak the speech, I pray you, trippingly on the tongue.

EXECUTIONER: Say it!

GEORGE: Friend, be not afraid of your office. You send me... Extraordinary how potent cheap music is.

MEG: That's not the line.

GEORGE: Women should be struck regularly like gongs.

MEG: George, say the line right.

GEORGE: They say you can never dream your own death, so I expect I'll wake up just as soon as he starts to bring the blade down. So perhaps I should get it over with.

MEG: Say the proper line, George.

(George kneels down.) —

GEORGE: Friend, be not afraid of your office.

(Executioner raises his ax.) —

ELLEN: Good-bye, Willie.

SARAH: Good-bye, Hamlet.

MEG: Good-bye, George.

EXECUTIONER: Good-bye, Sir Thomas.