

Side 4: Scene Eight, Pages 44 to 46 (Rebecca Hemings, John Hemings, Alice Hemings)

Back to Henry and Elizabeth.

HENRY. Now that we *can* do this, we must! If we do not, who will?

ELIZABETH. Oh please, darling, I'm not dissuading you, I think the book is a fine idea and a brilliant tribute. But you need to watch the money. We want to be *investing* in this book, not donating.

HENRY. We'll work out the deal when we have the partners. Right now we drink!

ELIZABETH. You need to think of it now. And I will not have you do all this work for nothing.

HENRY. It's not nothing, it's pride, it's love, it's not about profit.

ELIZABETH. Henry. There no such thing as a business that's non-profit. Now before you sign any papers let me read them, I want a return and a percentage of the earnings.

HENRY. I love it when you talk business.

ELIZABETH. I know you do.

HENRY. I get swept away with the heart of a thing.

ELIZABETH. I know you do.

HENRY. And now I need to kiss my beautiful wife.

ELIZABETH. Nothing in your way that I see.

He chases her off.

Back to John and Rebecca.

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.

JOHN. *All right, women, all right.*

Beat.

ALICE. Why don't you come to the playhouse tomorrow, Mum?
I'll take care of things here, come see a play, have some fun.

Rebecca stops. Tentatively she asks...

REBECCA. What's on? A comedy?

ALICE. Actually it is, and Henry's in it. He's not bad.

REBECCA. *(Thinks.)* Maybe next week. *(To John.)* Would it were you, I'd go. I'd always go see you.

She smiles at her daughter, and husband. Breathes, and heads to bed. John and Alice share a look as we... Transition.

Nine.

John, Alice, Henry in the Globe Tap House...

HENRY. Wait a minute, wait, not one printer on Fleet Street is willing?

JOHN. I went to everyone. They all say they can't print such a large project. I even said we had the money.

ALICE. Do we?

JOHN. Of course not.

ALICE. Well it has to be folio or else we can't fit all the plays.

HENRY. So John is finally on board to print and now we have no printers.

ALICE. Something's rotten in that.

JOHN. Tarry now. I tried today and I'll try tomorrow. Where there's a will...

William Jaggard enters the Tap House with a cane and guided by his son, Isaac.

JAGGARD. Good day gentlemen. Do I find any of the King's Men present here?