

ELIZABETH. How's John, Becky?

REBECCA. John's a wreck. Your husband?

ELIZABETH. Henry's in a fog since we heard. Good friends mean bad days when the time comes.

REBECCA. How is he gone? How could he be? Not Burbage. He had more life in him than twenty men.

ALICE. I keep thinking he'll just walk back into the Tap House. Surprise us all.

ELIZABETH. I think that would be a plot twist he'd like.

REBECCA. A life with actors and I still fool myself that it's all entrances and no exits.

ALICE. Well. You can't have the comedies without the tragedies.

REBECCA. I find I *need* more comedies the older I get.

ALICE. You've always loved the comedies Mum.

REBECCA. Yes but it's the *needing* that surprises me in times like these. Laughter must be death's greatest defiance I think.

ELIZABETH. You and your daughter are the heart of this entire outfit, you know.

REBECCA. I think we share the pulse of it, Liz.

ALICE. It's hard to be strong through it all.

ELIZABETH. That's why they need us to do it.

REBECCA. Clean up and carry on. So they can.

ELIZABETH. I think we can stop cleaning for a day. Come round tomorrow, we'll find somewhere sunny to walk.

REBECCA. I could stop for an hour I suppose.

ELIZABETH. Join me and your mum tomorrow, Ali? Take your mind off it all?

ALICE. Would that I could. The theatre needs ale and apples and I clean up and carry on.