

~~START~~
you might also recall my stern objection, sets the whole theatre alight and everything in it. What am I to do?

JOHN. We lost everything?

HENRY. The first drafts in his own hand? The originals?

ED. We almost lost you, Henry, yes we lost Will's manuscripts, the promptbooks, we had a library of actor sides but, as I said, poof. I told Will, I said "no cannons" I said it to his face a hundred times.

HENRY. Bloody poof and we're sunk from the start.

JOHN. Well which plays *do* you have, Ed?

ED. *The Winter's Tale, Hamlet, Othello, and Henry IV Part Two.*

CRANE. And *Twelfth Night*.

ED. And *Twelfth Night*. Thank you, Crane. How's that copying coming?

HENRY. That's it? That's all we have? Five?

ED. Might be a few more in some of the prop boxes.

CRANE. I actually think we might—

ED. (*Not even hearing Crane.*) I don't know and I don't have time.

CRANE. I mean there's a chance I could—

HENRY. (*Not even hearing Crane.*) You're supposed to manage the stage, Ed!

ED. And you were supposed to manage the cannon.

JOHN. All right. Perhaps we can admit that this project is too much for us.

HENRY. No! John? You're siding with Ed? We hate Ed.

ED. Excuse me?

JOHN. (*To Ed.*) No we don't, Ed. We *need* Ed.

ED. Thank you very much.

JOHN. (*To Henry.*) What we don't need is an impossible project when we're trying to run a theatre company.

HENRY. It's not impossible!

CRANE. Improbable, yes, but not impossible. (*Immediately realizes his place.*) Sorry.

HENRY. Just because the scripts aren't here doesn't mean they're not somewhere. What about Burbage? He must've kept his sides.

ED. Probably slept with them round him like cats.

JOHN. But even Burbage wouldn't have the whole plays he'd just have his character's lines—

HENRY. Why the hell did we start doing it that way, anyway? Every actor gets only his lines? It's a mess. I blame Ed.

ED. *It wasn't me.*

JOHN. It was Will. Make it harder for other companies to steal it if no one had the whole play.

HENRY. Well now we can't steal our *own* plays from ourselves for ourselves.

CRANE. But if we can find *most* of the sides we could piece the shows back together using our memory and the quartos to fill in the rest.

HENRY. Yes!

ED. *Crane.*

JOHN. NO.

CRANE. Sorry.

JOHN. The quartos?

You saw that boy's Hamlet, most of the quartos are trash. And frankly our memory is worse.

HENRY. Which is why this is so important. That *Hamlet* is what's left if we don't do this and do it well.

John admits that he hates that idea...

Crane's right. We scour the city. If there are sides in corners and cupboards across London, we'll find them. What about Will's wife, surely there's something back in Stratford.

CRANE. He left all his papers here before he retired, but I can write her.

ED. No you won't. You've got two tragedies and a farce to ready before Friday. And the Will I knew would much prefer the show go on. Speaking of which, you're going on for Burbage in an hour, Henry.

~~HENRY. We must all give sorrow words, the grief that does not speak whispers the overfraught heart and bids it break.~~

ED. *Macbeth*, isn't it? Nice. Except it's *Henry IV* today. But have Crane pen that bit before you go and we lose it too. Beg your pardon, friends.

~~END~~