

KILLIGREW. Dryden! Come back here! (*Following him out with NANCY.*)

HART and NELL are left alone. NELL looks out into the empty theatre.

NELL. I'd forgotten the smell of this place. Wood. Paint.

HART. Sweat.

NELL. Always sweat. It's hardly changed.

HART. I remember the first time you stood here.

NELL. I almost didn't come up. Imagine if I hadn't. Where I might be.

HART. Writing an epic with Aphra Behn?! Adventuring to the Indies?

NELL. Maybe. Or still in Cheapside.

HART. Or still in Cheapside.

NELL. You told me once to mine my own emotions. But nothing came. I thought I couldn't act.

HART. You could always act.

NELL. But I didn't... feel. Not really. I didn't know then what it was to love. Or to lose. (*Pause.*) When he died I felt like I'd been capsized. Sunk. It was like stones had filled me and I couldn't breathe. I don't know if I can find it again. That joy.

HART. There was a time I didn't think I would.

NELL. I'm sorry.

HART. And I. But you will. It's just time, Nell. And patience. You'll get it back. And until then, just do what all great actors have done since the Grecians trod the boards.

NELL. What's that?

HART. Fake it.

NELL. Fake it? No, I couldn't do that. At least, not on stage.

HART. Nell!

NELL. You were so sure I could do it. How did you know?

HART. Instinct. And mad faith. (*Pause.*) And love.

NELL. Thank you, Mr Hart. (*Remembering their early exercise.*) MR HART!

Scene Twelve

Epilogue

We are in the final moments of Tyrranick Love. A Roman battle and then the final sequence. NELL, as Valeria, speaks to HART (Maximus), NANCY (Servant) and NED (Placidius).

NELL. 'Let me be just before I go away.

Placidius, I have vowed to be your wife;
Take then my hand, 'tis yours while I have life.
One moment here I must another's be;
But this, Porphyrius, gives me back to thee.'

NELL pretends to stab herself twice, and then NED wrestles the dagger from her.

NED. 'Help, help the princess, help!'

HART. 'What rage has urged this act, which thou hast done?'

NELL. 'I can no more, Porphyrius, my dear –'

NANCY. 'Alas, she raves, and thinks Porphyrius here.'

NELL. 'Porphyrius, do not swim before my sight;

Stand still, and let me, let me aim aright!
Stand still, but while thy poor Valeria dies,
And sighs her soul into her lover's eyes.'

NELL 'dies' and then HART pretends to stab himself – and then the other two stab themselves. Two 'EXTRAS' arrive with a stretcher and pick up the 'dead' NELL. When they get halfway across the stage she sits up and tells them to stop, in order for her to speak the epilogue. [*This epilogue is almost*