

SIDE 1

BURBAGE. A life of ages and pages.

*Pause. Henry looks at his ring.*

HENRY. I miss him. Three years gone and I miss Will every day.

JOHN. Aye. He'd know what to say to shut up all our bleating.

BURBAGE. To Will.

Who bequeathed us three these rings to remind us that good friends are behind all good stories. And good stories make for good lives.

JOHN.

To Will.

HENRY.

Hear, hear.

ALICE.

That I like

*A lovely moment...*

*That is soon destroyed when Boy Hamlet stands on a table as the gathered crowd cheers and starts clapping for the boy to do a speech.*

CROWD.

Speech! Speech! Speech!

BOY HAMLET.

Yes, yes. Thank you, yes!

BURBAGE. *(Making a fist with his ringed hand.)* Or perhaps Will just meant us to leave a mark.

ALICE. Oh dear.

HENRY.

Burbage, let's not.

JOHN.

What's the point,

Burbage

ALICE.

Dammit, Richard,

believe me.

BOY HAMLET. "Alas poor Yorick—"

*Burbage rises on the table—cuts the boy off.*

*He is a lion of a man and throws his ire at the Boy Hamlet.*

BURBAGE. YOU. BOY. Speak not that speech, I pray you.

Mine ears repel the broken lines you claim as Shakespeare.

BOY HAMLET. I claim it not, Master Burbage. I only play the part as written.

BURBAGE. IT WAS NOT WRITTEN FOR YOU.

Those lines are not Shakespeare's and not yours. And Hamlet does not flinch at death, nay he leans into it, he examines, he defies, he does not, as you did today, fall to his knees and whine about it.

*The crowd laughs at this.*

You deserve the crown more than you deserve that play.

BOY HAMLET. You misunderstand me, Master Burbage. I defer to you, sir. I hope in my old age I will be as well seasoned.

BURBAGE. I'M NOT A GODDAMNED SOUP, YOU ARTLESS MINNOW.

ALICE. Time to go, young man.

HENRY. This is the house of the King's Men, and we have seen enough of you today.

BARMAN. You know I just saw you play Polonius last week, Condell. Had a good cheer when they poked you to death.

BARMAN 2. Finally shut him up.

HENRY. Oh, you think you're being funny?

BARMAN 2. Oh, not as f-f-funny as it was watching Johnny all those years ago.

BARMAN. I do miss the crackling of old St-St-Stuttering Heminges.

HENRY.

That is *not* this good man's name.

ALICE.

Hey now, none of that in here.

JOHN. Leave it, Henry.

BARMAN. No wonder they moved him to m-m-management.

HENRY. OUT OF HERE OR A BROKEN JAW FOR BOTH.

JOHN. *(Getting upset, which triggers his stutter.)* Just l-l-leave it, I said, leave it.

*The barmen explode into laughter and mock John's stutter.*

*Alice smacks her hand on the table, shutting them up.*

ALICE. This is Master John Heminges' Tap House next to the Globe Theatre on the boards of which he made *real men, gentlemen, kings, and queens* laugh with wit and wisdom and the soul of the ages, while you were trying to think of a comeback to the cheap whore who wouldn't have you. So unless you want to feel even more like the desperate asses you are, you'll learn from these gentlemen players, steal better, and go *drink by your own playhouse, not ours.*

*The bar cheers for her.*

JOHN. *(To Alice.)* Never tell your brothers but you are my favorite.

*Burbage quiets them.*

END