

John, Rebecca, Alice

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.

REBECCA. All right. Yes. This is mostly absurd and rather improbable, and you're not even publishers.

JOHN. Exactly.

REBECCA. And the project is enormous and costly and it is all on your head because this theatre has come to depend on you for its very life.

JOHN. Yes. Yes.

REBECCA. But not its art.

This stops John.

You gave up the stage, the stage you loved, the stage that made you and made you alive, to make the King's Men great, and they are, *you* are. That's why you have to do this. That book is...it's *you*. Those

plays are you at your best. You gave up what you loved once, I won't let you do it again.

JOHN. I've already put my life into this theatre, I don't know if I can put the rest into a book.

REBECCA. A theatre is an empty thing. A theatre you fill up. With words.

Alice enters.

ALICE. Dad. We need to talk about this.

JOHN. Ali, not now.

ALICE. Dad, this book is—

JOHN. I know what it is, and I know what it's not. Half the country can't read, the other half can't pay, the paper alone is worth the whole theatre, and I'm not bankrupting the King's Men for this.

ALICE. There's a way.

REBECCA. There must be..

JOHN. *There's not, I'm telling you there's not.*

I'm sorry. I'm tired, Becky.

REBECCA. So am I. I'm tired too, I'm tired after *my* long days, and I know my lines aren't grand ones, "apples, pears, figs, and nuts," but I say them every day, on cue, with no applause. Because not everyone doing good work gets applause. And not everyone gets the chance at a legacy.

JOHN. Is a legacy worth a life?

REBECCA. You're damn right it is.

ALICE. Dad, I can help more if that would—

JOHN. I've tried, I've tried, I've given it too much already and I'm done.

REBECCA. *Dammit John that book is mine too.* Those plays are mine and Ali's and your sons', and I should tell you to abandon this thing just so I can have you at home, so your children can have you, you know the little people who sleep here at night.

JOHN. Becky, please—

REBECCA. I should tell you to drop this whole thing because that would make *my* life better and probably yours. But those plays are not yours and not Will's and not Burbage's, no, they're ours and if

they are lost to time, I'm sorry my love, but that will be on your head. So you *will* do it. Yes you will.