

THIS WAS YOUR LIFE.

Set: two chairs centre stage, with table. Camera facing. Row of chairs(eight) back right. Amplifier back left.

T.1.

Introductory music, followed by sustained applause, as loud as possible. Enter Compere through Door, Left, with large 'This Was Your Life' volume. Walks briskly to centre of stage, all smiles, typical Eamon Andrews. Faces camera. Holds up hands for applause to stop:

Vayne
C: Now good evening, ladies and gentlemen, and thank you very much. Welcome once again to another programme of 'This Was Your Life'. If only you viewers at home could see all the eager, smiling faces in front of me now, you would know how expectant everyone is here to-night, for one member of the audience has been chosen to be the Star Personality of this programme. Now (comes down amongst the audience) I wonder who it can be...

Impromptu discussion on relative merits of audience with them. Followed by camera. Looks around, does not find Shakespeare. Puzzled. Back to stage centre.

Well, ladies and gentlemen, due to some unforeseen slip among the organizers of this programme... *+ briefcase.*

T.2.

Commotion outside, interrupts signals from C. to cameraman. Door bursts open, and S. is pushed in. Loud applause. Cameraman holds card up to audience 'Applause'. S. stands looking foolishly from side to side. C. takes him by the hand, very happy.

Well it seems we only just got him; but now he is here we put both him and you out of your ignorance, for William Shakespeare, This Was Your Life.

T.3

Tumultuous applause. C. leads S. over to chair centre. S. bewildered- various comments- 'Who? Me? I'faith! But, etc.' Both sit:

C: Yes, William Shakespeare, This Was Your Life. Now what do you think about that?

S: I'm at a loss for words, prithee. I mean, I've never used a situation like this before. Nobody told me ~~anything~~ ^{nothing}. I only came here for the course in Tragedy, after all, and I had a lot of work to do, a Vacation Essay to write, a new

play to finish...

C. cuts him off.

C: Well William, ha ha, er, I may call you William?

S: Who?

C: (**unhearing**) this is a lot of ado about nothing, isn't it. You will lose no labour by enjoying the next half-hour; for to-night we are going to relive your past...

S. makes effort to leave, checked by Eamon, smiling glassily at the camera.

Think of all your friends, united once again in the warmth of this studio. But first, those basic facts which have provided us with YOU:

glances T4 Taped Voice: Born April 1564 in Stratford-on-Avon, son of John and Mary Shakespeare. Educated 1571-7. Withdrawn from school 1577. December 1582 married Anne Hathaway and lived in a cottage. Gave up teaching in Stratford for the London theatre in 1585. There he produced many plays, and wrote some. Retired to Stratford in 1611, where he died leaving a will.

C. turns back to S.

S: Yes, that's more or less correct, I think. You've left a lot out, you know.

C: Well, Will, we'll remedy that now. Here is the first voice to remind you that This Was Your Life:

Voice 1: (Mother). (^{I'm worried about} **admiringly**) William. How many times ~~have~~ I've told ^{him} you to stop acting the silly-billy while doing ^{his} your homework- ^{his} your spelling will never improve. (Oh, I feel silly).

She is cut off my Sshhes from outside, and by C. who turns to S.

C: Well, William, can you guess who that is?

S: Er...

C: It's not difficult. Someone who was very close to you when you were young.

S: (**slowly**). It's not mother, by any chance, is it?

C: Yes indeed it is.

T5 More applause. Enter Mrs.S. Meets S. Centre. Peer at each other.

S: Mother, you've changed, i'faith.

Mrs: Well, son, it's nice to see you again, after all these years.

You look well. Do they feed you in London. (uncertainly).

S: (hurriedly) Oh yes, yes.

Mrs.S. sighs. They shake hands. She moves to first chair, shown by C. S. looks questioningly at C.

S: Are you sure...?

C: We'll talk later. (Turns to audience) Well, after that happy reunion, I think it's only logical to give ~~the~~ you the other half of the family...

S: (leaping up and down). Dad! Dad! not Dad!?

C: Yes, Mr. John Shakespeare himself. *claps on mr.*

Enter Mr.S., met enthusiastically by S. He has obviously learnt his lines.

Mr.S.: How art thou, Will my boy, it's been a long time.

S: Oh, that's my Dad.

Mr.S. We've had some good times together, son. *Mr. S gets out paper*

S: (to C.). He used to tell me nursery rhymes when I was small, all about murders, and ghosts, and revenge, and plots against the king. I owe everything I've got to my Dad.

Mr.S.: I used to tell Will nursery rhymes all about murders, and ghosts and revenge and plots against the king. I owe everything I've got...

C: No, no, you're reading the wrong lines again. (whispered).

Mr.S.: Oh yes, yes. Catches sight of Mrs.S. Here, how did she get here.

S: I don't know. I'faith, he brought her (points to C.).

Mr.S. Cor, I'm getting out of here...

Moves towards door on left, nearly knocking over C. Is caught by Mrs.S. on the way, who swings him round fiercely. S. hides behind C.

Mrs.S.: Of course, this is typical of you, John Shakespeare. You never think of the career my boy could have had, if he hadn't ruined it, acting (disgusted). A nice, safe job he had in Stratford, and you made him give it up to hold horses outside a ridiculous theatre. Turns to Will suddenly Why did you do

it, Will? **Back to Mr.S.** I tell you, I was proud of him before that-
 the way he studied that ^{shakespeare} English- he would have made a wonderful
 lecturer at Stratford Tech. **To C.** If all English students did
 this there'd be some changes made, marry. **To S.** And that horrible
 accent(**emphasised**) that you came back with, fair made my ruff curl.
 Oh Will. **Half breaks down.** Mr.S., used to this, takes out daily
 paper, ~~talks to cameraman.~~ C., who has been trying to interrupt
 throughout, puts arms round her to sooth her.

C: Now, Mrs.S., lets not quarrel at this happy time. Think of Will
 as just your boy, doing his Latin...

S: Er, excuseth me, but I didn't do any Latin...

Mr.S.: (**from behind paper**) And less Greek.

S: ...~~in school~~. It was Ben's fault(**to C.**). He stole my Classics
 books for spite.

C: (**tough**), Now look Will; we have the authority of many learned
 critics for your life. Please don't argue.

S: I'm sorry (**crushed**). I really am sorry. I'll talk to Dad. **To
 Mr.S.** Come on, Dad; I know a nice place...

C: No, no. There's a time for this later. Right now, I want you
 to meet the third person in your home life.

VOICE 2: You never had much time for me, Will, leaving me alone in
 the cottage with all those children; but I loved you for your spirit
 of independence, courage, verve, initiative, and mainly for the
 extra money you sent home every week.

S:(**complacent**). Easy that one. My Black Woman.

C: Wrong. William Shakespeare, this is your wife, Ann Hathaway. ^{buys etc.}

**Enter Ann. S. as if he expected her, but really this is getting
 out of his depth. Ann kisses him on the forehead, shakes hands
 with Mr and Mrs.S. who are sitting at opposite ends of the row,
 then places herself fondly round S.'s feet.**

S:(**to C.**). Yes, she knows her place. But I couldn't have done
 without her, you know. She inspired many of my characters- Lady
 Macbeth, Goneril... ^{Regan} And the way she used to drown those kittens,
 a natural Ophelia.

C: Yes, you really knew how to tame your own shrew, as you might
 say. **Tumultuous applause, suddenly cut off.**

T6|

T7|

A. opens large edition of Shakespeare, and begins quietly reading.

C: So much for your home life, William Shakespeare. When you moved to London, a vista of novelty became yours, and you weren't long in meeting this:

Voice 3: (background of jazz music). Hi, Will. Remember the Globe, and the scene-shifting, when you were my Hamlet.

S. now definitely worried. Cor blimey!

bojze T8

In time to solo saxophone, enter Dark Lady. More tumultuous applause. Stands by S., who looks other way. Not so Mr.S., who jumps out of chair, but just stopped by Mrs.S. C. talks to cameraman. S. feels he must do something, as everyone standing about.

T9

S: Er, Ann...this is...marry, I never did know your first name, did I?...a friend. To DL. Anne. Sits down in relief. A. looks up from book.

DL: You were Will's little woman, weren't you. He told me a lot about you. (Looks her up and down). Yees, you made him a good wife; but he wanted the best...(turns to Will sharply)... and he got it.

A: (superior). You are all the same, you London women, but I do not care. Call me what you will, though you fret me you cannot play upon me. This majestically. Looks up questioningly at S. who has stood up for this line. Act 3. Scene 3. Line 363? He nods. There is a chord. They sit. A., to DL. Just because you got most sonnets...

T10.

Reno

C: But is this true, Will? Did you, in fact, write most sonnets to our mutual friend (DL winks at C. who loses place)?

S: (visibly worried). Er, well.

C: Here, ladies and gentlemen, is the ~~fifth~~ fourth voice from Shakespeare's past.

Oscar Wilde Empson

S: Hey, you can't do that, think of my reputation. No-one will read my sonnets any more if...(drowned by voice)

bach

T11.

Voice 4: (lisps, etc.) More than forty thousand brothers could not have made up my sum, with all their love, could they Will?

C: Yes, come on in W.H. Tumultuous applause.

WHE (Comes straight in, seeing no-one save S.). Oh, hello William,

there's the most horrid fellow outside; he wouldn't let me in when I told him who I was, so I had to fight my way past him. Oh dear, what a bore... as I said to the young Earl of Southampton only the other day... (catches sight of women)... Oh! Who's this. Looks at A. I say, you're not that wife of William's, are you- how horrid!

A: Who are you calling horrid. (Hits him with the book.)

DL: Yeah, take it off the cuff, babe.

A: I'm his legal wife, not you. You don't go around calling Mrs. Shakespeare Junior names, or you won't get into any biographies.

T12.
Grows

Mrs S. and Mr. stand up. C. rushes over to separate A. and WH who is now almost against the wall. She is using the book to good effect. DL trying to keep S.'s attention to herself. Mr.S., in fighting pose, attacks Mrs.S. Everybody shouting. Cameraman turns on more applause by mistake. C. shouts cut. Card with 'We regret this break in transmission of the text' held up. C. restores order.

C: I do apologise for that, ladies and gentlemen. (To S., who is exhausted) Buck up, Will, remember the viewers. But we have three more people who have been brought many miles to be with us this evening- people connected with your work. This man you were always pleased to see.

Voice 5: Alright Will my boy, I lend you the money, and you pay me back when you can, eh? I saye lent!!

S: Will! Will Henslowe, by my sword.

Enter W, consulting Times Stock Page.

S: You're looking well, Will.

W: No, things are bad, boy; look at the state of the market. I lent a lot of money to that Ale Company in Stratford, and now look what they've done- turned the brewery into a theatre. You put me onto a bad thing there, my boy. To audience I saye lent.

S: I'm sorry, Will; but come to the party afterwards; it'll give you something to write about in your little book.

W: True, true. How's the new play coming along, anyway.

S: Which, Henry 9th? Well, I'm having a little trouble with my

sources at the moment. Can't find any facts anywhere, except a poem in Latin, and you know I haven't got any Latin...

W: And less Greek.

S:...and less Greek, yeh. But the poetry's coming along alright. I'm still revolutionizing the iambic pentameter, you know.

W offers *DL* a cigarette. They light up. *DL* takes one, lights for *S.*

W: Bloody stuff, this invention of Raleigh's.

Yes, it was lucky you got rid of Marlowe in time wasn't it?

S: Aye. If I'd let him develop much further along those mighty lines, he might have become quite a good poet, and we can't have that, can we *(to C.)*? There's only one genius in an age.

A. and *DL* look up fondly. So does W.H.

W: How long did you have to wait for a good murderer?

S: Oh, only a few hours. We'd had Macbeth on the previous night, and everyone was dead keen. Not like that other time when we were after Kyd; we'd had Hamlet the night before that and we couldn't get anyone to raise a knife. Procrastination! Go away will you? *(To C.)*

C: But gentlemen, time is running out, and there is much to be done. Er, lend me your pencil a minute will you Will?

W: I saye lent.

W. goes and sits down, next to WH. C. faces front.

C: And now for the next mystery voice, come in please.

Voice 6: *Howya doin' Willy, hic' - haven't seen you in the ol' arse*
Mermaid lately- you goin' teetotal or somethin'? *pub.*

Mrs.S: William, you don't drink!

C: Ssshhh.

S: It's Ben; Ben Jonson; the biggest boozier that ever lifted pen.

Hey, take that down, it's good *(to Ann, who does so).*

B: How are you, Willy? Long time no see, eh?

S: How's everybody, all the lads? Do you still go and write in the Old Inn, just like they're doing in America?

B: Indeed, no man. We gave that up a long time ago. I'm living in Cardiff now, you know.

S: Why that, prithee?

Drink to me only. (to DL) Hello.

hello baby

*Alacazan,
Alacaboo,
Hello to her*

T13

NB rhyme

*B
>
Yes to
BTalking
an appearing
etc.
just
returned
from his
Mephistoan
excite*

B: Well, the beer started to go off, and Flossie ^{r D.A} left... and they have a good Classics department in Cardiff (very keen on culture there, you know (to C.)). Although, you wouldn't know about that, having no Latin...

S: (*meditatively*) and less Greek.

B: I mean, it was alright telling the odd winter's tale as we liked it, but those merry wives, sacking up with those fellows from Verona... what could I do? You were alright; you just wrote plays about them, but I couldn't, I wasn't in the humour. And besides, ^{confidentially} the Chamberlain was giving me trouble with some of the language in 'Volpone'. *Alchemist.*

S: I know; it was the same with the unexpurgated 'Love's Labour's Lost'; my foul papers really are!

B: Ha! We've had some rare japes with those manuscripts, haven't we, Will?

S: Oh, rare, Ben Jonson. *A. O horrible, horrible, most horrible.*

B: That 'Romeo and Juliet' (*both laughing*). That's fooled the editors. Nobody will ever know ~~x~~ we wrote one quarto each after a party...

S: I've never been so ^{in the cups} ~~drunk~~...

B: ...and took both texts, and threw them up in the air...

S: And put them together any old how as they floated down...

B: "Falleth like the gentle dew from heaven" ~~XXX~~ you said, you old dog... *A. looks to page.*

By this time, everyone is looking shocked at them, making such comments as 'Not my Will', 'I never thought I'd see the day' etc. C. walks over to them.

C: How interesting. There'll be some changes made now, I can see that. Well, William Shakespeare, we have almost come to the end of This Was Your Life. But before we critically discuss your achievement, here is a final voice, one of dissent.

Voice 7: Now look, Willy, I never meant the story to get out that I really wrote those stupid plays; it was Hardin Craig and his Night-School. I was perfectly happy writing essays, honest.

The rest of his words is lost in a great boeing from all present.

C: Now, let's be fair, and hear what he's got to say. Come in Francis Bacon.

Enter F., scared. Stands behind cameraman, who tries to keep him in front of camera. General running round in circles. A, throws book at him. WH smiles at him.

F: Now, look, Will, I've done my time. You heard it all in the Tavern- pin it on Frank, they said...

S: It's no use, Francis, I have no sympathy for you. You have started a controversy and you must share the fate of all other controversy-starters. No-one will ever believe you...

WH: I believe him.

B: You know what happened to young Chrissy Marlowe- Watch it!

F: But just one? Couldn't I have just one of your plays? A small one? Those tragedies never suited you, you know...

S: Well, I don't see why not... you could have Lear, at a pinch.

A: William, you're weakening again! (warningly).

W: Besides, Willy boy; you don't own Lear any more. I do.

DL: And you're not giving him any of my sonnets.

B: (Taking out his cards) We'll cut for it.

C: Now let's settle down, all of you. We'll decide this in just a moment. Would you sit down, Francis. **To audience.** A rasher man never lived, than Francis Bacon. **Tumultuous applause.**

I'm sorry. Well, to decide this problem, and to generally sum up William Shakespeare in the way in which only he can, we have brought to the studio to-night, at fabulous expense, the only E.M.W.Knight, come on in Dover. This, ladies and gentlemen, is a modern critic. *Roll of drums. Fanfare*

All the cast, including Shakespeare, bow low.

A: Look, look, I have my text, I have my text, it's been recommended. She rushes towards him, holding out the Complete Works. She is stopped by S., saying

S: Give it here. It's mine I tell you, all mine.

DL: Come and sit by me, big boy.

W: Does he owe me any money (to C.)?

F: How much is it worth to fix things a bit?

B: It's worth his life... and yours. (Coming up behind him. They both retire. K. comes to the front, and holds up one hand majestically. Silence falls. Notice held up 'Dead Silence'.)

T16
K: We must make no sweeping generalizations about the problem, for there are involved many layers of analysis. It is, I think, significant (looks at notes) that a situation has been allowed to develop, which, though unprecedented, er, um, (loses place), will, er, oh dear. In my latest book, published by Faber and Faber, price 6d., I have alluded to this. But it is certain (marching music, growing louder) that future generations will be grateful for our work; when time will prove, as only time can, the underlying simplicity of this wheel of fire, this tragedy of errors, this (almost weeping) Wooden O...

Cameraman comes forward with Toilet-seat, gives it to a weeping K., who staggers over to C., pushes it blindly into his hands, and moves to one side. C. takes seat, turns to S.

C: And with this touching reminiscence, William Shakespeare, (presenting him with seat) This Is Your Life.

T17
Tumultuous applause, leading in to last few bars of theme, with everyone shaking hands.

F I N I S

Written and directed by David Crystal for the Department
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