

Emilia • Henry

Then Emilia Bassano Lanier enters through another door in another room across town. She's a gorgeous woman with dark hair. She enters laughing.

EMILIA. Henry Condell! When she said it was you, I thought my maid had gone syphilitic. How is your wife, your children? Are you well? I heard about Burbage, dear brute. His Antony, I still remember. Do sit, don't stand, wine? I will.

HENRY. Yes, Lady Lanier. And I thank you for seeing me.

EMILIA. Emilia, Emilia. We're friends. We were. In a different life perhaps, but still. Why are you here, Henry?

HENRY. We need your help.

EMILIA. Oh. Who is we?

HENRY. John and I. And Will.

EMILIA. Will?

HENRY. Shakespeare.

EMILIA. (His name hits her with profound nostalgia.) Well. Now I'm terribly interested indeed.

HENRY. If he were alive he'd never allow us to bother you, but... Well however he broke your heart I hope that the love you showed him once will bare itself again in this hour of need.

EMILIA. My heart? Is that what he said? Of course he did. The things men say away from women are never to be trusted.

HENRY. Do I offend you, milady?

EMILIA. Oh no, no. Though it was most certainly his heart that broke. He was not the kind of man who could keep a friend after being a certain kind of...friendly.

HENRY. You broke his heart?

EMILIA. Oh yes terribly. All those sonnets don't come from happy endings.

HENRY. I know it didn't end well between you two, but—

EMILIA. (Quoting by heart Sonnet 147.)

“For I have sworn thee fair and thought thee bright,
Who art as black as hell, as dark as night.”
Thank you, Will. Thank you so much.

HENRY. You were a kind of a muse to him. He wanted to write you into every play.

EMILIA. He managed to get me in a few I recall.

HENRY. You were the heart of his Beatrice, Rosalind, Lady Macbeth.

EMILIA. Lady M?

HENRY. Ironically the happiest couple he ever wrote. And even in *Othello* he used your name for Emilia.

EMILIA. Yes well the man failed to realize that most successful courtships don't include naming a character after your true love and then stabbing her to death in the end.

HENRY. He did read your book of poems. He liked it—*loved it*.

EMILIA. Did he?

HENRY. Oh yes, very much. Though I think it made him cringe from...curiosity. The pain in wondering where your lost loves are now.

EMILIA. I did love him. Which was the problem. Love is not a light thing for a poet.

EMILIA. All right Henry, you fanned my flame long enough. How can I help you?

HENRY. We need money to finish publishing Will's collected works.

EMILIA. A collection?

HENRY. Yes, which is quite the task and we've hit a ditch and we didn't want to ask you but...

EMILIA. I suppose...penance for breaking a poet's heart is living with its output. I am happy to help.

HENRY. We thank you, milady.

EMILIA. I do miss him. I hope he knew that. God he was good. And his plays weren't bad either.

HENRY. Oh my word.

EMILIA. Do I make you blush?

HENRY. I was his best friend. You do not tell me anything I have not already heard in reverse.

She smiles at the thought.

EMILIA. Don't wait until there's an emergency to come back and see me.

HENRY. Milady.

