

## **Under Milk Wood** **By Dylan Thomas**

### **Synopsis**

The play opens at night, when the citizens of Llareggub (Llangeryb) are asleep. The narrator (First Voice/Second Voice) informs the audience that they are witnessing the townspeople's dreams.

Captain Cat, the blind sea captain, is tormented in his dreams by his drowned shipmates, who long to live again and enjoy the pleasures of the world. Mog Edwards and Myfanwy Price dream of each other; Mr. Waldo dreams of his childhood and his failed marriages; Mrs. Ogmores-Pritchard dreams of her deceased husbands. Almost all of the characters in the play are introduced as the audience witnesses a moment of their dreams.

Morning begins. The voice of a guide introduces the town, discussing the facts of Llareggub. The Reverend Eli Jenkins delivers a morning sermon on his love for the village. Lily Smalls wakes and bemoans her pitiful existence. Mr. and Mrs. Pugh observe their neighbours; the characters introduce themselves as they act in their morning. Mrs. Cherry Owen merrily rehashes her husband's drunken antics. Butcher Beynon teases his wife during breakfast. Captain Cat watches as Willy Nilly the postman goes about his morning rounds, delivering to Mrs. Ignore-Pritchard, Mrs. Pugh, Mog Edwards and Mr. Waldo.

At Mrs. Organ-Morgan's general shop, women gossip about the townspeople. Willy Nilly and his wife steam open a love letter from Mog Edwards to Myfanwy Price; he expresses fear that he may be in the poor house if his business does not improve. Mrs. Dai Bread Two swindles Mrs. Dai Bread One with a bogus fortune in her crystal ball. Polly Garter scrubs floors and sings about her past paramours. Children play in the schoolyard; Gwennie urges the boys to "kiss her where she says or give her a penny." Gossamer Beynon and Sinbad Sailors privately desire each other.

During dinner, Mr. Pugh imagines poisoning Mrs. Pugh. Mrs. Organ-Morgan shares the day's gossip with her husband, but his only interest is the organ. The audience sees a glimpse of Lord Cut-Glass's insanity in his "kitchen full of time". Captain Cat dreams of his lost lover, Rosie Probert, but weeps as he remembers that she will not be with him again. Nogood Boyo fishes in the bay, dreaming of Mrs. Dai Bread Two and geishas.

On Llareggub Hill, Mae Rose Cottage spends a lazy afternoon wishing for love. Reverend Jenkins works on the White Book of Llareggub, which is a history of the entire town and its citizens. On the farm, Utah Watkins struggles with his cattle, aided by Bessie Bighead. As Mrs. Ignore-Pritchard falls asleep, her husbands return to her. Mae Rose Cottage swears that she will sin until she explodes.

As night begins, Reverend Jenkins recites another poem. Cherry Owen heads to the Sailor's Arms, where Sinbad still longs for Gossamer Beynon. The town prepares for the evening, to sleep or otherwise. Mr. Waldo sings drunkenly at the Sailors Arms. Captain Cat sees his drowned shipmates—and Rosie—as he begins to sleep. Organ-Morgan mistakes Cherry Owen for Johann Sebastian Bach on his way to the chapel. Mog and Myfanwy write to each other before sleeping. Mr. Waldo meets Polly Garter in a forest. Night begins and the citizens of Llareggub return to their dreams again.

## Character Breakdown

**CAPTAIN CAT:** The old blind sea captain who dreams of his deceased shipmates and lost lover Rosie Probert. He is one of the play's most important characters as he often acts as a narrator. He comments on the goings-on in the village from his window.

**ROSIE PROBERT:** Captain Cat's deceased lover, who appears in his dreams.

**MYFANWY PRICE:** The sweetshop-keeper who dreams of marrying Mog Edwards.

**MR. MOG EDWARDS:** The draper, enamoured of Myfanwy Price. Their romance, however, is restricted strictly to the letters they write one another and their interactions in their dreams.

**JACK BLACK:** The cobbler, who dreams of scaring away young couples.

**EVANS THE DEATH:** The undertaker, who dreams of his childhood.

**MR. WALDO:** Rabbit catcher, barber, herbalist, cat doctor, quack, dreams of his mother and his many unhappy, failed marriages. He is a notorious alcoholic and general troublemaker and is involved in an affair with Polly Garter.

**MRS. OGMORE-PRITCHARD:** The owner of a guesthouse, who dreams of nagging her two late husbands. She refuses to let anyone stay at the guesthouse because of her extreme penchant for neatness.

**MR. OGMORE:** Deceased, Linoleum salesman, late of Mrs. Ogmore-Pritchard.

**MR. PRITCHARD:** Deceased, failed bookmaker, late of Mrs. Ogmore-Pritchard. He committed suicide "ironically" by ingesting disinfectant.

**GOSSAMER BEYNON:** The schoolteacher (daughter of Butcher Beynon), dreams of a fox-like illicit love. During the day, she longs to be with Sinbad Sailors, but the two never interact.

**ORGAN MORGAN:** The church organ player has perturbed dreams of music and orchestras within the village. His obsession with music bothers his wife intensely.

**MRS. ORGAN MORGAN:** A shop owner who dreams of "silence," as she is disturbed during the day by Organ Morgan's constant organ-playing.

**MR. & MRS. FLOYD:** The cocklers, an elderly couple, seemingly the only couple to sleep peacefully in the village. They are mentioned only during the dream sequence.

**UTAH WATKINS** – The farmer, dreams of counting sheep that resemble his wife.

**OCKY MILKMAN** – The milkman, dreams of pouring his milk into a river, 'regardless of expense'.

**MR. CHERRY OWEN** – Dreams of drinking and yet is unable to, as the tankard turns into a fish, which he drinks.

**MRS. CHERRY OWEN** – Cherry Owen's devoted wife, who cares for him and delights in rehashing his drunken antics.

**POLICE CONSTABLE ATTILA REES** – The policeman, relieves himself into his helmet at night, knowing somehow he will regret this in the morning.

**MR. WILLY NILLY** – The postman, dreams of delivering the post in his sleep, and physically knocks upon his wife as if knocking upon a door. In the morning they open the post together and read the town's news so that he can relay it around the village.

**MRS. WILLY NILLY** – who, because of her husband's knocking upon her, dreams of being spanked by her teacher for being late for school. She assists Willy Nilly in steaming open the mail.

**MARY ANN SAILORS** – 85 years old, dreams of the Garden of Eden. During the day she announces her age ("I'm 85 years, 3 months and a day!") to the town.

**SINBAD SAILORS** – The barman, dreams of Gossamer Beynon, whom he cannot marry because of his grandmother's disapproval.

**MAE ROSE COTTAGE** – Seventeen and never been kissed, she dreams of meeting her "Mr. Right". She spends the day in the fields daydreaming and unseen, draws lipstick circles around her nipples.

**BESSIE BIGHEAD** – Hired help, dreams of the one man that kissed her "because he was dared".

**BUTCHER BEYNON** – The butcher, dreams of riding pigs and shooting wild giblets. During the day he enjoys teasing his wife about the questionable meat that he sells.

**MRS. BUTCHER BEYNON** – Butcher Beynon's wife, dreams of her husband being 'persecuted' for selling "owl's meat, dogs' eyes, manchop."

**REV. ELI JENKINS** – The reverend, poet and preacher, dreams of Eisteddfodau. Author of the White Book of Llareggub.

**MR. PUGH** – Schoolmaster, dreams of poisoning his domineering wife. He purchases a book named "Lives of the Great Poisoners" for ideas on how to kill Mrs. Pugh; however, he does not do it.

**MRS. PUGH** – The nasty and undesirable wife of Mr. Pugh.

**DAI BREAD** – The bigamist baker who dreams of harems.

**MRS. DAI BREAD ONE** – Dai Bread's first wife, traditional and plain.

**MRS. DAI BREAD TWO** – Dai Bread's second wife, a mysterious and sultry gypsy.

**POLLY GARTER** – An innocent young mother, who dreams of her many babies. During the day, she scrubs floors and sings of her lost love.

**NOGOOD BOYO** – A lazy young fisherman who dreams peevishly of "nothing", though he later fantasises about Mrs. Dai Bread Two in a wet corset. He is known for causing shenanigans in the wash house.

**LORD CUT-GLASS** – A man of questionable sanity, who dreams of the 66 clocks that he keeps in his house, all telling different times.

**LILY SMALLS** – Dreams of love and a fantasy life. She is the Beynons' maid, but longs for a more exciting life.

**GWENNIE** – A child in Llareggub, who insists that her male schoolmates "kiss her where she says or give her a penny".