

KIT *cont'd*

Well, let's finish Act Two so we can get drunk. Race you?

WILL

No but Kit—

KIT

We'd better get it done quickly, I'll have to go out of town soon. Business abroad, you know how it is. If there's a sequel we may have to work separately which I know you'd prefer.

WILL

No but Kit, are you going to—

KIT

You're either in or out, Will. If you're out, you don't get to know. Content yourself.

(Pause)

WILL

I do. I will.

(SLAM, light/sound/transition; Kit goes out, Will in a spot, maybe sheds his jacket, talking to the audience.)

WILL

Yeah, I'm no secret Catholic but my family are, so that's a problem. Do you think he really agreed to write with me to spy on me? Maybe he thought I was stupid enough to tell him anything. Well, I wasn't, quite, but unfortunately that misbegotten history play we threw together did well enough that we've got to write sequels, God help us, so here we are months later writing Part Two.

START

PART 2

(SLAM: Will alone writing steadily at the table. It's hot; maybe he's in a not-very-clean shirt. Kit bangs in; underneath his banter he's tense.)

KIT

Hello darling, I'm back.

(Will holds up a finger to say quiet, give me a minute without looking up or stopping writing.)

What's this impertinence? Too busy to welcome back the conquering / hero—

(Will holds up his whole hand and hunches over his work, determined not to be distracted.)

KIT *cont'd*

Fine, fine, finish your deathless whatever. Feck, it's hot.

(He does something to distract Will, though Will refuses to look up. Finally—)

For the love of our whoreson Christ, I've been gone for months, can you leave off posing as a fucking genius for ten minutes?

WILL

Posing?

(Kit comes over and reads over his shoulder. An intimate moment, maybe hands on Will's shoulders. He reaches over and picks up the page.)

KIT

"I fear me, love, that if I had been dead, thou wouldst not have mourned so for me./ No, my love, I should not mourn, but *die* for thee." *(displeased)* Not bad.

WILL

I know. You should have heard the next line, which has now gone right out of my head.

KIT

The next thing you think of will be better. Well. Look at you. Stealing a march, are you?

WILL

I told you I was doing Margaret.

KIT

You didn't tell me you were doing her better than anything else we've written so far in this shit play.

WILL

It's not so bad.

KIT

It's a shit play and you know it. A dog's breakfast, a mare's nest, a...nother bit of colorful vernacular.

WILL

It'll play.

KIT

Oh yes, it'll play. Not the stuff of immortality though, is it. "Why droopeth my lord, like over-ripened corn?" Why do you think, dozy cow.

WILL (*dry*)

I'm sorry if I've held you back. You needn't worry though, you've already got your immortality sewn up.

KIT

You haven't though. Have you? You've got what, that clown show you ripped off from Plautus? And Titus I-vomit-thus?

WILL

That's—that's a *pun*.

KIT

Oh, I know, I should leave the low humor to you, you're the expert at giving the groundlings what they like. You can bring in the coin, all right.

WILL

Why are you being so nasty, then? If I'm no threat to the great Marlowe?

KIT

Oh, you idiot, you upstart crow.

WILL

Oh, well, if you're going to plagiarize Greene now—

KIT

What, shall I spend my own jewels on such as you, you feckwit coney-brained gape-gobbed lost cause—

WILL

Have you done? Because I'm just in the middle of—

(Kit strikes him. Will is knocked back or down, his mouth bloodied; he wipes his mouth on his sleeve. Kit is braced for a return attack.)

You damned fool, this is my only decent shirt.

(Kit stares, then maybe laughs. He gives Will a beautiful handkerchief.)

KIT

Here, have this. Damn you, I was set up for a good fight; what does it take to provoke you?

WILL

You'll know when you do. Why are you in such a foul mood, anyway? (*Reads embroidered initials*) R.C.?

KIT

Just another whore.

WILL

A wealthy whore, to have such fine linen.

KIT

What are you implying?

WILL

That of you and R.C., I fancy R.C. is not the whore. What's funny?

KIT

Only your face in a minute when you realize.

WILL

R.C.... Oh Christ, Robert Cecil?

(Maybe he runs to make sure no one's listening at the door while Kit laughs.)

KIT

Need a clean pair of pants?

WILL

Oh shut up, you know I didn't know.

KIT

Anyway, you were right, but at least I'm not a cheap whore. Though I suppose you'd say better poor and free than rich and had.

WILL

I suppose I would.

KIT

It won't do, you know. Every man must have a master. Anyone who thinks otherwise is living in a dream.

WILL

Perhaps I like my dream. Anyway, what about a mistress?

KIT

Oh, I know you're a romantic but I'd like to see you groan under the rule of woman.

WILL

But I do. The queen for one.

KIT

Your wife, for another?

(slight pause)

I do know you've a wife, back home. Why so shut-mouth? Is she ugly? Old? Beastly?

WILL

I don't want to talk about her.

KIT

Oh, no, oh poor Will, have you got her upon a monument, like an image of virtue? You ought to know, she opens her legs like any other woman—

(Will hits him. Kit staggers back. He crows and squares off for a fight.)

Ah ha! Now we know what it takes. Come on then!

WILL *(handing back handkerchief)*

Sorry. Here, have this back.

KIT

Oh, damn, are we done? A married man should have more stamina.

WILL

As a matter of fact I do love her. There are different sorts of love.

KIT

Oh yes, I know. Love in an alley. Love in a stable. Love against the wall. Love over a table. Love with a pretty boy. Love with a slutty girl. Love with a nobleman whose purse you plunder.

WILL

I'm not sure you know what love is.

KIT

Oh shut up. Listen to you bleating on / about love—

WILL

You're the one who's going / on about it—

KIT

When I'm the one who knows how truly fecking dangerous it is.

WILL

If you could do *anything* quietly you'd find you could do anything you like.

KIT

No, no, that's you, slipping through the world like an eel, playing it safe, Careful Will who won't. But I will.

WILL

I know you will.

END

KIT

Can we stop doing that?

WILL

Right, yeah, I'm cautious, I have to be bloody cautious, because yes I've got a wife *and* children and I'd rather not see them starve in the next bad year—I can't afford reckless youth, I've got to keep my head down, stay out of trouble and make some bloody money.

KIT

Reckless youth? I've been out in the world as you *never* have, serving our country—

WILL

As if you've ever served anything or anyone but yourself, your ambition, your greedy appetite for sensation, your wild quarrelsome vainglorious—

KIT

Oh, is that how you see me?

WILL

It's impossible to insult you, you lap it all up like cream.

KIT

Yes I do, would you like that?

WILL

No. Work?

KIT

Did you miss me at all?

WILL

I didn't miss the uproar, the chaos, the impossibility of knowing whether knowing you would get me killed or kill me yourself—

KIT

Ah, you did miss me.