

Eight. A Dual Scene.

Henry bounds into his house, thrilled, and meets Elizabeth.

HENRY. Light has triumphed over darkness! Good over evil! And all here shall know that chicanery hath been vanquished on this day!

ELIZABETH. My goodness, Henry, what play is that?

HENRY. No play, my glorious wife, *today* life is better than drama!

ELIZABETH. (*Sarcasm.*) No.

HENRY. Yes! Ben went to the Lord Chamberlain to flatten the Old Jaggard for printing Will's work without the rights and they stopped the presses *today*!

ELIZABETH. Stopped them today?

HENRY. They are stopped! And Ben tells us that Jaggard played the fool: "Oh sire, I did not know the rights were in question." Horse shit—

ELIZABETH. *Henry.*

HENRY. He knew exactly what he was doing, do not be fooled.

ELIZABETH. I'm not fooled and you're not sleeping in my bed with that language.

HENRY. I love you my darling but you cannot stop glee from arising as it will.

ELIZABETH. Please inform your glee that it needs to behave like a gentleman.

HENRY. The gentlemen won today! We are free to print our book the way it should be printed.

ELIZABETH. Will's book.

HENRY. What?

ELIZABETH. It's *Will's* book, isn't it?

HENRY. With him gone, and a legacy on the line? We are Will.

John and Rebecca at home.

John is exhausted, sinks into a chair.

#7 - ELIZABETH/HENRY

Rebecca brings him something warm to drink.

JOHN. What a day, my dear, a day that ends a week that ends a month of this tiresome business.

REBECCA. What's this shadow about? I thought you and Ben sorted it all out?

JOHN. We did. He's not very pleasant company but he is profoundly effective at getting what he wants. So. The Jaggard book is stopped, but...

REBECCA. What? Is this not good news?

JOHN. Yes, but I don't know if I can weather the constant storms to get this book done, and it looks like the waves won't stop coming, it's one thing after another, and I don't know if I can do it.

REBECCA. Of course you can, if anyone can, you can. Your sails are stronger than anyone's.

JOHN. I don't need encouragement right now, I need support.

REBECCA. Support you quitting?

JOHN. I'm not quitting!

REBECCA. It sounds like you're quitting. But this book is a good idea and a good deed.

JOHN. Well it's also impossible.

REBECCA. It's not, it's... *nearly* impossible.

JOHN. *Nearly*, yes, thank you, and every day it gets more so. And I fear after all the work and the time away from you and the children and the theatre and the church, after all that time we will have nothing to show for it, I will have nothing to show for it.

REBECCA. John—

JOHN. Failing them is worse than losing them.

REBECCA. Well you can't help losing friends, but you can and must try to honor them.

JOHN. I am not young.

REBECCA. You're also not dead.

JOHN. But everyone who should be doing this work instead of me already is.

Side # 8

BERNARDO:

If you do meet Horatio and Marcellus,
The rivals of my watch, bid them make haste.

FRANCISCO

I think I hear them. Stand, ho! Who's there?

HORATIO

Friends to this ground

MARCELLUS

And liegemen to the Dane. Give you good night.

FRANCISCO

O, farewell, honest soldier:
Who hath relieved you?

FRANCISCO

Bernardo hath my place.
Give you good night.

MARCELLUS

What, has this thing appeared again tonight?

BERNARDO

I have seen nothing.

MARCELLUS

Horatio says 'tis but our fantasy.
And will not let belief take hold of him,
Touching thi dreaded sight twice seen of us.
Therefore, I have entreated him along
With us to watch the minutes of this night,
That if again this apparition come,
He may approve our eyes and speak to it.

Rebecca comes in with a basket of scrolls.
REBECCA. John! Look what I found. Look here.

ALICE. What did you find, Mum?

JOHN. What's there, darling?

REBECCA. I was ruminating about your project and I thought—the basket in the chest in the closet!—and sure enough I found some of your sides John—Falstaff!—I'll admit to mostly keeping the funny ones.

ALICE. *You threw some out?*

REBECCA. Well I didn't know we'd need them fifteen years later, and a house full of paper and children is quite the fire hazard thank you very much.

JOHN. Thank you for this, Becky.

HENRY. Yes! *(To John.)* See? *(To Rebecca.)* Thank you for keeping what you did. Thank you.

ALICE. *(Under her breath.)* Threw out Shakespeare.

REBECCA. All right, you. It's not Oxford.

Elizabeth comes in too, with more scrolls.

ELIZABETH. Henry Henry Henry! I found some of your parts at home—Mercutio and Horatio—Becky was right, check near the privy. Oh! And Burbage's widow found his Hamlet and Othello, and his mistress gave me Richard!

HENRY. This is excellent, my love, thank you.

ALICE. Thank you, Liz!

ELIZABETH. The mistress said she might also have his Antony and Lear somewhere too. I'm going back tomorrow.

HENRY. Well thank God for mistresses.

Elizabeth smacks Henry.

And happily married husbands—

ELIZABETH. Uh-huh.

HENRY. Deeply happy—truly deep.

REBECCA. I found Polonius and Oberon too.

ELIZABETH. And somehow I've got Sam's Titania.

~~1119~~ CRANE, HENRY, ALICE, REB. ELIZ

ALICE. There starts a pairing.

HENRY. All right then.

REBECCA. But who had Puck? You can't do that one without Puck.

JOHN. I think it was Kemp that played him? Or... Who was it, Condi?

HENRY. I subbed in once, but—

ELIZABETH. *(Reciting Puck, her favorite.)*

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

HENRY. Look at that.

REBECCA. Well played there, Liz.

ELIZABETH. Thank you. I always liked it when it rhymed.

HENRY. You don't know the rest of it do you?

ELIZABETH. Probably a bit more. And I memorized most of Beatrice.

REBECCA. Oh me too. She was my favorite. "Is it possible disdain should die while she hath such meet food to feed it as Signior Benedick?"

*They cheer her! Crane runs in with a large bag in his hand.
He's more than a bit awkward.*

CRANE. Masters. Good evening. I—well—you must forgive me but—

HENRY. Speak, Crane. What is it?

CRANE. Now I know it was mostly wrong of me, but I swear I didn't mean any harm, I just—

HENRY. WhatWhatWhat is it, man?

Will he reveal or flee...

CRANE. All the Shakespeare I could find.

He dumps the contents on the table—papers spill out.

Please don't sack me. Master Knight didn't know I kept them. I wasn't supposed to, but I made copies of my favorites. Just for private reading and study.

ALICE. *Cymbeline, Antony, Lear, Caesar—*

HENRY. Oh my God, Crane, I could kiss you.

CRANE. Thank you, let's not.

REBECCA. *Tempest, Two Gents, King John.*

CRANE. I had a lot of favorites.

HENRY. Blessed Heaven you did! John, do you see this!

ELIZABETH. *Merry Wives, Measure for Measure, Taming of the Shrew—*

ALICE. *As You Like It!* As much as you can drink, Master Crane!
On the house!

JOHN. No it's not.

ALICE. *On the house.*

end CRANE. That's very kind but I just want to keep the job.

HENRY. You will. And you just earned another.

JOHN. What other?

HENRY. Editor of the Collected Plays of William Shakespeare. You've seen more of Will's hand than anyone alive, I'd wager.

JOHN. Henry, wait now, we haven't agreed to all this yet.

HENRY. But we have the plays, John! *Full* scripts, not part-by-part, not shite quartos. We have the actual plays now.

JOHN. *Some* of them. And not all the rights and not the funding and not the—the time and the knowledge, and—We don't know what we're doing, and even if we did it would *still* be mostly insane to try.

Pause.

REBECCA. He'll do it.

JOHN. *Becky.*

REBECCA. John. You'll do this like you do everything else.

JOHN. And how is that?

ALICE. *How is that?*

REBECCA. With a sometimes charming but always robust blend of reason, fortitude, and guile.

I love you. Get to work.

Rebecca kisses John and goes.

JOHN. And now you leave me?

REBECCA. I said get to work. We've all got to.

She smiles and exits as John watches her go, heart full for her.

ELIZABETH. (To Henry.) I hope you look at me like that when I leave a room.

HENRY. Usually.

She smacks him.

Always.

JOHN. All right, Condi. Let's give this damn thing a try.

ALICE. HENRY. CRANE.

Yes, Dad! Yes! Heart of gold, I always said. Isn't this exciting.

They cheer just as a very angry Ben Jonson enters with a book.

BEN. CONDELL.

HENRY. What, ho, Ben. Join us!

ELIZABETH. Master Jonson, we're toasting!

JOHN. Welcome, Ben. A pint for the poet?

ALICE. Pint?

JOHN. True. Better just put a stool under the tap for him.

BEN. *What in high shit do you think you're doing?*

This changes the mood.

HENRY. Well. Presently we celebrate John finally coming to his senses and Master Crane and his marvelous deception.

CRANE. Private study, I said.

BEN. Deception indeed. You publish Will's work without my knowledge? *Without my knowledge?*

JOHN. Publish it? No.

HENRY. Yes we are. Now we are!

JOHN. But we haven't even started.

BEN. And yet I hold in my hand ten so-called plays by William Shakespeare.

A new collection on which I was neither consulted nor alerted so I will repeat, *what in high shit is this?*

Ben walks right over to their table and drops it with a SMACK.

JOHN. What the devil?

CRANE. Ten plays?