

ACT TWO

One.

John's home.

John is at Rebecca's bedside. He watches her.

REBECCA. Good night, John. Go to bed.

JOHN. What, my dear? Are you all right? What do you need?

REBECCA. I need you to sleep. That's what people mean when they say "good night." You don't have to stay next to me every moment.

JOHN. I'm not leaving you.

REBECCA. John.

JOHN. I'm not.

REBECCA. I'm fine.

JOHN. You're not, and I'm not, so here I stay.

REBECCA. Then neither of us will sleep. I can't rest when I know you're sitting right there worrying about me. Don't you have a book to worry you?

JOHN. Don't think about that. I'm right here and I'm staying here until you can stand up and walk about and start giving me orders again.

REBECCA. I can give you orders from bed, thank you. The book, John.

JOHN. I don't care about the book. I'm not bothering with it. Not now.

REBECCA. Yes you are.

JOHN. Not now.

REBECCA. Yes now. Your sons might have never seen you onstage but I did. And I've never seen you happier. Or more full of life. Or handsomer. I know Will's words made you, John. Return the favor.

Pause.

JOHN. Handsomer?

REBECCA. Always had a weakness for men in makeup.

JOHN. Well you married a player and ended up with a manager.
REBECCA. I know whom I married. In your heart you're a player still. The heart's what matters.

Pause.

JOHN. When I thought you were gone my heart stopped. No play has sent me to my knees and then up again and through the streets running as last night. Nothing is worth more than you.

REBECCA. Then listen to me. When the world grew dark, where did you turn? When our sweet Mary died.

JOHN. Yes.

REBECCA. And then young John. Then our Lizzie.

JOHN. God bless them. I never knew how people went on after loss like that, but somehow they do. We did.

REBECCA. Every day is someone's worst. At least ours we had together.

JOHN. You bore it all so much better than I did.

REBECCA. No I didn't. We all bear it as we can. Most people would go to church, but you went... to the Globe.

JOHN. No I didn't.

REBECCA. I know you went there. Alone and at night. Why? What did you do there? Meet Will?

JOHN. No.

REBECCA. Henry?

JOHN. No. I would... just speak. It seems childish but I... would stand on the boards. And speak. The whole theatre dark but for a candle to my side. I would recite speeches. *Hamlet* and *Lear*. Some *King John*, anything that would... direct the rage, the pain, the endless pain of it. Plays held more solace than priests, they always did in that respect. You're supposed to be quiet in church. That I could not do, not when God asked me to hold that much in my heart, I could not do that.

REBECCA. You needed words.

JOHN. Yes I did. They were alive for me.

REBECCA. Yes they are.

JOHN. Yes.