

'A GLORIOUS BLAZE OF PASSION AND FURY... RICHLY FUNNY'

THE TIMES

'Men, who forgetting they were born of women, nourished of women, and if they were not of the means of women, they would be quite extinguished out of the world, and a final end of them all; do like vipers deface the wombs wherein they were bred.'

Emilia Bassano, 'To the Vertuous Reader'

In 1611 Emilia Bassano penned these words to her 'Vertuous Reader', as part of a volume of radical, feminist and subversive poetry. It was one of the first published collections of poetry written by a woman in England.

The little we know of Emilia Bassano is restricted to the possibility that she may have been the 'Dark Lady' of Shakespeare's Sonnets – and the rest of Her Story has been erased by History. Commissioned specifically for Shakespeare's Globe, and with an all-female cast, this new play reveals the life of Emilia: poet, mother and feminist. This time, the focus will be on this exceptional woman who managed to outlive all the men the history books tethered her to.

Morgan Lloyd Malcolm is a playwright and screenwriter. Her plays include *The Wasp* and *Belongings*. She is a proud writer of several pantomimes as well as community, children's and Christmas shows. With Katie Lyons and Verity Woolnough she wrote and performed in five shows as the comedy group Tripplicate. She also co-created and wrote the immersive *You Once Said Yes* and several other shows with Katie Lyons and Mimi Poskitt. She has several other stage and screen projects on the go, and two kids who still aren't entirely sure what it is their mum does for work – but they do rate her tomato soup.



SHAKESPEARE'S
GLOBE



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MORGAN LLOYD MALCOLM **EMILIA**

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EMILIA

A new play by Morgan Lloyd Malcolm

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A note on the text

I want to say thank you to Michelle Terry for giving me this opportunity. Without her passion and faith this project would never have begun. I want to say thank you to Nicole Charles for being my co-conspirator and dreamer. I feel so lucky to have made this with you. I want to say thank you for Kate, Eleanor, Eileen and Nica and your brilliant teams who saw what we made at the Globe and brought it to the beautiful Vaudeville Theatre. Thank you for believing in us. I want to say thank you to all the incredible women in the cast and crew and creative team. You have grabbed this opportunity with both hands and put so much of your hearts and beautiful souls into this piece and it shows. I have loved every moment of working with you. To the original cast and crew and everyone at the Globe, I will always be indebted to the work you put in and the love you gave. I feel like we began a family which will only grow and grow. Thank you to Georgina and Hannah at David Higham Associates, to everyone at Oberon, to my friends and my family. I also want to say thank you to the huge community both online and off who have supported and championed this play and everything we're trying to do; your enthusiasm helped get us to the west end! And finally thank you to Emilia Bassano whose words sit within all of us now. We all think you're amazing and we hope you like what we have made.

This play was written to be performed by an all female cast of diverse women. It would not be the same play if this is ignored. If being performed in a school where it is impossible to adhere to this then please cast against the 'usual type'. Be bold.

This play was also written to challenge the notion that a play about a person needs to be a vehicle for one actress. This is very much an ensemble piece hence the three Emilias. It takes place in several time zones at one time. It isn't an accurate representation of Renaissance England, it isn't a historical representation. It is a memory, a dream, a feeling of her.

CHARACTERS (grouped in the doubling made in the original production. However if you have a larger group of actresses do share these parts out more. Or if you see better doubling due to specific skills of your actresses do mix them up. This is just a guide.)

This production had new music composed by Luisa Gerstein and the vibe and style is intrinsic to the piece.

Characters

EMILIA1
EMILIA2
EMILIA3

The three Emilias represent the three ages of her.

MARGARET JOHNSON /
MARY SIDNEY / HESTER

SUSAN BERTIE THE COUNTESS
OF KENT / MARY / BOB

LADY HELENA / LORD HOWARD / EVE

LADY CORDELLA / FLORA

LADY KATHERINE / DESDEMONA (Othello)

LORD THOMAS HOWARD / JUDITH / PRIEST

LORD COLLINS / LADY ANNE / DAVE

LORD ALPHONSO LANIER / EMILIA (Othello)

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE / MAN 2

LADY MARGARET CLIFFORD /
MIDWIFE / MAN 1

THE MUSES

Everyone except EMILIA3 is a Muse. They play every other character in the play. The muses are the embodiment of Emilia's will. It is up to you how you show this.

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Emilia was first performed at the Globe Theatre on 10 August 2018. The cast was as follows:

LADY KATHERINE HOWARD
LADY MARY SIDNEY
LADY ANNE CLIFFORD
EMILIA 1
COUNTESS OF KENT / MARY
EMILIA 3
LORD HENRY CAREY / JUDITH
EMILIA 2
LORD THOMAS HOWARD / HESTER
LADY CORDELLA / FLORA
LADY MARGARET CLIFFORD
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
ALPHONSO LANIER
MUSICAL DIRECTOR / SHAWMS /
RECORDERS / DULCIANS / BAGPIPES
SACKBUT / GUITAR
DRUMS / PERCUSSION
SHAWMS / RECORDERS
SHAWMS / RECORDERS /
BAGPIPES / VIOLIN

Nadia Albina
Anna Andresen
Shiloh Coke
Leah Harvey
Jenni Maitland
Clare Perkins
Carolyn Pickles
Vinette Robinson
Sophie Russell
Sarah Seggari
Sophie Stone
Charity Wakefield
Amanda Wilkin
Emily Baines
Elinor Chambers
Catie Hough
Sarah Humphrys
Sharon Lindo

Creatives

Writer
Morgan Lloyd Malcolm
Director
Nicole Charles
Designer
Jo Scotcher
Assistant Director
Anna Dirckinck-Holmfeld
Composer
Bill Barclay
Choreographer and Movement Direction
Anna Morrisey
Costume Supervisor
Lydia Crimp
Physical Comedy Director
Joe Dieffenbacher
Fight Directors
Rachel Bown-Williams
and Ruth Cooper-Brown
of Rc-Annie Ltd
Voice Coach
Tess Dignan
Production Manager
Fay Powell Thomas
Stage Manager
Liz Isaac
Deputy Stage Manager
Carol Pestridge
Assistant Stage Managers
Aislinn Jackson,
Anthony Papamichael

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Emilia transferred to Vaudeville Theatre, London and was first performed on 8 March 2019. The cast was as follows:

LADY KATHERINE HOWARD /
DESEMONA / RIVER WOMAN
Nadia Albina
LADY MARY SIDNEY /
MARGARET JOHNSON / HESTER
Anna Andresen
ENSEMBLE / MUSICIAN
Christina Bloom
LORD THOMAS HOWARD /
EVE/LADY HELENA
Jackie Clune
EMILIA 1
Saffron Coomber
ENSEMBLE
Lauren Drennan
ENSEMBLE
Eva Fontaine
ENSEMBLE
Cora Kirk
EMILIA 2
Adelle Leonce
COUNTRESS OF KENT / MARY / BOB
Jenni Maitland
EMILIA 3
Clare Perkins
LORD HENRY CAREY /
JUDITH/PRIEST
Carolyn Pickles
LADY CORDELLA / FLORA
Sarah Seggari
LADY MARGARET CLIFFORD
/MIDWIFE / MAN 1/PRIEST 2
/ RIVER WOMAN
Sophie Stone
ENSEMBLE / MUSICIAN
Samantha Sutherland
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE /
MAN 2 / RIVER WOMAN
Charity Wakefield
ALPHONSO LANIER/
RIVER WOMAN / EMILIA IN OTHELLO
Amanda Wilkin
LADY ANNE CLIFFORD / LORD COLLINS /
DAVE / RIVER WOMAN
Tamika Yearwood

Creatives

Writer
Morgan Lloyd Malcolm
Director
Nicole Charles
Designer
Joanna Scotcher
Lighting Designer
Zoe Spurr
Sound Designer
Emma Laxton
Choreographer and Movement Direction
Anna Morrissey
Composer
Luisa Gerstein
Musical Director
Yshani Perinpanayagam
Voice Coach
Tess Dignan
Costume Supervisor
Sian Harris
Wigs Supervisor
Jessica Plews
Assistant Director
Rafaela Marcus
Assistant Designer
Amelia Jane Hankin
Assistant Choreographer
Christina Fulcher
Associate Lighting Designer
(Attachment to the
production from
Central School of
Speech and Drama)
Anna Reddyhoff
Fight Directors
Rachel Brown-Williams
and Ruth Cooper-Brown
of RC-Annie Ltd
Sacha Milroy
Rosie Gilbert
Production Manager
Carol Pestridge
Company Stage Manager
Sophie Macfadyen
Deputy Stage Manager
and Sarah-Linn Taylor
Assistant Stage Managers

It was produced by Eleanor Lloyd, Kate Pakenham, Nica Burns
and Eilene Davidson.

Prologue

Present Day. EMILIA3 makes her way down through the auditorium and towards the stage. She steps up onto the stage, standing in front of the cloth. She is holding a copy of a book called 'Sex And Society In Shakespeare's Age - Simon Forman The Astrologer' by AL Rowse. She stands for a moment taking in the audience and space. She flicks the book open and begins to read snippets from it.

EMILIA3: "Emilia, daughter of Baptista Bassano and Margaret Johnson...married to a Lanier...paramour to my old Lord Hunsdon that was Lord Chamberlain...maintained in great pomp. She is high-minded...She was very brave in youth... She hath many false conceptions...She hath been favoured much of her Majesty and of many noblemen...She is now very needy, in debt...(and) if I go to Lanier this night or tomorrow, whether she will receive me and whether I shall be welcome to 'halek'.

EMILIA3 looks up to acknowledge this word. She mouths the word 'fuck'.

...she is or will be a harlot...She was familiar and friendly... but only she would not 'halek'...

Another look.

She was a whore and dealt evil with him" Simon Forman, the astrologer, wrote this.

She stops. She closes the book. She takes a deep breath.

"She was a whore"

She kisses her teeth and throws the book away. Deep breath.

For centuries these are the words they have used to describe me. Not anymore... I am Emilia.

She is joined by EMILIA2 and EMILIA3 on stage.

We are Emilia

They are joined by all the other women.

We are only as powerful as the stories we tell. We have not always been able to tell them. Time to listen!

The music kicks in, the front cloth rises and the women invade the stage. The music slows to become the funeral music and EMILIA1 singing Durme Durme at her father's funeral.

Here we are where all good stories must start: death.

As EMILIA1 sings MARGARET JOHNSON and PRIEST enter. This is the funeral of Baptista Bassano, EMILIA's father. The congregation listens to EMILIA1 sing. During, SUSAN BERTIE enters, seen by MARGARET.

EMILIA1: (Singing.) Durme, durme, querido hijico
durme sin ansia y dolor
cerra tus chicos ojicos
durme, durme con savor.
Cerra tus lindos ojicos
durme, durme con savor.

MARGARET gestures to EMILIA1 to come with her and the PRIEST.

I've written something to honour Papa. Can I read it?

MARGARET JOHNSON: You absolutely cannot!

EMILIA1 ignores her. Over the following MARGARET is very aware that SUSAN BERTIE is watching.

EMILIA1: (Reading.) Sweet holy rivers, pure celestial springs
Proceeding from the fontaine of our life;
Swift sugred currents that salvation brings,
Cleare chrystall streames, purging all sinne and strife,
Faire floods, where souls do bathe their snow-white wings,
Before they flie to true eternall life:

Such sweet nectar and ambrosia, food of saints
Which, whoso tasteth, never after faints.

(To MARGARET.) Don't be angry.

SUSAN BERTIE: Let her do whatever she needs to do. What was it you just recited?

EMILIA1: I wrote it myself.

SUSAN BERTIE: Christ!

MARGARET JOHNSON: I can only apologise Countess.

SUSAN BERTIE: (Interrupting.) She shows great promise. Margaret I too lost my husband and I know the great fear that strikes into our hearts. My offer still stands. I'll look after her well and her introduction to court will be assured. The Queen has already requested my presence several times. I'm well placed to place her well. What do you say?

EMILIA1 runs to MARGARET and hangs off her skirt.

EMILIA1: Mama no!

MARGARET JOHNSON: Your father's left us with nothing. My dear Countess as you can see she is no delicate creature to be moulded.

(To Emilia.)

Get up!

(To the Countess.)

She is wild and boisterous. Her father indulged in her the abandon of her heritage. She won't be tamed.

SUSAN BERTIE: I am well accustomed to the challenges of young ladies. I'm sure I can handle her. Shall we discuss the terms?

EMILIA1: No!

She sinks to her knees as MARGARET and SUSAN step away to speak. As EMILIA3 speaks the following we see EMILIA1 come to terms with her leaving. SUSAN BERTIE beckons her to leave with her. She embraces her mother MARGARET and they make the journey to BERTIE's home. We see MARGARET hiding her sadness from her daughter.

EMILIA3: Like a seed pressed down firmly in the soil, covered and left. Something laid root in me. I did not know it then but I know it now. In my travelling family of musicians I was the latest in a long line of uprooted growth, floating towards somewhere to settle. We had come to this island like so many seeking shelter and purpose and we had found it. My father and his brothers were revered in the court for their musicianship. We knew our luck. But we still felt the notion of our otherness. Our differences. We thought we were part of their world but it is an easy fall when you can no longer pay your way. I was only seven, I had to go.

ACT 1

SCENE 1

SUSAN BERTIE: Cheer up Emilia for godsake. You're one of the lucky ones. You will be afforded the very best of education but most importantly how to present and thrive in court. How to find yourself that coveted prize of a rich and powerful man who will keep you in comfort for all your days. For what else does a young woman want? What else does a young woman need? What else could be as important to you as this?

She sweeps off. EMILIA1 speaks to us.

EMILIA1: My voice. My voice feels too loud in here. I must try to whisper more. Though sometimes I can't help but scream! Shout! But I mustn't. I can't. My breath feels shallower than before. It's being contained. I'm changing. I'm being changed. Metamorphosis. Eight years. To go from child to woman. I must try to only speak when I'm asked. No screeching. No jumping about. I'm a young lady now. This is what I've learnt. You see? I can be tamed. I know now that as I grow I must also shrink. I must not take up too much space. If I am to marry well I need to practice these tricks to hush my whole being so that I am only seen when needed. This I have learnt. This I am to practice. This. Silence. Of being. This. And yet...

The COUNTESS enters loudly.

SUSAN BERTIE: Emilia my girl put down your studies we've got guests. If you are to be introduced to court as a young lady, you will need armour. Not just for your body – that's what the corsets are for- but for you my darling. What

is both a woman's greatest shield and most devastating weapon?

EMILIA: You mean our...?

She points towards her vagina.

SUSAN BERTIE: No! Dear lord have I taught you nothing? That's your meal ticket. I'm talking about your protection. LADIES!

EMILIA sends the women on.

To survive we protect each other. These young ladies will be your strength. And you will be theirs. Lady Helena.

LADY HELENA: Charmed.

SUSAN BERTIE: Lady Katherine

LADY KATHERINE: Charmed.

SUSAN BERTIE: And Lady Cordelia

LADY CORDELIA: Alright?

EMILIA: Hello.

SUSAN BERTIE: They are here to learn with you. And over the next few years you'll become quite the regular fixture in court with these young ladies. I'll leave you to get acquainted. But prepare yourself for your first lesson together and I will return anon.

She leaves.

LADY HELENA: Oh thank god she's gone!

LADY CORDELIA: And now she has we can finally...
(She hooks her skirts up and adjusts her underclothes.)

...oh thank the good lord for that; it was going up my bum! Emilia, it's so nice to finally meet you.

EMILIA: Have you yet visited court?

LADY HELENA: Heavens no! I'm so nervous! You have natural beauty on your side – It's not easy for those of us who have to work harder on our outward appearance such as our dear, poor Lady Katherine here.

LADY KATHERINE: You better watch your mouth!

LADY HELENA: *(Pointing at her bosom.)* I'm just saying – you might be needing a little uplift because you're losing altitude in your old age.

LADY KATHERINE: I'm sixteen!

LADY HELENA: Which makes it all the more urgent.

LADY KATHERINE: You come at me one more time and I swear I'll...

LADY HELENA: You'll what? Throw your needle work at me? Read me some latin?

LADY KATHERINE: I'm not the one who should be worried Helena. I've never met anyone so ill suited to court – they'll laugh you out of there. I wouldn't be surprised if the Countess sent you home before you embarrass her.

LADY CORDELIA: Ladies! Dear lord. This is not becoming of our breeding.

LADY KATHERINE: Speaking of breeding – what's yours?

EMILIA: Pardon?

LADY KATHERINE: Where are you from?

EMILIA: London.

LADY KATHERINE: No. Where. Are. You. From?

EMILIA: I. Am. From. London.

LADY KATHERINE: But you don't look like us.

EMILIA: Is this your first time in London?

LADY KATHERINE: No I've been before!

LADY CORDELLA: Don't lie! She's born and bred in the shires and she's as clueless as the sheep her father owns.

LADY KATHERINE: Not true! I've travelled.

EMILIA: Well if you had then you would know that London doesn't ascribe to just one type of person. It envelopes and welcomes all kinds. My family hark from over the sea...

LADY KATHERINE: I knew it! My father said that we were being inundated with families like yours. Fleeing wars, men migrating for work. Craftsmen are furious. Coming over here to take their work. That's what they're saying. You... It's a real problem, that's what my father said.

EMILIA: Bet he's fun at parties. I cannot speak for other families but as musicians of the court we have been respected and revered for long enough to earn our place here. It is by our virtues that we are judged not our heritage and my family have proved themselves tenfold. I don't need to answer to you. Or your father and his questionable opinions about human beings rightfully seeking new lives.

LADY KATHERINE: Whatever. But all the virtue in the world will mean nothing if you walk into court as you are now. Do you know how to dance?

EMILIA: Some.

LADY KATHERINE: Well you need to know them all.

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The COUNTESS returns.

SUSAN BERTIE: Ladies!

LADY KATHERINE: You're lucky – the Countess is the best teacher around.

SUSAN BERTIE: We have the latest dance to learn girls! Chairs! Also we must spruce you and pluck you, tighten and rouge you to within an inch of your pretty little lives. We have a lot of hard work ahead of us my darlings but by the end of it you'll be in possession of the best bloody husbands the Court has to offer. Ladies – Are you ready to SLAY?

MUSIC. SUSAN BERTIE teaches the girls a dance that involves important lessons on etiquette.

Rise...and we're travelling...gliding...innocence... seduction...coy...amused...listening faces...he's talking... still talking...STILL talking...he's cracked a joke!...it's not funny. Practical assesment! Lady Katherine, hanky drop.

She drops a hanky and LADY KATHERINE daintily picks it up.

Steady.... Lovely. Emilia! Book walk.

EMILIA puts a book on her head and starts to walk,

Slowly... Good. Lady Cordelia, smile!

LADY CORDELLA gives her best smile.

Perfect! Lady Helena, solo dance.

(She demonstrates.)

Step, scissor scissor. Step, scissor scissor. Step, scissor scissor. Step, scissor scissor. And GO!

LADY HELENA attempts this and fails.

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(To HELENA.) You're not ready for court. Go and practice alone. GO!

LADY HELENA exits.

Ladies! Re-form!

They dance.

Ladies, the men are waiting – time to be introduced to court!

Court life. MUSIC. Men arrive. They're on the prowl. This should be a dance in which the men display their 'attributes' – it should be very funny. The girls join others vying for attention. It's predatory and EMILIA1 finds it hard to engage – despite being the one getting the most attention. Time passes...

SCENE 2

EMILIA1 is busy scribbling in her note book and yet is still the main point of interest for the men (she does not notice them). LADY KATHERINE and LADY CORDELLA can see this and are getting frustrated.

EMILIA1: Cordelia, I've written a new sonnet. Would you like to hear it?

LADY CORDELLA: No! The last one was most saucy and I felt terribly flustered after hearing it.

LADY KATHERINE: I'll hear it.

LADY CORDELLA: Katherine! Stop it!

LADY KATHERINE: Why not? The more disreputable she becomes by writing like she's a man the less men will be interested and the more will be left for us.

LADY CORDELLA: Don't encourage her!

LADY KATHERINE: We need to level the playing field Cordelia; we're dying out here.

EMILIA1: Calm down Katherine. They don't want me for marriage. I'm no threat.

LADY CORDELLA: And you're fine! Lord Howard has been all eyes on you all today.

LADY KATHERINE: Really?

LORD HOWARD appears.

He's coming this way!

LORD HOWARD: My ladies

They all curtsey.

Lady Katherine I wonder if you would permit me to say how fragrant you are.

LADY KATHERINE: I couldn't possibly allow such boldness.

LORD HOWARD: But I pray that you will.

LADY KATHERINE: My lord I know not who you think I am but such a forward remark cannot go unpunished.

LORD HOWARD: I fear my sentence will be most lengthy. What do you have in mind?

LADY KATHERINE: Marriage?

LORD HOWARD: Perhaps a dance first?

LADY KATHERINE and LORD HOWARD exit.

LADY CORDELLA: Oh lord will I ever meet someone who will sweep me off my feet like that?

LORD COLLINS arrives. He spots CORDELLA over the following and they make eyes at each other.

EMILIA1: Oh come on don't you want gentle touch and kind glances and conversation? Don't you want a man who will see you for how brilliant your mind is and ask you how you wish to live your life instead of telling you how your life will be lived?

LADY CORDELIA: Sorry Emilia I'm not listening, who is that stone cold fox over there?

EMILIA1: (*Discreetly.*) That's Lord Collins.

EMILIA1 clears the way.

LORD COLLINS: To what do I owe the absolute pleasure?

LADY CORDELIA: Lady Cordelia my Lord. Are you terribly rich and powerful?

LORD COLLINS: Not in the slightest but I'd keep you in dresses and we'd tumble every day.

LADY CORDELIA: Dance with me fool before I change my mind.

He leads her away, she smiles over her shoulder at EMILIA1 as she goes. The dancers return but suddenly EMILIA1 sees her mother MARGARET JOHNSON across the floor from her. She is surprised by this and tries to get to her through the dancers. She can't reach her and her mother disappears. EMILIA1 drops to her knees.

EMILIA3: Only eight years since my father left me that I was to meet death again. My mother.

1587

The court dances are disbanded.

EMILIA1: Where is home now?

LORD HENRY CAREY approaches her.

LORD CAREY: My lady Emilia.

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EMILIA1: Lord Henry Carey.

LORD CAREY: Would you give me the great pleasure of a dance?

EMILIA1: Would you permit me to decline?

LORD CAREY: That is your choice. Perhaps we could talk instead?

EMILIA1: Only if I can stay my tongue.

LORD CAREY: You would rather I talk without response from you?

EMILIA1: Sir I am weary of advances and my tongue would like a rest.

LORD CAREY: Do you have so many advances you feel I am unworthy of an audience?

EMILIA1: No sir. I am just weary. It isn't you. It is all of you. Must we continue these approaches until a match is made? Is it possible that perhaps a woman could choose never to match and instead live her life in pursuit of something greater?

LORD CAREY: What could be greater than love?

EMILIA1: Oh come now. How many of these marriages are the product of love? If you do seek love, and I know that I do, then seek it in poetry. Seek it in verse. In words written and spoken. Seek it in the pursuit of beauty. In art. For that, is the only place that will ever hold true love for me.

LORD CAREY: Then how about an old fool who looks not for marriage but for connection.

EMILIA1: Oh.

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LORD CAREY: I know you Emilia Bassano. I've watched you for quite some time. You gently step round the edges of courtly life giving only the minimum of yourself so as to be noticed but not seen. I watch how you suffer the attentions of men your age who find your looks exciting but don't quite know what to do with you. I feel you don't yet know what to do with yourself.

EMILLAI: You 'feel' wrong.

LORD CAREY: Perhaps but if you were clear on how this world works you would maybe know more about where you wish to place yourself in it.

EMILLAI: What do you mean?

LORD CAREY: Maybe what you seek is security enough to continue to write and pursue your creative desires whilst also enjoying the careful passions of a man who has been in this game a long time and enjoys many privileges as a result. Those privileges can be shared. I could open some doors for you. I know The Countess of Pembroke well.

EMILLAI: Mary Sidney?

She high fives someone in the front row or box.

LORD CAREY: She is a great patron of the arts. Her property, Wilton House, has been described as 'Paradise for Poets' and should you wish I could arrange an introduction.

EMILLAI: Would you do that for me?

LORD CAREY: Well that depends. Will you meet me in my chambers in twenty minutes?

EMILLAI: I don't know.

LORD CAREY: *(Passing her a note.)* They are not far, which gives you ten minutes to decide. I cannot offer you marriage

Mistress Bassano but what I can offer you is worth much, much more.

He leaves. She stands taken aback.

EMILLAI: He's at least sixty years old! What confidence to approach me. And yet. He doesn't dismiss my desires like the others. Does he see me? If I do not go to him perhaps I will meet a man of my age to marry and bear children with. Someone I will serve as dutiful wife while he pursues his own wants. That would be the correct path for me. That would be the respectable and safe route. The one I have been trained for. My head sends me this way. But my heart. Oh my heart. Can I ignore its beating?

She takes a beat to decide then runs off in the direction LORD CAREY went.

EMILLAI: Suddenly I was no longer a court curiosity. I was currency. A mistress of Lord Henry Carey was afforded an apartment in Somerset House and forty pounds a year, that's one hundred and twenty thousand to you. But most importantly to me he provided only the best connections. He indulged in my need for poetry and I was able to mix with others who did too.

SCENE 3

Wilton House. Enter EMILLAI, she marvels at the hundreds of books. MARY SIDNEY enters and watches EMILLAI until she is noticed.

EMILLAI: My lady, Countess of Pembroke, I am humbled to have been granted an audience. My Lord Carey insisted I stay only a short while so as not to over step my place but I had hoped you would read my work for to have your opinion on it would do me so much pleasure.

MARY SIDNEY: Oh god don't grovel. I've read your work. Henry sent it to me. You write with grace and confidence.

EMILIA: Thank you!

MARY SIDNEY: You're not bad. As you probably know, because those bitches in the court keep fake whispering about it, I'm working on some Psalms my late brother did not complete and I hope to publish them when I'm done. Is this something you would also strive for?

EMILIA: Well of course I can hope but surely the ones who would publish would not permit it.

MARY SIDNEY: The men you mean?

EMILIA: I do.

MARY SIDNEY: And yet Henry did tell me that you care little for what men think.

EMILIA: I don't. I mean. I do. But I've never considered it a possibility that my words would ever be good enough to be committed to print.

MARY SIDNEY: That is because you were not brought up as they were with words of encouragement and the blithe acceptance that you would be destined for great things. Do not underestimate what power that has. No matter what obstacles this system holds around us we must always strive to find ways to get whatever it is we so desperately desire. I desire my poems be published. And I will see that they are. You, Emilia Bassano, will one day do the same.

EMILIA: But how?

MARY SIDNEY: Well I don't know but if you keep writing you'll conspire of an answer. And in the meantime perhaps you

will come and sit with me a while. I want to find out what it is Henry is so enthusiastic about.

LADY MARGARET CLIFFORD has entered in the previous and quickly interrupts.

LADY MARGARET: Now now Mary let's not prey on a young lady's naivete.

MARY SIDNEY: Oh god who let you in?

LADY MARGARET: What a pleasure to see you too. I came as soon as I heard you had Mistress Bassano visiting as I had hoped to speak to her about a position but I see you were already attempting to get her into one ahead of me.

MARY SIDNEY: You really are the most dreadful box blocker Margaret. I found her first. She's much too exotic for you.

LADY MARGARET: How do you feel about that description Emilia? Are you an exotic curiosity?

MARY SIDNEY: (*Interrupts.*) Oh come now you know full well I wished only to encourage her pursuit of poetry.

LADY MARGARET: Emilia, my name is Lady Margaret Clifford and I have been admiring you from afar. I come with an offer of employment. My daughter Anne will be ready for a personal tutor soon and I have heard great things about your intellect. Perhaps you would consider joining me in creating another young lady with hopes beyond being considered a mere object of desire.

MARY SIDNEY: Oh Lord how dreary. Emilia darling for heavensake say no. You are destined for greater things than servitude. This is a dead end. Say no.

EMILIA: I am most flattered at the offer. Will you permit me to think on it? I'm suddenly feeling a little conflicted.

EMILIA1: Please.

LORD CAREY: What is it?

EMILIA3 halts action

EMILIA3: Safe. Safely. Carefully. Quietly. Calmly. We must abide. We must toe the rope. We mustn't show our teeth. Be careful. Here it comes.

EMILIA1: My lord I've been trying to find words that will not condemn me to a life of poverty. But there is no easy way to give you the plain truth.

LORD CAREY: (*Smiling.*) What wickedness have you performed now?

EMILIA1: My love I carry your child.

LORD CAREY immediately lets go of her. A long pause as she waits breathless for his response.

Please speak.

LORD CAREY: You won't be left wanting.

EMILIA1: Henry.

LORD CAREY: I'll arrange everything for you.

EMILIA1: Arrange what?

LORD CAREY: We'll speak anon.

He strides away. She tries to grab him but he slips her grasp.

EMILIA1: Please!

She is left alone. Except for the other two EMILIAS.

My heart. From the very moment I uttered the words I felt him begin to untie the knots. Can I run now? Where to?

And what of my child? I couldn't run so much as a bear in a pit could.

She exits. LORD CAREY enters with ALPHONSO LANIER – he is dressed flamboyantly and extravagantly for a court musician. He possesses a descant recorder.

ALPHONSO: I cannot love her. She is my cousin. And besides it is a poor match for me. My father expected better.

LORD CAREY: Your father had little to no expectation for you and this match is above anything you could have ever hoped to have achieved.

ALPHONSO: She is not to my taste.

EMILIA1 re-enters.

LORD CAREY: Your tastes need refinement.

ALPHONSO: She is soiled goods.

LORD CAREY: (*Furious.*) Proud, scornful boy, unworthy of this good gift! Check thy contempt! What you have before you is a flower of such sweetness and beauty. A viper of such strength and cunning. A temptress who will beguile the very clothes off your back. Do not underestimate this jewel.

EMILIA1: Can the jewel speak?

LORD CAREY: Emilia this is the best way.

EMILIA1: It is so far from the best it is back round to the worst. Alphonso? ALPHONSO? What are you doing Henry?

ALPHONSO: Thank you!

EMILIA1: Do you not want me to be happy?

LORD CAREY takes her to one side.

LORD CAREY: This is the perfect solution. He won't want of you and you have no need to give to him. We can continue our meetings but for colour you will appear virtuous.

EMILIA1: With Alphonso?!

LORD CAREY: I know, I know but think. He won't care. Look at him.

They both look over at Alphonso who is preening himself in a mirror.

He cares more for himself than for any woman.

EMILIA1: It's not women I'll be competing with that's for sure.

LORD CAREY: You won't need to compete at all.

EMILIA1: I cannot marry someone I do not love.

LORD CAREY: You can. And you must.

EMILIA1: And you won't abandon me?

LORD CAREY: I won't.

EMILIA1: What have you offered him?

LORD CAREY: My care. You will be provided for.

EMILIA1: I only do this for you.

LORD CAREY: And I for you. Lanier?

ALPHONSO comes over.

It is agreed.

ALPHONSO: Not by me!

LORD CAREY: Let me be very clear. If you are not obedient then I will throw you from my care and worse you will suffer both my revenge and hate which I will set loose on

you in the name of justice. Without any chance of pity. Speak your answer now.

ALPHONSO: Well when you put it like that. How can a man refuse?

LORD CAREY: Good answer. Come. We'll lay out our terms.

He takes ALPHONSO away without a backward glance at EMILIA1. She stands in shock as EMILIA2 and EMILIA3 speak. Over the following EMILIA1 is dressed in her wedding dress by handmaids.

EMILIA3: Was I a trawl of fish or stack of hay? Was I meat? What else was there for me now? His hook in me digs deeper, burrows further into my flesh so that it can assert it's ownership over my body. He has covered all inches of me. While he discusses what to do with my future. His seed is busy making home of my now. What were these feelings growing in me? The flutterings of a tiny creature making himself known or was it something else? It was a strange feeling indeed. A growing sense of unease.

EMILIA2: A flickering flame. Heat.

EMILIA3: I felt heat. Of something starting. Something that has lain quiet and still for some time. Held down. Buried. And this unspeakable action by my lord has awakened it somehow. I knew that I would marry that man but no longer for my love.

EMILIA2: I did it for my child.

EMILIA3: For me? I would begin to fan this flame so as to see how bright it would burn.

SCENE 5

Music. The Wedding Of ALPHONSO LANIER and EMILIA BASSANO. A motif that shows the transfer over from LORD CAREY to ALPHONSO. The couple are married. The kiss is an awkward peck. They pull away from each other as soon as it's done. ALPHONSO goes to his friends. EMILIA immediately bumps into someone. It's SHAKESPEARE.

EMILIA: I'm so sorry!

SHAKESPEARE: The fault was mine. My lady...

EMILIA: Emilia Bassano...sorry; Lanier. It's Lanier now.

SHAKESPEARE: Congratulations.

EMILIA: We met once did we not? Lady Mary Sidney's home.

SHAKESPEARE: Of course! The dark lady I never got the chance to speak with. My name is William Shakespeare. But you can call me Will. If you like, you don't have to.

A brief moment that they share.

Your husband approaches.

He leaves. EMILIA is disappointed and turns to ALPHONSO who approaches merrily.

ALPHONSO: I'm going to go and celebrate our marriage my dear.

EMILIA: Where?

ALPHONSO: With my friends.

A group of rowdy men cheer and raise glasses.

EMILIA: I mean tradition does dictate that a man must spend the first night with his wife....but...

ALPHONSO: Oh no no no. Fret not! It's far more fashionable for the groom to go and toast the beauty of his wife

with friends. I'll return anon and we can complete our... business then.

He leaves.

EMILIA: I can hardly wait.

He's gone.

What am I to do now? Go to my Lord Carey? Chase my new husband? I know not. No. I care not. I am done dancing towards them. They will have to dance to me.

She is about to sweep off when she bumps into SHAKESPEARE.

Oh!

SHAKESPEARE: I didn't mean to startle you my lady. I was simply returning to pay you my many congratulations.

EMILIA: You already did.

SHAKESPEARE: Sorry?

EMILIA: Before. You have already congratulated me.

SHAKESPEARE: Well then I do it again. Congratulations.

EMILIA: That's a bit weird isn't it?

SHAKESPEARE: Pardon?

EMILIA: If you wanted to say something else just say it I cannot be more done with the verbal dances we have to do all the time.

SHAKESPEARE: Oh I see.

EMILIA: Now what?

SHAKESPEARE: I'm sorry I just/

EMILIA: I'm going.

SHAKESPEARE: No please! When we met the first time I didn't have a chance to properly introduce myself but I was taken by your charm.

EMILIAI: You liked my face you mean.

SHAKESPEARE: Yes

EMILIAI: My skin.

SHAKESPEARE: Yes.

EMILIAI: You find me intriguing perhaps? You find me a 'breath of fresh air'. You find me exciting maybe. You want to give me a try. You want to see whether things are different with me. You want to even perhaps rescue me. Perhaps you want to sweep me off and cuddle me. Protect me. Perhaps you want to sympathise with me. Pity me. Be my champion. Encourage me. Step into the heroes shoes and alter my fate. Is that it? Because I've heard all of this before. A thousand times from all the men who skulk past and sniff at me like dogs. I don't care who you are but you will not be able to say or give me anything I have not had before. And besides, I'm married now. You should find someone better suited to your attentions.

She goes to leave.

SHAKESPEARE: You're so angry. Why? You're like a trapped wasp.

EMILIAI: Alright. We're doing this are we?

SHAKESPEARE: Doing what?

EMILIAI: You know what. Fine. Let's do it. If I am a wasp, best beware my sting.

SHAKESPEARE: If you sting me I'll pluck it out.

EMILIAI: Ay if you can find it.

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SHAKESPEARE: Who doesn't know where a wasp keeps his sting? It's in his tail!

EMILIAI: In his tongue.

SHAKESPEARE: Who's tongue?

EMILIAI: Your tongue if you don't leave me be.

SHAKESPEARE: Is this...I mean...are we? I don't know what this is.

EMILIAI: I do know of you, you know. How can I not? I hear you are a poet.

SHAKESPEARE: I am.

EMILIAI: Me too.

SHAKESPEARE: You write?

EMILIAI: I do.

They circle each other. They're wooing each other.

SHAKESPEARE: How oft, when thou, my music, music play'st, Upon that blessed wood whose motion sounds

With thy sweet fingers, when thou gently sway'st

The wiry concord that mine ear confounds,

Do I envy those jacks that nimble leap

To kiss the tender inward of thy hand,

Whilst my poor lips, which should that harvest reap

At the wood's boldness by thee blushing stand!

To be so tickled, they would change their state

And situation with those dancing chips,

O'er whom thy fingers walk with gentle gait,

Making dead wood more blest than living lips.

Since saucy jacks so happy are in this,

Give them thy fingers, me thy lips to kiss.

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She seems like she is going to kiss him then turns away at the last moment leaving Shakespeare frustrated. At some point over the following he gives her a rose.

EMILIA: How I would make him fawn, and beg, and seek,
And wait the season, and observe the time,
And spend his prodigal wits in bootless rhymes,
And shape his service wholly to my hests,
And make him proud to make me proud that jests!
So pertaunt like would I o'ersway his state
That he should be my fool, and I his fate.

She gives the rose to someone in the audience. Shakespeare reacts angrily. Over the following EMILIA reacts to his insults.

SHAKESPEARE: My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;
Coral is far more red than her lips' red;
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.

EMILIA: That's racist!

SHAKESPEARE: I have seen roses damask'd, red and white,
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;
And in some perfumes is there more delight
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.
I love to hear her speak, yet well I know
That music hath a far more pleasing sound:
I grant I never saw a goddess go;
My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground.
And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare
As any she belied with false compare

EMILIA: I carried Henry's child but it was Will's heart that I came to cherish.

EMILIA: Come, gentle night, come, loving, black-brow'd night,

Give me my Will, and, when I shall die,
Take him and cut him out in little stars,
And he will make the face of heaven so fine
That all the world will be in love with night,
And pay no worship to the garish sun.

Suddenly EMILIA cries out.

Stop!

She grabs her belly and looks up at SHAKESPEARE in fear.

SHAKESPEARE: Oh shit. I'll get help! Midwife!

He runs off.

SCENE 6

1592

The MIDWIFE runs on and EMILIA roar in pain.

MIDWIFE: Here! Now you listen to me. You push when I say.
You stop when I say. Anything in between? You do what I say. You understand?

EMILIA: Yes. But I want to push. Can I push?

MIDWIFE: Hold up!

She looks under EMILIA's skirts.

No, no, no, no, YES PUSH!

The birth is a bustling affair with lots of calm reassurances from the MIDWIFE and yelling from EMILIA. Choral voices. EMILIA cradles her new son. ALPHONSO bursts in.

ALPHONSO: I came as soon as I could! Is it safe to view my child?

MIDWIFE: It is.

ALPHONSO: It's just I'm no good around blood and gore.

MIDWIFE: You just missed that.

ALPHONSO: Small mercies. Do I have a son?

MIDWIFE: I'll let your wife tell you that.

ALPHONSO approaches.

EMILIA: I'll call him Henry.

ALPHONSO: Really?

EMILIA: Let's make sure we're never forgotten by him.

ALPHONSO: Clever woman.

He kisses her on the head.

He's got your eyes. They're very lovely. And his cheeks are/

EMILIA: You're allowed to go now.

ALPHONSO: Oh thank god. Good bye my love. I'm off to fight in a war.

EMILIA: Do whatever you need to do. I am content. Try not to spend all of our money.

ALPHONSO: That would be good! Oh! And well done for not dying. That would have been a massive drag.

The baby cries and so ALPHONSO exits.

EMILIA: Shush little one. Are you so sad that you have come? This great stage of fools? It won't be so bad. It won't be so bad.

SCENE 7

We see a brief moment of SHAKESPEARE and EMILIA as lovers which is interrupted by HENRY CAREY before he speaks. Then over the following scene we see various moments occur including SHAKESPEARE watching from a small distance away. EMILIA tries to nurse her child but the MIDWIFE is constantly taking him from her. She is also desperately trying to write. She is also torn by her love of SHAKESPEARE and he distracts her from her mothering AND her work. She oscillates between him and LORD CAREY. The two of them demanding her attention one after the other.

LORD CAREY: You do know that rumours are rife about you?

EMILIA: You don't believe any of them do you?

LORD CAREY: Of course I don't.

EMILIA: Good. Can you stay?

LORD CAREY: No. I'm called to court. We are assembling a company of actors – we're naming it after me; the Lord Chamberlain's Men! Young Will Shakespeare is making a real name for himself. You wouldn't want to ruin that for him would you?

She jumps back into the moment with SHAKESPEARE.

EMILIA: I dare not be the reason your play is late. What have you called it?

SHAKESPEARE: I know not.

EMILIA: Then I shall name it. My Love. Your Labour. Your lost son.

SHAKESPEARE: Catchy.

EMILIA: Love. Labour and Loss.

SHAKESPEARE: You don't even know what it's about yet.

EMILIA: I can guess. Mistaken identity, notes passed, silly boys and women who could do better?

SHAKESPEARE: Well now you mention it.

EMILIA: Make sure there is resistance from the women.

I want there to be one who does not wish to marry.

Who is being forced to marry. Let me be able to relate to someone. Someone who has not been given what she deserves.

SHAKESPEARE: Why wait to be given? Why not take?

EMILIA: You try taking when you are as I am. You try just taking. You can speak as you do because of who you are. What you are. You try stepping in my shoes.

SHAKESPEARE: You have your own talents my love. If you strive you too can achieve the same as I.

She jumps into a moment with LORD CAREY

LORD CAREY: He has talent. Talent doesn't need distraction.

EMILIA: What if it is I that is getting distracted?

LORD CAREY: From what?

EMILIA: My work.

LORD CAREY: Well alright but yours is more of a hobby isn't it?

EMILIA: Would you consider something of mine for your men? I could write a play.

LORD CAREY begins laughing hard.

LORD CAREY: Oh you are glorious. I must go. Just be careful. We need him.

He leaves. EMILIA turns back to SHAKESPEARE.

SHAKESPEARE: What did you think he was going to say?

EMILIA: (*Furious.*) Am I not permitted to have what you have?

SHAKESPEARE: Be careful Emilia. Anger will not serve you well.

EMILIA: Anger serves me just fine! Anger will fuel me. Anger will turn hope into action. Do not take my anger from me.

SHAKESPEARE: You cannot be angry with me?

EMILIA: Why not?

SHAKESPEARE: Have I not worked hard? And are you not happy for me?

EMILIA: How bitter a thing it is to look into happiness through another's eyes.

SHAKESPEARE: That's very cruel.

EMILIA: If you think I'm cruel to speak this truth then you will think me murderous if all my truth were known.

SHAKESPEARE: You're shaking. What's wrong you?

EMILIA: It feels like morning. I'm waking up.

SHAKESPEARE: Your words! This passion! Yes. Love's, Labour's, Lost. I can write this. I will write this tonight. And my heart, it will be in tribute to you. Let me help your words find a stage. Let me pour you into my work and immortalise your soul.

He grabs her and kisses her then turns to grab his quill and parchment and leaves in a hurry. Over the following EMILIA is strapped into a pregnancy bump.

EMILIA: Is this what it feels like now? Is this it? Have I reached my summit? Should I now rest here and watch

the heights that can be reached on other mountains by them? Looking up through the clouds. Searching and straining to watch them triumphantly conquer higher, more beautiful, more bountiful mountains that are not mine to climb? Is this it?

LADY CORDELLA enters

LADY CORDELLA: Emilia! Have you heard the news? Your Lord is dead!

EMILIA: Alphonso?

LADY CORDELLA: Lord Carey.

EMILIA: No!

LADY CORDELLA: Last night.

EMILIA: Can I see him?

LADY CORDELLA: His wife is in attendance.

LADY CORDELLA exits. EMILIA is rocked by this news. Everyone has eyes on her. She stands and composes herself.

EMILIA³: There was never any love without pain. My belly was full and round again. Over the crest of a wave I went. Again and again and again.

EMILIA howls in labour and gives birth. A repeat of her previous birth but quicker.

SCENE 8

EMILIA: *(To her new baby.)* Oh the life you could have had if you had not been born as I. Little eyes stay closed so you don't see the fate you are headed towards. Together. We'll do all this together.

ALPHONSO arrives.

ALPHONSO: Well what immaculate conception could this be? Did I pop back from battle nine months ago? A son?

EMILIA: A daughter. Odilya.

ALPHONSO: Well she is of no interest to me. Is Henry prospering?

EMILIA: He is well. I assume. I get letters from school. I barely see him. You hear about Lord Carey.

ALPHONSO: I did.

EMILIA: I trust you are being careful with our funds.

ALPHONSO: Must you ask? I trust you are being discreet?

EMILIA: As ever.

ALPHONSO: Clever woman.

SHAKESPEARE has been watching and waits for ALPHONSO to leave before he approaches with a Moses basket. EMILIA puts the baby in his arms.

SHAKESPEARE: Is she...?

EMILIA: Yes.

SHAKESPEARE: You know that I cannot...

EMILIA: I know. Your play? Is it open?

SHAKESPEARE gently returns the baby to EMILIA

SHAKESPEARE: Yes. Much Ado About Nothing. They love it. In fact. I'm due at the theatre now.

EMILIA turns to get her notepad, while she does SHAKESPEARE leaves.

EMILIA: I've written something new also. In the bleary moments between night feeds. It's all I can do but I think

it might be good. I know you're busy and probably have plenty of your own work to be doing but will you read it? Tell me what you think.

She turns and sees he's gone.

EMILIA3: Are you ready?

EMILIA2: Yes.

Over the following EMILIA1 has placed the baby in it's Moses basket and takes the opportunity to write. EMILIA3 approaches the crib and when it feels right takes the opportunity to lift the baby and cuddle her then finally replace her.

EMILIA3: Some women will say that when they give birth they lose something of themselves to their child. That somehow this tiny parasite that has grown within them has managed to sneak something out of her and will now keep it as their own forever. They see this as the stolen sleep and time. They see this in the changes to their body or the pains they will forever have. They see this in the way their lives before will never now return to them as they will have to pour all their energy into their child so that they can instead be the one that thrives. Not many mothers will begrudge this but some will. I did not begrudge this. But I did feel a loss. Yet it was worth it; I thought that I could bring up a daughter who was perhaps stronger than me. Perhaps would benefit from a changing landscape. Have more chances than I did. And I knew that I would fight for her. So even though I felt the loss I also saw the gain. And for me, Odilya, was hope.

Everyone watches EMILIA1 as she speaks to her daughter. The other EMILIA's join her.

EMILIA1: Hello sweet girl.

EMILIA2: Will you wake?

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EMILIA1: Let's go out for a walk.

EMILIA3: Odilya?

EMILIA2: Will you?

EMILIA1 gently shakes her then after another moment she rips at the baby's clothing.

EMILIA1: Odilya?

EMILIA2: Wake up.

She holds her baby to her face and tries to feel her breath.

EMILIA3: Breath.

EMILIA2: Breath for me.

EMILIA1: Please. No no no no.

She is on her knees holding her baby to her. The baby is taken from her. EMILIA2 and EMILIA3 have joined her.

EMILIA3: You've done so well.

They swap places. EMILIA1 is helped off by EMILIA3 and the ensemble. EMILIA2 is left alone in her grief.

SCENE 9

SHAKESPEARE enters.

SHAKESPEARE: I heard. Are you alright?

EMILIA2: No.

SHAKESPEARE: What can I do?

EMILIA2: Nothing.

SHAKESPEARE: Nothing will come of nothing.

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EMILIA2: I cannot heave my heart into my mouth. There are no words for what I am feeling.

SHAKESPEARE: I know my love.

EMILIA2: Do you?

SHAKESPEARE: You know I do.

EMILIA2: And yet you find them. Again and again. The pain and anguish of your own losses written large upon the stage. Does it help? I think it must. If only my own grief could be dissipated as such. But it can't. Can it? And it is because of this that grief is not my only pain. It is my whole existence in your shadow. It is women born to a status that dooms us to your ill will. That there be women that do abuse their husbands I am of no doubt but the balance is grossly tipped in your favour. That we must assume that everything we do is to be dismissed. That all talent and interest, all passion and sense is just a quirk of our sex that can be indulged but never validated. That we must instead sit quietly and patiently watch as you enjoy the fruits of your labours. Imagine it so for you. Then see how my own desires languish in the dark. And still your sex think we are less? That we have less, to be able to survive? That somehow perhaps we feel less? Well I would that you use your privileged position in that wooden O of words to let husbands know, their wives have sense like them. They see and smell and have their palates, both for sweet and sour, as husbands have. What is it that they do when they change us for others? Is it sport? I think it is. And does affection breed it? I think it does. Is it frailty, that thus errs? It is so too. And have not we affections. Desires for sport, and frailty, as men have? Then let them use us well; else let them know, the ills we do, their ills instruct us so. Get out.

SHAKESPEARE: Emilia you are full of grief. Stop.

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EMILIA2: Get out!

SHAKESPEARE: I will return when you are at peace.

EMILIA2: I will never be at peace as long as I have no voice!

SHAKESPEARE leaves.

I will not stop. I will not rest until I find words for my Odilya. And for all my daughters I will never know.

SCENE 10

LADY KATHERINE arrives.

EMILIA2: Will you help me? I need money to publish my poetry. I can change things. For us all. I know it.

LADY KATHERINE: Listen to me Emilia; you have lost Lord Carey and your yearly stipend, your husband is an idiot who spends more money than he has, you have no other lovers to pay for you and soon you will be driven to the streets. You are throwing away years of hard work and your father and mother, if they were with you now, would be urging you the same as me. This battle is not yours to fight.

EMILIA2: Then whose is it?

LADY KATHERINE: Not yours. You speak as if you do not live a life of privilege when you do. You are fine. You can still be fine. Why would you want to throw this away?

EMILIA2: I know I can still be fine and I know my privilege, I am reminded of it every day. Every time I am looked upon with surprised eyes. When I'm lusted over. When I am questioned as to whether I should be in court or did I get lost on my way up from downstairs. I doubt you've ever suffered the same.

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LADY KATHERINE: It's hardly a suffering.

EMILIA2: You don't get to say that unless you've experienced it. Have you not heard the way the men in court discuss those coming here to seek a home? To seek work? To seek peace and solace? Have you not noticed how they are no longer interested in what skills people bring but whether they 'belong' here or not? Have you not felt a change? These families, coming here, they are like mine. I'm no longer a curiosity. I'm something else now. I can't sit by and do nothing.

LADY KATHERINE: Find the path you were trained for and rejoin it. Be sensible Emilia.

EMILIA2: 'Sensible' has never changed anything Katherine.

LADY KATHERINE: Then I must go.

She leaves.

As EMILIA2 speaks she paces. She walks the stage but eventually joins the groundlings. Stalking everywhere. She has come to the Globe to see SHAKESPEARE'S latest play OTHELLO and the actors prepare themselves on stage.

EMILIA2: I must walk the shore of the river on Bankside. I must breathe in the filth and smoke and smells of the water that brought us here. I must surround myself with the rest of us. I find myself at the Globe. It's busier here than before. There's a buzz. A new play is on. I go into the yard amongst people like me, people not like me, people. I go into the yard and for a moment I let myself look at the stage as if expecting to see my own work there. For we are told this. That the art is for escape and we should simply transpose our own image upon it. Use

our imaginations. That should be enough shouldn't it? But there is only so much work our imaginations can do. When the image we see is so far from our truth we cannot see a place for us. Is there no room at all? We do not ask for them to step aside and go without we merely ask them to let us join. Surely there is enough to go around.

Suddenly she sees SHAKESPEARE who walks through the dress circle to the box. He is enjoying his fame.

Will?

SHAKESPEARE: Ay? Autographs at stage door thank you.

EMILIA2: Do you ignore me now?

SHAKESPEARE: You were the one who told me to go.

EMILIA2: But now I see you have much to do.

SHAKESPEARE: It's a busy time. The Globe needs plays. I'm writing more than I ever have. My latest is a triumph. Othello. I play Iago. It is about a Moor. It's right up your street.

EMILIA2: I'm happy for you.

SHAKESPEARE: Are you?

EMILIA2: I'm happy you've found your voice so strongly. Perhaps it is because I am no longer your muse?

SHAKESPEARE: You never were.

EMILIA2: What?

SHAKESPEARE: You were my lover but I had other muses. This is all rather public isn't it? So sorry! Excuse me

He exits to come down. EMILIA2 is made to wait. SHAKESPEARE arrives on stage.

Look, you were my sparring partner. You challenged me of course. But I did not need you for my work.

EMILIA2: And yet you were happy to use my words.

SHAKESPEARE: They aren't yours. No one owns words spoken. No one owns what they've said. What absurdity. After all you can speak with passion and eloquence but when you come to put it onto a page it is a harder craft than you may imagine. I have the talent to recognise phrases or speeches that can be used and I craft them into my scripts to tell the story I wish them to tell. That is where the skill lies. Not in simply speaking. It means nothing until it is on a page.

EMILIA2: Do not assume to teach me my craft. I am not a schoolgirl staring up at you in adoration. You are explaining what I already know. Why is it only men do this? You speak as if I cannot already write.

SHAKESPEARE: You can.

EMILIA2: And yet I should not have recognition for it? Should not publish? Not be commissioned as you?

SHAKESPEARE: No.

EMILIA2: Why not?

SHAKESPEARE: ...

EMILIA2: Will? Why can I not do as you do?

SHAKESPEARE: ...

EMILIA2: You know why. Say it.

A musical flourish.

SHAKESPEARE: Good luck Emilia. Act 4 is beginning I need to go.

EMILIA2: My words! You've used my words and stories in so many of your plays and yet only your name is known.

SHAKESPEARE: (*Angry.*) Now you listen to me. Those plays are MY work. I toiled over them. I wrote them. Me. There is a big difference between having an idea to write and being the one who actually does it.

EMILIA2: But I do write!

SHAKESPEARE: I will not be held at fault for the rules of our time.

EMILIA2: And yet you prosper from them.

SHAKESPEARE: What would you have me do? Down tools? Refuse to write unless women are also given the same freedoms?

EMILIA2: Yes!

SHAKESPEARE: Well I won't. And neither would you if you were I.

Some voices call for him from elsewhere.

BOB: Will!

DAVE: We've got your beer.

SHAKESPEARE: Just a sparkling water for me...need to protect my voice...!

BOB: It's starting!

SHAKESPEARE: Good day Emilia. How about you try enjoying the show instead of taking offence at any similarities to your words within it try being flattered. Many other women would die for the chance.

He leaves. BOB and DAVE who he's joining cheer and laugh at him. By now EMILIA2 is on the floor with the Groundlings. Act 4 Scene

2 of Othello is playing out. The Willow Song is shared between DESDEMONA and EMILIA. Whilst this happens SHAKESPEARE joins his friends in one box and EMILIA2 makes her way up to a box on the opposite side. The scene starts.

DESDEMONA: I have heard it said so. – O these men, these men! Dost thou in conscience think – tell me Emilia.

EMILIA3: She had my name.

EMILIA2: She has my name.

DESDEMONA: That there be women do abuse their husbands in such gross kind?

A musical note.

EMILIA3: There. This. Here.

DESDEMONA: Wouldst thou do such a deed for all the world?

EMILIA: Why, would not you?

DESDEMONA: No by this heavenly light!

EMILIA: Nor I neither by this heavenly light : I might do't as well i the dark.

EMILIA2: Ha! I like her.

DESDEMONA: Wouldst thou do such a deed for all the world?

EMILIA: The world is a huge thing; tis a great price for a small vice.

DESDEMONA: In troth, I think thou wouldst not.

EMILIA: In troth, I think I should, and undo't when I had done. Marry, I would not do such a thing for a joint-ring, nor for measures of lawn, nor for gowns, petticoats, nor caps, no any petty exhibition; but for the whle world – why who would not make her husband a cuckold, to make him a monarch? I should venture purgatory for 't.

EMILIA2: She speaks like I would. She seems like me. He's even used my name the bastard. Is he laughing at me? For this is not flattery. She speaks sense but they will not see it so. He is laughing at me. He says with this; look what I do that you cannot. And he expects my silence.

DESDEMONA: Beshrew me, if I would do such a wrong for the whole world.

EMILIA: Why the wrong is but a wrong i' the world; and having the world for your labour, 't is a wrong in your own world, and you might quickly make it right.

DESDEMONA: I do not think there is any such woman.

EMILIA: Yes a dozen; and as many to the vantage as would store the world they played for. But I do think, it is their husbands' faults, if wives do fall.

EMILIA2: Did I not say this to him on the pillow one night? I remember this. I did! I was furious with Alphonso! Oh these are mine! These are mine!

EMILIA: Say, that they slack their duties, and pour our treasures into foreign laps. Or else break out in peevish jealousies, Throwing restraint upon us; or say, they strike

us, Or scant our former having in despite: Why we have galls; and, though we have some grace,

A musical note.

EMILIA3: Now!

EMILIA2 runs on stage.

EMILIA2 AND EMILIA: Yet have we some revenge.

The person playing EMILIA stops in shock and looks down towards EMILIA2 who continues the speech while battling her way through the Groundlings and to the stage.

EMILIA2: Let husbands know, their wives have sense like them: they see and smell, And have their palates, both for sweet and sour. As husbands have. What is it that they do, when they change us for others? Is it sport? I think, it is. And doth affection breed it? I think it doth.

DESDEMONA: There's a woman on the stage!

Over the following the attendees of the performance of Othello react in outrage and amazement. No one at first knows what to do but eventually they make it to stage to get rid of her.

It's't frailty, that thus errs? It is so too. And have not we affections, desires for sport and frailty, as men have? Then let them use us well; else let them know, the ills we do, their ills instruct us so.

By now she is centre stage addressing the crowd. She is furious and powerful. A couple of officials try to grab her and drag her off but she pulls away from them and beats her feet chanting:

The ills we do, their ills instruct us so!

This becomes a chant. Drums. She is watched but not joined. It feels like she is winning but then finally she is over come by people trying to stop her and she is dragged from the stage still shouting.

BOB: Music!

EMILIA2: The ills we do, their ills instruct us so!

BOB: Curtain!

END OF ACT 1