

CHAPTER ONE



“COME WHAT MAY”

Parents can be a real pain in the morning. My parents are actually pretty cool as parents go, but it’s like they take pleasure in being extra annoying in the morning. Every morning my mom yells to me from the bottom of the stairs. “Emma!” she shrieks. “Time to get up!”

Oh, how I hate that. If I don’t get up within five seconds, she starts singing this stupid song, “Oh, what a beautiful morning. Oh, what a beautiful day,” at the top of her lungs.

Before she can get to the next line, I yell, “I’m up!” or something like that—anything to get her to stop that racket. I asked her one time where she got that song from, and she said it’s from some play called *Oklahoma*. A whole play about Oklahoma? Really? Imagine what a stupid play that must be.

Peter’s dad had an annoying routine for waking him up, too. And Peter hated it just as much as I hated my mom’s song. “Rise and shine!” his dad would yell. That’s sort of the way this crazy

“COME WHAT MAY”

story starts, with Peter’s dad standing over him and saying, “Rise and shine!”

According to his dad, Peter mumbled what sounded like, “*O sleep! O gentle sleep.*”

“Up and at ’em,” his father responded. “It’s seven o’clock, and all is well in the world.”

“*Good morrow, father,*” Peter replied. Then he peeked out from under his covers and saw his father’s smiling face over him. At this point his dad usually started pulling off Peter’s blanket and sheets. Peter sat up quickly to avoid that, the worst part of the wake-up routine. But then he felt a little dazed and grabbed his head

His father looked worried. “Are you OK, Champ? The doctor said you might feel dizzy today. How do you feel? Do you think you should go to school?”

“*Yes, better, sir,*” Peter replied. And then he looked past his father and said, “*But soft! What light through yonder window breaks?*”

His father laughed and said, “Duh, that’s the sun, and it means if you’re going to school, you’ll be late if you don’t hurry.” Peter threw the covers over his head and moaned. “Enough of this nonsense,” his dad said. “Your bus will be here in half an hour.”

Peter later told me that as he slowly climbed out of bed and looked at his father, he said, “*Fair thoughts and happy hours attend on you.*” As those words left his mouth, he knew something was wrong. And the look of shock on his father’s face only added to his own panic.

“Say that again,” his father responded. “What did you say?”

“*How like a dream is this I see and hear,*” Peter answered.

At that point, his father noticed something under the covers. Pulling back the blanket, he lifted up a fat book called *The Riverside*

Shakespeare. “Why are you sleeping with this book?” he asked. “Is this why you’re talking so goofy?”

“*It is a wise father that knows his own child,*” answered Peter, surprised at his own words. He couldn’t figure out what was wrong or why he kept talking so funny. He thought about the accident the day before that led to his trip to the hospital, all the tests that they had given him, and the “slight concussion” the doctor had diagnosed. He wondered if all that had anything to do with his funny way of speaking.

His father laughed and headed downstairs.

“*Half sleep, half waking: but as yet, I swear, I cannot truly say how I came here,*” Peter said to no one in particular, looking down at the book his father had left on his bed. He had only read a few pages of *Romeo and Juliet*, the play that he was studying for school, before he had fallen asleep the night before. And he didn’t know much more about Shakespeare than what he’d found on Wikipedia. He’d never even seen any of Shakespeare’s plays. Well, there was that version of *Macbeth* he saw on *The Simpsons*, but that didn’t count.

He tried not to think about it while he took a quick shower and got dressed. “*What the dickens?*” he muttered to himself. “*Come what may.*”

He went downstairs for breakfast and noticed *Good Morning America* on TV. “*Now, what news on the Rialto?*” he asked his mom.

By now Peter’s dad had told his mom their son was playing this cute word game, so she decided to roll with it. “They’re going to interview the family of that young girl who was missing five years ago in the Caribbean,” she said. “I honestly wish these TV people would leave these families alone.”

“COME WHAT MAY”

“*All the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players,*” Peter responded.

“I know,” she said. “It seems like they almost like being on TV again. It’s like they’re trying to keep her memory alive.”

“*What’s done cannot be undone,*” Peter said.

“By the way, how do you feel this morning? I know you had quite a scare yesterday.”

“*Ay, ’twas a rough night.*”

“But you feel OK to go to school?”

“*All shall be well.*”

“Well, sit down and eat your breakfast. I made bacon and eggs, your favorite.”

“*I thank you. I am not a man of many words, but I thank you.*”

His mother ignored what she thought was his foolishness. I guess she was used to his wacky behavior, and this seemed to be just more of the same. “Besides,” she later told me, “it was sort of fun to see what he was going to say next. I figured he couldn’t keep up the game for much longer.”

Peter quickly finished his breakfast, grabbed his backpack, and headed out the door. “*Parting is such sweet sorrow,*” he yelled on his way out.

