

Carrie counted four beats before she started leaping across the floor; she knew the steps that came after her leaps because she had gone over this dance a thousand times. Carrie was 14 years old. She was tall with long brown hair and had been dancing since she was five years old. Carrie wore her hair in a bun and was dressed in her favorite purple leotard. Shining on the stage were bright lights with colorful backdrops behind the dancers.

This was Carrie's last recital before her dance studio started working on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. They would be performing it as a ballet instead of a play. Although Carrie had no idea what *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was about, that would all change soon.

She started her pirouettes but lost her balance because she had forgotten to spot, tripped, and fell. Carrie tried to get up, but she was very dizzy and fell over again. The room looked like it was spinning, but after a few moments Carrie realized that the room really was spinning. It started to spin faster and faster and then she couldn't see anything; it was pitch black.

Before Carrie could even open her eyes she could hear someone shouting in the distance, but she couldn't understand what he or she was saying. Though she was feeling a horrible pain in her head, the darkness was starting to go away allowing her to see where she was. When she opened her eyes she felt groggy. Looking around she realized she was lying down on a stage in a theater. There was no ceiling in the theater, so she could see the sunlight shining in from outside. The sunlight was so bright Carrie had to squint as she looked up. White flags encircled the top of the theater. A man was running towards her, and she realized that he was the one that had been shouting--shouting to her!

"Art thou unwell? 'Twas quite a mishap you had."

The man was dressed in clothes that looked very strange to Carrie. He had on a large, white ruffled collar, and his shirt had puffy sleeves. He looked as if he were wearing a costume. He had long, dark, curly hair, but his hairline was receding. As Carrie looked closer at the man, she thought he looked a lot like William Shakespeare from the pictures that she had seen of him in school.

"Yes, I'm fine," Carrie replied.

The man laughed and said, "Thee must be Carrie, the newest member of the cast."

Carrie looked at the man with a bit of a confused expression, but then said, "Yes, I'm Carrie."

"Welcome to the Globe Theater," the man said. "I am delighted to have thee as part of the cast."

"Isn't it illegal for girls to act in plays?" asked Carrie.

"Yes, 'tis. But I am a humanist, and so I believe that all humans have potential. This will be the first play where girls are acting. It is a secret humanistic mission of mine to have girls be able to act in all plays. Goeth backstage with the rest of the cast and commence the tumbling routine again, but mind your step this time," replied the man.

Carrie, who was still lying on the stage, stood up and walked backstage where there were lots of other people, many of whom asked if she was okay. Carrie just smiled and said she was fine. The others backstage also had on funny clothes. The girls had on ruffled gowns, and the boys had on similar clothes to the man she had spoken to earlier. It wasn't until Carrie was looking at the other girls' clothing that she realized she was no longer in her leotard and tights. She was now in a ruffled dress just like the rest of the girls.

Where did I get these clothes? Carrie thought to herself. Am I really in the Globe Theater? Who was that man I was just talking to? How did I end up in Elizabethan England? Is this real or some kind of a dream? Did I time travel somehow when I fell in dance class?

A girl who looked about the same age as Carrie approached her and interrupted her thoughts.

"Art thou the new cast member Will told us about?" the girl inquired.

"Yes I am. My name is Carrie."

The girl replied, "I am called Abby. Tis' time to do our tumbling routine. It is unfamiliar to thee, but only involves cartwheels and tumbles; thou shalt learn it quickly."

Abby seemed like a nice girl, and Carrie was very glad to meet someone that could possibly be her friend since she was so unfamiliar with everything around her.

Abby led Carrie on stage with some other people who Carrie guessed were also part of the cast. They started to tumble and cartwheel across the floor. Carrie was able to follow what the others were doing and didn't make too many mistakes. After they finished the routine Abby told Carrie that they would all be minor fairies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The play would be performed for the first time tonight, which is why there were white flags flying at the top of the theater.

Carrie was nervous about performing the play that night, because she had never been in a play. She had been in many ballet recitals, but she had little acting experience. Carrie was very glad that she would only be playing the role of a minor fairy.

After the tumbling routine was over the man that Carrie had talked to earlier approached her and said, "Well done on your routine. Thou learneth with speed."

"Thank you," said Carrie. "What is your name, Sir?"

"An ill man am I! Forgetting to introduce myself," the man said. "I am called William Shakespeare, but please, call me Will."

Carrie stared at him in shock. She couldn't believe that she was actually talking to William Shakespeare.

"William Shakespeare the playwright?" Carrie said, still in shock.

"Yes, I wrote *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the play being presented tonight," Shakespeare answered. "T'will begin post haste, so robe thyself now."

When Carrie was done changing into her costume people were filling up the Globe. The poorer people were standing on the ground in front of the stage; they were called the groundlings. The wealthier people, who could afford more expensive seats, sat on wooden benches in balconies around the theater. All of the people were anxious for the play to begin. Not only was the audience excited for the play, but Carrie was

too. She didn't know much about *A Midsummer Night's Dream* so she was excited to watch it.

The cast took their places backstage and awaited their cue. Just then trumpets started to blast, and the first actors stepped onto the stage; all the people fell silent. Carrie heard the gasps of the crowd when they saw that girls were acting in this play. She watched the adventures and troubles of Helena, Puck, Bottom, Titania, Oberon, Lysander, Demetrius, and Hermia. She loved the story and all the twists and turns that it had. Many times the audience shouted to the actors, especially the mischievous Puck, "Stop!" or "Don't do that!" because they were so engaged in the play. Carrie was so enthralled that she almost forgot she was acting in the play and that her cue as a minor fairy was soon.

Lined up and ready to go on stage, the minor fairies all had nervous excitement. One by one they tumbled and cartwheeled onto the stage, their elaborate costumes glittering in the sunlight that was quickly fading. They really did look like fairies that were flying and tiptoeing about on stage. Tumbling and cartwheeling, just as they had come on stage, they went off stage; people applauding as they left.

At the end of the play, when Puck was giving the final speech, the silence in the theater was deafening. Carrie glanced over at Shakespeare during Puck's speech, and he was watching intently; he was completely still. Puck stood in the center of the stage speaking the lines effortlessly.

*"If we shadows have offended,
Think but this and all is mended,
That you have but slumber'd here
While these visions did appear."*

The audience erupted with applause and cheers for Puck when his speech was finished. Puck took a short bow as the rest of the cast came on stage for the curtain call. While Carrie was taking her final bow she started to feel a little dizzy; her vision became cloudy and unclear. Again, the whole world looked pitch black to her.

A little while later Carrie could hear footsteps close by her and people talking with panic in their voices.

"Is she alright?" the voices said. "She never lost consciousness but she hasn't opened her eyes since she fell."

"How long has it been since she fell?" a different voice asked.

"About five minutes."

Five minutes? Thought Carrie. *I couldn't have fallen five minutes ago, because I have been with Shakespeare all day.*

"We'll take her to the hospital and get her some medical help," said the second voice.

Carrie tried to tell the people around her that she didn't need to go to the hospital, but her mouth wouldn't move or say anything. She tried to open her eyes but her mind wouldn't tell her eyes to open. She felt people lifting her onto something and start to move her somewhere. She had been put on a stretcher and was being taken to the hospital. That was all Carrie remembered from that day, because when she finally was able to open her eyes she was no longer in Elizabethan England or at her dance recital.

White walls surrounded Carrie when she awoke. The room smelled of medicine and disinfectants, and she could hear the constant beeping of many monitors. She was lying on a bed with white papery sheets. She was in the hospital.

A lady wearing a white coat walked in and said, "You're awake!" She then started flooding Carrie with questions. "How do you feel? Do you have any pain? Can you remember anything about what happened? Is there anything I can get for you?"

Carrie smiled weakly and said, "I'm fine and I would really like some rest."

"I'll tell the doctor you're awake but in the meantime you can sleep," the nurse replied and then walked out of the room.

As Carrie was lying in the hospital she thought and thought about what had happened. *Was it really just a dream when I met Shakespeare? It couldn't have been a dream, because it seemed so real. Will I ever see Shakespeare again?*

Part of Carrie was glad to be back in the "real world", but part of her didn't want to leave Elizabethan England. She had liked being an actress in Shakespeare's

company, and she knew that dancing in *A Mid Summer Night's Dream* would be so different than acting in it with Shakespeare as the director.

That night, when Carrie fell asleep, she didn't dream that she was in Elizabethan England, because dreaming of it could not compare to living it.