



Written and Directed by Will Chase

USA | 2020 | 24 min | English

PRESS NOTES



## LOGLINE

A man at the end of his rope gets an unexpected visit from the Bard.



## SYNOPSIS

“To be or not to be?” The very moment Tom (Will Chase) contemplates this famous question about whether his life is worth living, a disembodied and outspoken William Shakespeare (Jack Davenport) intervenes, and spends the day convincing him that the answer might just be:

“To be”.



# DAGGER

## CAST



**WILL CHASE** is a Tony Nominated, American actor, best known for his Broadway and Television appearances including “Nashville”, “Stranger Things”, “Sharp Objects”, “The Deuce”, “American Crime Story”, *After The Wedding*, “Smash”, and “Rescue Me”. His numerous Broadway credits include *Rent*, *Billy Elliott*, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, *Kiss Me*, *Kate*, and *Something Rotten*.

*Dagger* marks Will’s directorial debut.



**JACK DAVENPORT** is an English actor best known for his roles in the television series “This Life” and “Coupling”, and as “James Norrington” in the *Pirates of the Caribbean* series. Other Film and Television include *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, *Kingsman: The Secret Service*, “The Morning Show”, “Why Women Kill”, “The Good Wife”, and “Smash”. Jack made his Broadway debut in the revival of George Bernard Shaw’s *Saint Joan*.



# DAGGER

## PRODUCTION CREDITS

|                |                                 |
|----------------|---------------------------------|
| Directed by    | Will Chase                      |
| Written by     | Will Chase                      |
| Edited by      | Jan Klier                       |
| Music By       | Saul Simon<br>MacWilliams       |
| Post Finishing | Jan Klier                       |
| Camera         | Will Chase<br>Ingrid Michaelson |

### Special Thanks

Ingrid Michaelson Don Scardino Eric Stoltz Jan Klier  
Dylan Steinberg David Handelman Scott Rowen



# DIRECTOR'S NOTE

What better way to pay tribute to one of the greatest speeches from arguably the greatest writer in the English language, than to poke fun of him and his work, all the while trying to tackle the very issue at the heart of Shakespeare's most famous speech: to live or not to live. I've lived with this speech for the last 25 years or so, and I keep coming back to it over and over, learning, hearing, and discovering something new every time I revisit it. This time, I was stuck at home in Los Angeles due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and thought, "I know, I'll make my first movie ever using this speech as a jumping off point". Not lofty at all! I wanted to show a man, Tom, a modern Hamlet, contemplating life, contemplating possibly ending his own. And I needed it to be one actor, able to film alone in the confines of his surroundings. (Me by default, since I was the only one around).

But in the middle of this pretentious exercise, as I put pen to paper, I wondered, "what would the Bard think of this moment": not only of this fictitious episode I was writing, but what would he think of me, actually writing it, embarking on making yet another modern adaptation of his most famous play. Then the fun actually began. Shakespeare the man actually started to come to life, brazen yet philosophical, compassionate yet cheeky;



annoyed at yet another “Hamlet” using his words to justify “not to be”. I became his foil, and he became mine. (How very Shakespearean!) As the cheeky banter, the jabs back and forth, started to reveal themselves, and as I realized Shakespeare himself would have to talk this man off a ledge, the piece started to become, as we say in the theater, a “two-hander”: I needed another actor; or at least the *voice* of another actor to inhabit Tom’s mind (and inhabit the illuminated chandelier through which he would communicate with Tom).

The only person to pop into my head for the role ended up voicing the role, fully bringing the fun, nuance, bewilderment, dry wit and charm that I needed this Shakespeare to have. The brilliant Jack Davenport and I rehearsed remotely and recorded all of his dialogue well before I shot even one frame. But having his wonderfully layered and already perfectly timed performance in my head (very rarely in my ears, as I couldn’t always use playback) made it feel as if he was actually in the room pushing me, provoking me, playing the scenes with me.





And, as the story became “meta”, (and “meta” a few times over, complete with Tom silencing the movie soundtrack at one point), I never wanted to lose sight of the essential question at hand, and certainly didn’t want to sugar-coat whatever outcome the story had. Tom needs Shakespeare to nudge him in the right direction. If only for a day. “One day at a time”, Shakespeare says (as he cops a Willie Nelson lyric); tomorrow Tom may need someone else, or another song lyric, or just spend another day in contemplation. Who knows. But we all need that nudge. Some days more than others. And hopefully we have access to it. But for now, from Shakespeare’s point of view at least, “Just don’t use me and my words to do it!”

—Will Chase





# Technical

Country: USA

Language: English

Film: Short

Genre: Comedy/Drama

Run Time: 24 minutes

Format: HD, Color, Stereo, 2.76:1 / 2.20:1

Camera: iPhone 11 Pro

