

START

BEN. I did not kill that man and if I did it was a long time ago. I'm going to bed.

JOHN. Leaving us so soon, Ben?

BEN. Yes I am because life is short and shitty and your daughter won't give me any more beer, and when friends and art are lost, what's left for men to seek but God and hops.

HENRY. Only one of those is supposed to answer prayers.

BEN. Oh shut up, Henry.

ELIZABETH. Do you need help home, Ben?

BEN. I just walked to Scotland and back, I can walk up the street.

ELIZABETH. Why'd you walk to Scotland, Ben?

BEN. *Because I'm a man and I felt like it and I did it and Will and Burbage and every good man is dying before our eyes and I'm tired and good night.*

*Ben exits.*

ALICE. Always a pleasure, that one.

*Ben comes back in—*

JOHN. What now, Ben?

BEN. *(To Alice.)* Did I tell you that I love you?

ALICE. You did.

BEN. Secretly?

ALICE. You did.

BEN. All right then.

*Ben grabs whomever's beer is closest to him and finishes it as he really exits.*

ELIZABETH. I'll retire as well, Henry. Sans pageant. Good night all and God bless.

HENRY. WaitWaitWait my dear. I just...I must say how lost and low I would be without you.

ELIZABETH. I know my love. Don't stay up too late. *(To Alice.)* Funerals always make them so sweet.

REBECCA. Wait, Liz, I'm off as well. The morning is nigh and I can neither spoil the children nor the produce. *(To Alice.)* See your father

finds a bed at some point. *(To the room.)* Good night and God rest his soul.

JOHN. Good night, my dear.

*As the wives start to exit:*

ELIZABETH. Becky, I found a book of poems at the stalls last week by a woman poet no less.

REBECCA. A woman?

ELIZABETH. I know. Do you remember Lady Lanier?

REBECCA. Lady Lanier...

ALICE. Bassano you mean? Emilia Bassano?

REBECCA. The Lord Chamberlain's mistress, ages ago.

ALICE. Will's mistress, I thought.

ELIZABETH. Not in the end she wasn't.

REBECCA. Oh yes, I remember all the trouble she caused for Will.

ALICE. You mean the *sonnets* she caused for Will.

ELIZABETH. "The Dark Lady," he called her.

REBECCA. Always thought that was a bit dramatic.

ELIZABETH. Yes well now she's written something of her own and it's quite good. We'll read them tomorrow and lift this fog of sorrow for a bit.

ALICE. Take a break from drama for poetry.

ELIZABETH. We are wives of actors, dear.

REBECCA. There are no breaks from either.

JOHN. What was that darling?

REBECCA. Nothing I Love You Good Night.

*Elizabeth and Rebecca exit together.*

JOHN.

HENRY.

ALICE.

Good night.

Good night, dear.

Good night, Mum.

HENRY. I don't know how men do it without good women.

JOHN. Do what?

HENRY. Exactly.

JOHN. All right. One more and then to bed. *(Lifting a glass.)* To Burbage.

END