

A MYTH  
*of*  
SHAKE-  
SPEARE

*by*  
CHARLES  
WILLIAMS

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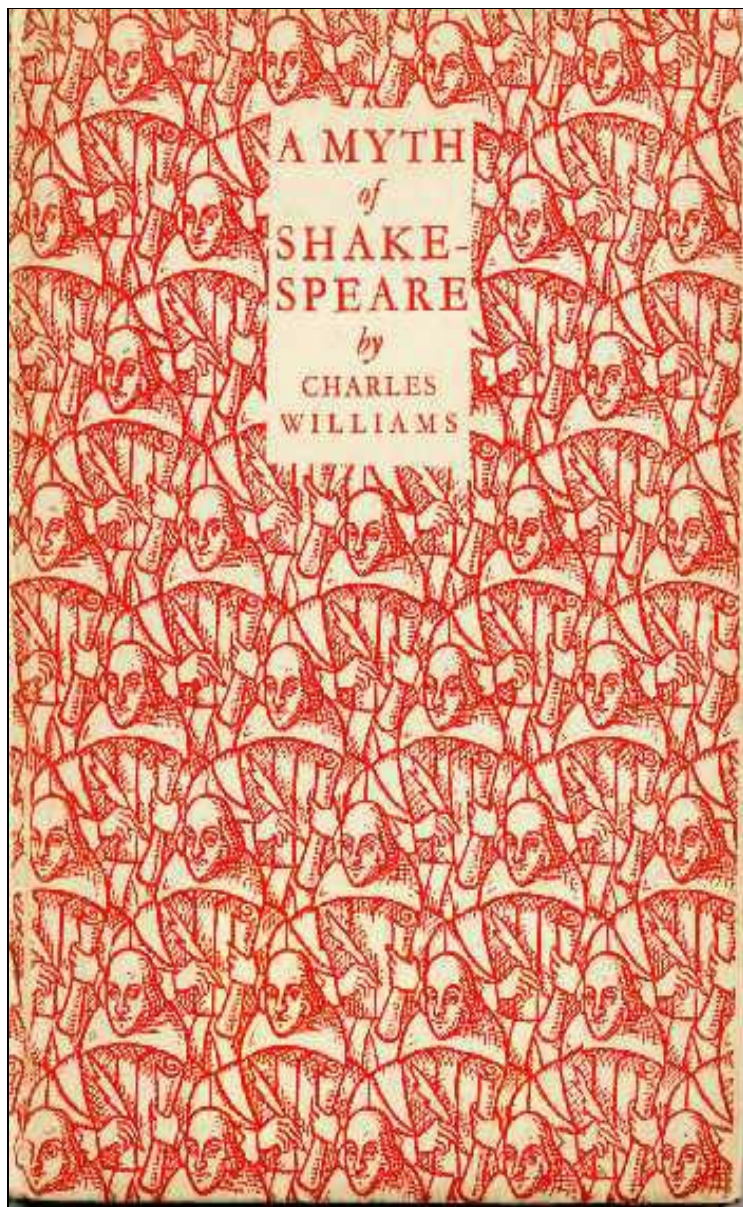
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**A MYTH OF  
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# CHARLES WILLIAMS

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## NOTE

The following verse was written, at the suggestion and largely on the plan of Mr. A. C. Ward, of the City Literary Institute, for a Shakespeare festival; the first part for the afternoon performance, the second for the evening. Its purpose therefore is only to provide a momentarily credible framework for

representative scenes and speeches from the Plays. It does not pretend to be an episodical play, after Mr. Drinkwater's model, and here and there—especially in the scenes relating to the Court—it allows itself a freedom of anachronism which its title may excuse. It contains no thesis of Shakespeare's life, character, or genius, except that he was a born poet and working dramatist. The scenes included were intended, quite mythically, to represent barely possible incidents in his life, passages read to or by his friends, or performances in his theatre.

It was originally intended that the *Myth* should be produced upon a double stage, the inner being separated from the outer by curtains which could be withdrawn whenever an actual scene from the Plays was given, its movement occupying either the inner or the whole stage as seemed most suitable. Speeches or scenes supposed to be read aloud (as in the second scene of the first part) might either be so read by the speaker or delivered by one or more actors from the inner stage.



It is clear that the *Myth* is capable of a good deal of variation. Complete scenes from the Plays might be inserted between or instead of its own scenes—one from the great tragedies, for example, somewhere in the second part; those included here might be dropped in favour of others at the expense of a little ingenuity in altering the verse or providing additions to the *Myth*. For convenience of reading, the extracts printed have been reduced to their shortest, without any implication that each abridgement is all that it is desirable to give in that particular instance. Each is a matter for the producer to decide with the Plays before him. But the natural interest which the authors (and especially the writer of the verse) feel in their attempt cause them to reserve the dramatic rights; applications for permission to produce the *Myth* as it stands or to make any alterations should be made to the Publisher.



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(Myth)



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## PROLOGUE

Courteous and kind, hear what we do not do;  
We are no learnèd wits, to bring to view  
The outward Shakespeare, giving you to scan  
London, the boards, the equipage, the man  
In every point accoutred to the time;  
Nor in the limits of a plausible rhyme  
To bid yet more interpretations start  
Out of the unknown point that was his heart.  
This is but fabulous dreaming; take it so.  
We tell you nothing that you do not know.  
If you mislike it and are wroth therewith,  
O think we call it nothing but a myth.  
If here a month and there a name's awry,  
O ask but if we do it prettily.  
We to the imaging of him to-day  
Bring nothing worthy to be called a play;  
'Tis but a masque done in his honour—sit,  
And if you rise too much displeasèd with it,  
Too much offendèd by the cloudy sense  
Wherewith we sully his magnificence,

Think that by so much you are less than he  
Who would have ta'en our service  
generously.  
The younger and the older Shakespeares  
would  
Have willed at least to try to find it good;  
Now, though excuse shall bid them be at  
odds,  
Must churchfolk be more godlike than their  
gods?  
Sit then and watch; and if you like our scene,  
Say no more than *Thus Shakespeare might  
have been.*

## **PART I**

### **SCENE I**

#### **THE ROAD FROM STRATFORD TO LONDON**

[SHAKESPEARE sitting on a stile singing.  
BOTTOM and the other craftsmen from the  
*Midsummer Night's Dream* cross the stage,

followed after a moment's interval by  
QUINCE, who pauses on seeing  
SHAKESPEARE]

QUINCE: God bless you, master. What  
makes life so gay?

SHAKESPEARE: Rhyme and an empty  
purse and hark-away!

QUINCE: An empty purse and hark-away?  
'Tis so  
That many feel an east wind.

SHAKESPEARE:                      If it blow,  
Why should rough melancholy freeze the  
time?  
Tell me but that—but lest you spoil the  
rhyme  
I end the line: ah, and begin another.

QUINCE [trying to rhyme]:  
Well done. When I was young and had a  
mother—  
I made a-many and was spry at fairs—

But now, God bless us!

SHAKESPEARE:            Now's a pack of  
cares  
If we will let it be so, but what part  
Can any play to ruin him at heart?

QUINCE:  
Young blood, young song, young talk, young  
legs on the road!  
But there's a time when all the blood has  
flowed  
Out of the heart, and though we still write  
plays,  
As I do, there's a frost upon our days—  
And tragic masks are meant for us to wear  
When—when—when—            [He breaks  
down

SHAKESPEARE:            O come, devil take  
despair!  
When we search larders and find nothing  
there,  
When spry October leaves the hedges bare,  
When we sit down before the fire and stare,

When knells of stormy death are in the air,  
When darkness swallows all bright things and  
rare,  
When we have lost our hearts and know not  
where,  
When doleful Winter takes the elbow chair,  
When thoughts fly up as pheasants at a scare,  
When every doublet has a length-long tear,  
When—

QUINCE: Ah, you've got a knack at finding  
rhymes—  
That's like me.... Did you ever write a play?

SHAKESPEARE: Something of one.

QUINCE: M'm. Where are  
you going now?

SHAKESPEARE: London; where else?  
London, where poets are  
And plays and theatres and all bright things  
else—  
Except for Anne.

QUINCE: Ah boy, there's always  
Anne.  
Howe'er we trudge and thrive in London  
town  
There's always Anne in the country pulls us  
back.

SHAKESPEARE: Well, she'll do better if I  
thrive. I shall;  
And she shall own the biggest house there is  
In Stratford, and think scorn of farmers'  
wives.

QUINCE: That's well; but count your  
crowns and keep them safe.  
Don't lend; don't borrow; look askance at  
drabs.  
Don't bluster, but be firm and keep your  
word.  
You'll soon be capped in Stratford .... Ere  
you go,  
Spend a night here with me and see a play.

SHAKESPEARE:  
A play! What company? the Lord

Chamberlain's? No,  
They're to the west. Who acts? and what's the  
play?

QUINCE: My play; the company's our own.  
My lad,  
You won't find better actors up in town—  
Perhaps not better plays. I don't say so,  
But others might, and do. What are you  
called?

SHAKESPEARE: My name is William  
Shakespeare.

QUINCE: A round name,  
A good, no-flourishing, prosperous, solid  
name.  
Come up then, Master Shakespeare; we  
rehearse  
In the forest here,—you'll learn a trick or two  
For when you write plays for the Queen's  
own Grace;  
Ha, ha, ha! there, don't mind me. My name's  
Quince.  
This way; this way—La, they're all waiting

us.

SHAKESPEARE [while QUINCE speaks to the players]:

Fair omen! help me, Fortune! These are they  
That are half-woodland and half-town; they  
are

The very stuff of the mind. Up, mind, and  
watch!

Plays for the Queen's Grace! a true word, my  
Quince;

But that's to come. Meanwhile, there's nought  
so poor

That has not something in it more than I,  
Worth watching, learning, knowing, making  
fast.

Rare fellows! look, they scatter—Ho, the  
play!

BOTTOM: *Are we all met?*

QUINCE: *Pat, pat; and here's a marvellous  
convenient place for our rehearsal. This  
green plot shall be our stage, this hawthorn-  
brake our tiring-house; and we will do it in*



*action as we will do it before the duke.*

**BOTTOM:** *Peter Quince,—*

**QUINCE:** *What sayst thou, bully Bottom?*

**BOTTOM:** *There are things in this comedy of Pyramus and Thisby that will never please. First, Pyramus must draw a sword to kill himself, which the ladies cannot abide. How answer you that?*

**SNOUT:** *By'r lakin, a parlous fear.*

**STARVELING:** *I believe we must leave the killing out, when all is done.*

**BOTTOM:** *Not a whit: I have a device to make all well. Write me a prologue; and let the prologue seem to say, we will do no harm with our swords, and that Pyramus is not killed indeed; and, for the more better assurance, tell them that I, Pyramus, am not Pyramus, but Bottom the weaver: this will put them out of fear.*

QUINCE: *Well, we will have such a prologue, and it shall be written in eight and six.*

BOTTOM: *No, make it two more: let it be written in eight and eight.*

SNOUT: *Will not the ladies be afeard of the lion?*

STARVELING: *I fear it, I promise you.*

BOTTOM: *Masters, you ought to consider with yourselves: to bring in,—God shield us!—a lion among ladies, is a most dreadful thing; for there is not a more fearful wild-fowl than your lion living, and we ought to look to it.*

SNOUT: *Therefore, another prologue must tell he is not a lion.*

BOTTOM: *Nay, you must name his name, and half his face must be seen through the lion's neck; and he himself must speak through, saying thus, or to the same defect,*

*'Ladies,' or, 'Fair ladies,' 'I would wish you,' or, 'I would request you,' or, 'I would entreat you, not to fear, not to tremble: my life for yours. If you think I come hither as a lion, it were pity of my life: no, I am no such thing: I am a man as other men are'; and there indeed let him name his name, and tell them plainly he is Snug the joiner.*

*QUINCE: If that may be, then all is well. Come, sit down, every mother's son, and rehearse your parts. Pyramus, you begin: when you have spoken your speech, enter into that brake; and so every one according to his cue.*

*PYRAMUS:  
O grim-look'd night! O night with hue so black!  
O night, which ever art when day is not!  
O night! O night! alack! alack, alack!  
I fear my Thisby's promise is forgot.  
And thou, O wall! O sweet, O lovely wall!  
That stand'st between her father's ground  
and mine;*

*Thou wall, O wall! O sweet, and lovely wall!  
Show me thy chink to blink through with  
mine eyne.*

[WALL holds up his fingers]

*Thanks, courteous wall: Jove shield thee well  
for this!*

*But what see I? No Thisby do I see.  
O wicked wall! through whom I see no bliss;  
Curs'd be thy stones for thus deceiving me!*

[Enter THISBE]

THISBE:

*O wall! full often hast thou heard my moans,  
For parting my fair Pyramus and me:  
My cherry lips have often kiss'd thy stones,  
Thy stones with lime and hair knit up in thee.*

PYRAMUS:

*I see a voice: now will I to the chink,  
To spy an I can hear my Thisby's face.  
Thisby!*

THISBE: *My love! thou art my love, I think.*

PYRAMUS: *Think what thou wilt, I am thy lover's grace;  
And, like Limander, am I trusty still.*

THISBE: *And I like Helen, till the Fates me kill.*

PYRAMUS: *Not Shafalus to Procrus was so true.*

THISBE: *As Shafalus to Procrus, I to you.*

PYRAMUS: *O! kiss me through the hole of this vile wall.*

THISBE: *I kiss the wall's hole, not your lips at all.*

PYRAMUS: *Wilt thou at Ninny's tomb meet me straightway?*

THISBE: *'Tide life, 'tide death, I come without delay.*

[Exeunt PYRAMUS and THISBE

WALL: *Thus have I, Wall, my part  
discharged so;  
And, being done, thus Wall away doth go.*

[Exit

[Re-enter THISBE, MOONSHINE, and  
LION]

THISBE: *This is old Ninny's tomb. Where is  
my love?*

LION [roaring]: *Oh—* [THISBE runs  
off

[The LION tears THISBE'S mantle,  
and exit

SHAKESPEARE: *Well moused, Lion.*

[Re-enter PYRAMUS]

PYRAMUS:  
*Sweet moon, I thank thee for thy sunny  
beams;  
I thank thee, moon, for shining now so  
bright,*

*For, by thy gracious, golden, glittering  
streams,*

*I trust to taste of truest Thisby's sight.*

*But stay, O spite!*

*But mark, poor knight,*

*What dreadful dole is here!*

*Eyes, do you see?*

*How can it be?*

*O dainty duck! O dear!*

*Thy mantle good,*

*What! stain'd with blood!*

*Approach, ye Furies fell!*

*O Fates, come, come,*

*Cut thread and thrum;*

*Quail, crush, conclude, and quell!*

SHAKESPEARE: *Beshrew my heart, but I  
pity the man.*

PYRAMUS:

*O! wherefore, Nature, didst thou lions frame?*

*Since lion vile hath here deflower'd my  
dear?*

*Which is—no, no—which was the fairest  
dame*

*That liv'd, that lov'd, that lik'd, that look'd  
with cheer.*

*Come tears, confound;  
Out, sword, and wound*

*The pap of Pyramus:*

*Ay, that left pap,*

*Where heart doth hop:*

*Thus die I, thus, thus, thus. [Stabs  
himself*

*Now am I dead,*

*Now am I fled;*

*My soul is in the sky:*

*Tongue, lose thy light!*

*Moon, take thy flight! [Exit*

MOONSHINE

*Now die, die, die, die, die. [Dies*

[Re-enter THISBE]

THISBE: *Asleep, my love?*

*What, dead, my dove?*

*O Pyramus, arise!*

*Speak, speak! Quite dumb?*

*Dead, dead! A tomb*

*Must cover thy sweet eyes.*



*These lily lips,  
This cherry nose,  
These yellow cowslip cheeks,  
Are gone, are gone:  
Lovers, make moan!  
His eyes were green as leeks.  
O, Sisters Three,  
Come, come to me,  
With hands as pale as milk;  
Lay them in gore,  
Since you have shore  
With shears his thread of silk.  
Tongue, not a word:  
Come, trusty sword:  
Come, blade, my breast imbrue: [Stabs  
herself  
And farewell, friends;  
Thus Thisby ends:  
Adieu, adieu, adieu. [Dies*

QUINCE: Well done, my masters.  
[To SHAKESPEARE:] Now, what make you  
on't?

SHAKESPEARE:

Thanks to you, Master Quince; and thanks to  
all

You gentle company, who make my heart  
Shake with dear pity and enforced grief  
And mortal terror, such as when the tale  
Of Ilium ruining in night and fire  
Stirred Dido from her contemplation  
Of the sea-borne Aeneas. O you are  
The mimics of old Death and outworn Time  
And stories of young lovers doomed to die,  
Tales that set Cupid weeping; you have  
stirred

My mother in me, and I cannot speak  
To thank you worthily, good fellows all,  
Lest tears should choke my speech with  
misery,

And make you weep as you made me. All  
thanks—

I can no more; speak for me, Master Quince.

QUINCE: Nay now, no marvel. I was  
moved myself;

In truth, it is a very piteous tale;  
You take it rightly; it is tragical mirth.

BOTTOM: Aye; there's a few things need  
reforming though;  
You keep your hands too still, some of you  
lads—  
Put your hearts to it, thus. You're yet too slow  
—

QUINCE: Aye, well, we'll do it over times  
enough  
Before we take the torchlight. The night  
grows.  
Come, Master Shakespeare, we're for home  
and bed.  
You'll be afoot with the sun, I make no doubt.

SNOUT: Why, where are you going, to be  
up so soon?

SHAKESPEARE: London, good friend.

SNOUT AND THE REST:           London  
—nay, there—afoot  
With the sun to London—why there?—aye,  
why there?

SHAKESPEARE: Because I leave the  
winter for the spring.

THE OTHERS: Spring, spring in London?  
—Hey now, there's a fool!—  
Seeks spring in London—hoo, hoo! a fine  
spring!

QUINCE: Peace, there; he speaks well.

BOTTOM:           Aye, aye, very well.  
Why, there's the Queen; consider, fellows all,  
There's the Queen's Grace. Isn't the Queen the  
spring?

SHAKESPEARE: O yes, the Queen is there  
—and all the Queens.  
The woodland's own Titania must be there;  
She never found a voice else, no, nor she  
Venus with all her doves. They murmur  
there,  
There are the voices; there is loveliness.

BOTTOM: Well, well, God bless you; I had  
thought of it,

But none could spare me hence when I was young.

[The actors move off, QUINCE going with them. SHAKESPEARE lingers]

SHAKESPEARE: O yes, the spring; but other lady-smocks Than grow on hedges, other daisies pied— Pied, pied, that's it.

[He drags a paper from his pocket, and writes in a word]

Strange how a word so long Hides in the arras, till a windy thought Blows shelter off and scares it into sight. Pied, pied, of course.

[He mutters and a voice sings]

I

*When daisies pied and violets blue  
And lady-smocks all silver-white  
And cuckoo-buds of yellow hue  
Do paint the meadows with delight,*

*The cuckoo then, on every tree,  
Mocks married men; for thus sings he,  
Cuckoo;  
Cuckoo, cuckoo: O, word of fear,  
Unpleasing to a married ear!*

## **II**

*When shepherds pipe on oaten straws,  
And merry larks are ploughmen's clocks,  
When turtles tread, and rooks, and daws,  
And maidens bleach their summer smocks,  
The cuckoo then, on every tree,  
Mocks married men; for thus sings he,  
Cuckoo;  
Cuckoo, cuckoo: O, word of fear,  
Unpleasing to a married ear!*

## **III**

*When icicles hang by the wall,  
And Dick the shepherd blows his nail,  
And Tom bears logs into the hall,  
And milk comes frozen home in pail,  
When blood is nipp'd, and ways be foul,*

*Then nightly sings the staring owl,  
Tu-who;  
Tu-whit, tu-who—a merry note,  
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.*

#### **IV**

*When all aloud the wind doth blow,  
And coughing drowns the parson's saw,  
And birds sit brooding in the snow,  
And Marian's nose looks red and raw,  
When roasted crabs hiss in the bowl,  
Then nightly sings the staring owl,  
Tu-who;  
Tu-whit, tu-who—a merry note,  
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.*

### **SCENE II**

**LONDON: OUTSIDE THE THEATRE**

[SHAKESPEARE lounging and watching  
the actors enter]

SHAKESPEARE: So, pass, and pass. That's

Greene—he's got no face  
To bring a country-lad to; country-lad?  
Boor, rustic. Why did I leave Stratford?  
Zounds,  
Because I saw no way of getting rich?  
Because I thought my poetry no worse  
Than other men's? Is it or is it not?  
It rings as hollow. Fool, to think to vie  
With Greene and Nash and Lyly—there's a  
mind  
Apollo's bow might loose at and not miss!  
But all this loaded pouch of verse—Chut, lad,  
That's temper, merely temper. None the less,  
Anne, if you saw your singing husband now  
You'd think your chance of New Place  
something lean.  
The tavern's my best hope; there's no chance  
here,  
But a word above a tankard—umph; my  
purse  
Warns me there won't be many tankards  
more.

MARLOWE [without]: Hola, my ancient!  
hola, child of Jove!



Hovering about the threshold of this house  
As his strong eagle on the golden bounds  
Of skyed Olympus! Ho there, take my horse.

SHAKESPEARE: I am no fee'd post, sir.  
Must Ganymede  
Do other service than the cup he bears?

MARLOWE: So, so. [To an unseen other:]  
Here, fellow. [He comes in.] What, my  
Ganymede,  
You think it scorn to hold your master's  
horse?

SHAKESPEARE: O no! but if the thunder-  
plated Jove  
Disguise his godship in a russet cloak,  
Close his vast lightnings in a leather sheath  
And walk familiarly with tavern-boys,  
Must not his minions wait upon his will  
And, though they know him, shrug a stranger  
by?

MARLOWE: That's the high talk; that's the  
true theatre talk.

Why, God-a-mercy, now our horse-boys brag  
As if the Soldan's self of Babylon  
Outbraved his viceroys and created kings.  
My furbisher of phrases, what best chance  
Taught your large mouth the syllables of  
gods?

SHAKESPEARE: The gods that voice them  
in the groundlings' ears,  
And know their kindred by the meet reply.

MARLOWE: God then or groundling?  
stand, unfold yourself.

SHAKESPEARE: Why, to say god were  
something oversworn,  
And to say groundling something  
undervowed;  
Is there no wingèd flight 'twixt heaven and  
earth  
That might have leave to sing what song it  
can,  
And chance the ear it pleased?

MARLOWE:

Please mine

then now

With something subtler than a mimic roar.

I do the roar as well as any lion

Let loose within the precincts, but I know

Excess can lift its head to bay the moon

While she rides spotless. Come, I go—one  
phrase.

SHAKESPEARE: Are you a poet and  
would challenge thought

To dive below the seas of memory

And bring a pearl to change in merchandise?

I have forgotten all I ever made.

MARLOWE: I half believe you for that  
very thing.

You make them then? You have gone out by  
night

To watch where Cynthia with a score of  
maids

Makes the whole world fantastic with her  
song?

Nay now, stout fellow! nay now, turn not  
hence.

Your pardon. I have wronged you.

SHAKESPEARE: Never  
wrong.  
But if you challenge all that claim the house  
To show their title-deeds, your years will be  
As a poor lawyer's, snuffling heavy doubts  
Before the clients shouting at the door.

MARLOWE: Why, truth, I'm not loved  
overwell within,  
But we must talk. Are you in waiting here  
For anyone but Time that kills the gods?

SHAKESPEARE: On Time that makes his  
common speed; on Luck  
That seems to have slept and left the race to  
Time.  
I could have held your horse as well as not,  
For all my haste; and better, for my pouch.

MARLOWE: Come in then: they rehearse a  
thing of mine—  
Pardon the brag. First labour and then drink.  
Come in and listen to me. Then my turn;  
No slipping, we must talk. Pray you, come in.

[They go into the theatre, where  
*Tamburlaine* is being rehearsed]

COSROES: *Barbarous and bloody  
Tamburlaine,  
Thus to deprive me of my crown and life.  
Treachorous and false Theridamas,  
Even at the morning of my happy state,  
Scarce being seated in my royal throne,  
To work my downfall and untimely end.  
An uncouth pain torments my grievèd soul,  
And death arrests the organ of my voice.  
Who entering at the breach thy sword hath  
made,  
Sacks every vein and artier of my heart,  
Bloody and insatiate Tamburlaine.*

TAMBURLAINE: *The thirst of reign and  
sweetness of a crown,  
That caused the eldest son of heavenly Ops  
To thrust his doting father from his chair  
And place himself in the Imperial heaven,  
Moved me to manage arms against thy state.  
What better president than mighty Jove?  
Nature that framed us of four elements,*

*Warring within our breasts for regimen,  
Doth teach us all to have aspiring minds:  
Our souls, whose faculties can comprehend  
The wondrous architecture of the world:  
And measure every wandering planet's  
course,  
Still climbing after knowledge infinite,  
And always moving as the restless spheres,  
Will us to wear ourselves and never rest,  
Until we reach the ripest fruit of all,  
The perfect bliss and sole felicity,  
The sweet fruition of an earthly crown.*

*THERIDAMAS: And that made me to join  
with Tamburlaine,  
For he is gross and like the massy earth,  
That moves not upwards, nor by princely  
deeds  
Doth mean to soar above the highest sort.*

*TECHELLES: And that made us the friends  
of Tamburlaine,  
To lift our swords against the Persian King.*

*USUMCASANE: For as when Jove did*

*thrust old Saturn down,  
Neptune and Dis gained each of them a  
crown:  
So do we hope to reign in Asia,  
If Tamburlaine be placed in Persia.*

*COSROES: The strangest men that ever  
nature made,  
I know not how to take their tyrannies.  
My bloodless body waxeth chill and cold,  
And with my blood my life slides through my  
wound.  
My soul begins to take her flight to hell,  
And summons all my senses to depart:  
The heat and moisture which did feed each  
other,  
For want of nourishment to feed them both,  
Is dry and cold, and now doth ghastly death  
With greedy talons gripe my bleeding heart,  
And like a harpy tires on my life.  
Theridamas and Tamburlaine, I die,  
And fearful vengeance light upon you both.*

[TAMBURLAINE takes the Crown and puts  
it on]

TAMBURLAINE: *Not all the curses which  
the furies breathe  
Shall make me leave so rich a prize as this:  
Theridamas, Techelles, and the rest,  
Who think you now is king of Persia?*

ALL: *Tamburlaine, Tamburlaine.*

TAMBURLAINE: *Though Mars himself the  
angry God of arms  
And all the earthly potentates conspire  
To dispossess me of this diadem  
Yet will I wear it in despite of them,  
As great commander of this Eastern world,  
If you but say that Tamburlaine shall reign.*

ALL: *Long live Tamburlaine, and reign in  
Asia.*

TAMBURLAINE: *So, now it is more surer  
on my head,  
Than if the Gods had held a Parliament:  
And all pronounced me king of Persia.*

[Exeunt. MARLOWE comes forward with



SHAKESPEARE, HENSLOWE, and  
GREENE]

MARLOWE: Well?

SHAKESPEARE: No.

MARLOWE: Ah tell me.

SHAKESPEARE: Tell you?  
You must know.

MARLOWE: Did ever poet less love praise  
for that?  
Tell me.

SHAKESPEARE: I cannot. There were a  
score of lines—  
I have forgotten—they went past my ear  
Like bright Apollo mounting on his car  
To his best heaven of radiance; what I heard  
Was no more mortal. O you have put off  
The last poor soiled flesh of humanity  
And are at once immortal. Was it you  
That bade me hold your horse? your horse,  
your cloak,

Your—anything, to have a hold on you  
And think that you once knew me. Must I  
kneel,  
Must I confess you are omniloquent  
And leave the world with nothing more to  
say,  
No, and no way to say it?

MARLOWE:                                   It is good?

[SHAKESPEARE makes a gesture of  
helplessness]

HENSLOWE: O yes, it's good; but, Kit, you  
overshout.  
You're always shouting. Where's the fun in  
this?

SHAKESPEARE: Fun?

HENSLOWE: Fun. There should be fun in  
every piece,  
Or we lose customers. Still—yes, it's good.

GREENE: You've got a way, Kit, of  
beginning scenes.



SHAKESPEARE: Well, I have thought—a  
maid on the last day  
Of her virginity—a maid in love—  
No—for you are the master of us all.

MARLOWE: Not so far master as to think  
the noise  
Sounds in the farthest caverns of man's heart,  
Or pierces the dim silence; there are ghosts  
Rise not at such a calling. Come, your scene.

SHAKESPEARE: Why then—you pardon  
me?—something like this:

*Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds,  
Towards Phæbus' lodging; such a waggoner  
As Phæton would whip you to the west,  
And bring in cloudy night immediately.  
Spread thy close curtain, love-performing  
night!  
That runaway's eyes may wink, and Romeo  
Leap to these arms, untalk'd of and unseen!  
Lovers can see to do their amorous rites  
By their own beauties; or, if love be blind,  
It best agrees with night. Come, civil night,*

*Thou sober-suited matron, all in black,  
And learn me how to lose a winning match,  
Play'd for a pair of stainless maidenhoods:  
Hood my unmann'd blood, bating in my  
cheeks,  
With thy black mantle; till strange love,  
grown bold.  
Think true love acted simple modesty.  
Come, night! come, Romeo! come, thou day  
in night!  
For thou wilt lie upon the wings of night,  
Whiter than new snow on a raven's back.  
Come, gentle night; come, loving, black-  
brow'd night,  
Give me my Romeo: and, when he 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.  
O! I have bought the mansion of a love,  
But not possess'd it, and, though I am sold,  
Not yet enjoy'd. So tedious is this day  
As is the night before some festival  
To an impatient child that hath new robes  
And may not wear them.*

MARLOWE: More, more.

SHAKESPEARE:           Alas, there is  
none. Still it hangs  
With endings and beginnings.

GREENE:                   'Tis Kit's style,  
His very tones. You've heard his stuff before?

MARLOWE: O no, not mine, not mine, but  
the great voice  
Of the air, and the age, and us that are the  
age,  
Because we come not singly but are sent  
In flights and companies, dropping at once  
Upon the greening branches of the earth  
To make spring happy.

GREENE:                It is yours, I say.  
He has heard some line shouted outside the  
house  
And loved it—so much as to make it his.

SHAKESPEARE [to MARLOWE]: I will  
not cry your pardon, if that be,

As well it may be.

MARLOWE: Pardon! you from me?  
More, more. Not that then—you have others?

SHAKESPEARE: Why,  
A scene or so—if you were pleased.

GREENE: The time—

MARLOWE: Time! Sir, we speak of poetry  
—there is  
No other matter conceivable in the world.  
Come, read.

[Enter LORENZO and JESSICA]

LORENZO: *The moon shines bright: in  
such a night as this,  
When the sweet wind did gently kiss the trees  
And they did make no noise, in such a night  
Troilus methinks mounted the Troyan walls,  
And sigh'd his soul toward the Grecian tents,  
Where Cressid lay that night.*

JESSICA: *In such a night*

*Did Thisbe fearfully o'ertrip the dew,  
And saw the lion's shadow ere himself,  
And ran dismay'd away.*

*LORENZO: In such a night  
Stood Dido with a willow in her hand  
Upon the wild sea-banks, and waft her love  
To come again to Carthage.*

*JESSICA: In such a night  
Medea gather'd the enchanted herbs  
That did renew old Æson.*

*LORENZO: In such a night  
Did Jessica steal from the wealthy Jew  
And with an unthrift love did run from  
Venice,  
As far as Belmont.*

*JESSICA: In such a night  
Did young Lorenzo swear he lov'd her well,  
Stealing her soul with many vows of faith,  
And ne'er a true one.*

*LORENZO: In such a night*



*Did pretty Jessica, like a little shrew,  
Slander her love, and he forgave it her....  
How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this  
bank!*

*Here will we sit, and let the sounds of music  
Creep in our ears: soft stillness and the night  
Become the touches of sweet harmony.*

*Sit, Jessica: look, how the floor of heaven  
Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold:  
There's not the smallest orb which thou  
behold'st*

*But in his motion like an angel sings,  
Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubins;  
Such harmony is in immortal souls;  
But, whilst this muddy vesture of decay  
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.*

[Enter Musicians]

*Come, ho! and wake Diana with a hymn:  
With sweetest touches pierce your mistress'  
ear,*

*And draw her home with music. [Music*

*JESSICA: I am never merry when I hear*

*sweet music.*

*LORENZO: The reason is, your spirits are attentive:*

*For do but note a wild and wanton herd,  
Or race of youthful and unhandled colts,  
Fetching mad bounds, bellowing and  
neighing loud,  
Which is the hot condition of their blood;  
If they but hear perchance a trumpet sound,  
Or any air of music touch their ears,  
You shall perceive them make a mutual stand,  
Their savage eyes turn'd to a modest gaze  
By the sweet power of music: therefore the  
poet  
Did feign that Orpheus drew trees, stones,  
and floods;  
Since nought so stockish, hard, and full of  
rage,  
But music for the time doth change his  
nature.  
The man that hath no music in himself,  
Nor is not mov'd with concord of sweet  
sounds,  
Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils;*

*The motions of his spirit are dull as night,  
And his affections dark as Erebus:  
Let no such man be trusted. Mark the music.*

[Enter PORTIA and NERISSA, at a distance]

PORTIA: *That light we see is burning in my  
hall.  
How far that little candle throws his beams!  
So shines a good deed in a naughty world.*

NERISSA: *When the moon shone, we did  
not see the candle.*

PORTIA: *So doth the greater glory dim the  
less:  
A substitute shines brightly as a king  
Until a king be by, and then his state  
Empties itself, as doth an inland brook  
Into the main of waters. Music! hark!*

NERISSA: *It is your music, madam, of the  
house.*

PORTIA: *Nothing is good, I see, without  
respect:*

*Methinks it sounds much sweeter than by day.*

NERISSA: *Silence bestows that virtue on it, madam.*

PORTIA: *The crow doth sing as sweetly as the lark*

*When neither is attended, and I think  
The nightingale, if she should sing by day,  
When every goose is cackling, would be  
thought*

*No better a musician than the wren.  
How many things by season season'd are  
To their right praise and true perfection!  
Peace, ho! the moon sleeps with Endymion,  
And would not be awak'd! [Music ceases*

MARLOWE: *And that's yours too? There's something in the style—*

HENSLOWE: *Aye, that's more like—*

MARLOWE: *Aye, that's more like  
the Queen  
Or the King of Spain or the Grand Turk or*

him

Who rolled home last from the tavern  
yesternight

To the guardroom at the Tower. Are you mad  
To think a poet growing like a tree  
From one seed, solitary, has no trade  
By the exploring imagination, with  
All minds that grow about him? Out, you  
fool!

SHAKESPEARE: You like it?

MARLOWE:            Like it? Sir (I speak in  
form,  
Because I speak no longer to my friend—  
As friend you must be—but to him who  
read),  
Young as I am, I have known men begin,  
Being drunk with some short passion, to write  
well—  
Then, either that some other work came in,  
Promising greater profit than their own,  
Or that a press of business choked their  
minds,  
Or that their wealth or lordship shamed them

dumb,  
Or that some new ironical intent  
Of that necessity which works the world  
Made them a spectacle of mockery,  
But some way they were changed and silent.  
Sir,  
This may be—since man cannot outreach  
Fate,  
No, not for all his archings of desire;  
But if this lasts you, as I think it will,  
O then be happy, as you are fortunate  
Above most men in this—never to know  
An ill so heavy or a chance so wry  
You cannot bring it still to blessedness  
By breathing it in music. What of us?  
We are your lackeys, holding on the stage  
Your chairs until this moment, all our chairs  
Being yours for the mere asking. Sir, believe  
That I am Marlowe and I tell you this.

[He turns away abruptly and walks across the  
stage, meeting a much impressed  
HENSLOWE]

HENSLOWE: You think it's all as good as

that?

MARLOWE: All? No,  
I think some of it's trash. Go you and tell him  
so,  
But I think you and I will scream in hell  
Before we meet a greater poet. Go,  
Tell him that too. [Shouting back at  
HENSLOWE]

And you won't meet one then.

HENSLOWE: You've got a way of  
exaggerating, Kit.  
It comes from writing verse. Still, if he's good  
—

GREENE: He'll be the rage, and the only  
shake-scene too  
In the whole town—young upstart! Peacock's  
feathers  
Stuck in a crow's back!

MARLOWE [having reached  
SHAKESPEARE again]:  
Well, you'll come with me?

We can't talk here. No, Henslowe, none of  
your craft  
To get the man tied down to you by loans.  
Come, Master Shakespeare. 'Master  
Shakespeare'! God,  
How does one call you?

SHAKESPEARE:           Some men call  
me Will.

[They go out]

### SCENE III

#### MARLOWE'S LODGING AT DEPTFORD

[MARLOWE working. SHAKESPEARE  
calling without]

SHAKESPEARE: Kit! Kit!

MARLOWE:           Hallo! Come in!

[As SHAKESPEARE enters]       Well, is it  
done?



SHAKESPEARE: This morning—past one when I finished it.

MARLOWE: Well, you've been long enough.

SHAKESPEARE: I know, but time Gets taken up with half a hundred things, And polishing these old plays they set me to Is the very devil of hack-work.

MARLOWE: You're too long Worrying over them; cut here and there, And thrust a new beginning in at whiles, That's the way I do it. But you work too much At making a fair whole of bits of bad.

SHAKESPEARE: Yes, well, I like it—if it's touched at all— Not to be spurned by me or any else; Besides, our company's got to be popular, I want more money.

MARLOWE: Hear the romantic young!

A poet in his springtide think of gold—  
What would the world say?

SHAKESPEARE:           I want money,  
Kit;  
Yes, and I'm going to have it. This is the way:  
To polish plays as well as any man,  
And have a tag in verse as well at need,  
And a play of one's own to hand if there's a  
chance.  
You'll see me own a bit of the theatre yet.

MARLOWE: If I'm not dead first. That  
reminds me, Will,  
What's this word?   [He turns the MS. over  
and points  
                  This—'The gaudy'—what comes  
next?  
I've thought of thousands, but not one is like.

SHAKESPEARE: That? 'Blabbing', man; b-  
l-a-b-b-, blabbing.  
                  [Declaiming  
'The gaudy, blabbing, and remorseful day'—

MARLOWE: 'Blabbing'!—You are an  
insane creature, Will;  
'Blabbing'—God's mercy, how do you bring it  
off?  
Not but I might have thought of that.

SHAKESPEARE: Of course;  
I know you might; that's why I put it in,  
Just to annoy you, Christopher!

MARLOWE: It's too mad,  
Too utterly lunatic, and too madly right!  
'Blabbing'—hell take you! Well, let's hear the  
death  
Of your two lovers. Are you pleased with it?

SHAKESPEARE: Yes and no since I  
stopped a score of times,  
But in good truth, I think so. It's so hard  
To judge when oneself opposite oneself  
Seesaws upon the line one's just set down.  
Here's for you. Romeo's coming to the tomb  
Where the drugged Juliet dreams her death  
away.

ROMEO: *How oft when men are at the  
point of death  
Have they been merry! which their keepers  
call  
A lightning before death: O! how may I  
Call this a lightning? O my love! my wife!  
Death, that hath suck'd the honey of thy  
breath,  
Hath had no power yet upon thy beauty:  
Thou art not conquer'd; beauty's ensign yet  
Is crimson in thy lips and in thy cheeks,  
And death's pale flag is not advanced there.  
Tybalt, liest thou there in thy bloody sheet?  
O! what more favour can I do to thee,  
Than with that hand that cut thy youth in  
twain  
To sunder his that was thine enemy?  
Forgive me, cousin! Ah! dear Juliet,  
Why art thou yet so fair? Shall I believe  
That unsubstantial Death is amorous,  
And that the lean abhorred monster keeps  
Thee here in dark to be his paramour?  
For fear of that I still will stay with thee,  
And never from this palace of dim night  
Depart again: here, here will I remain*

*With worms that are thy chambermaids; O!  
here*

*Will I set up my everlasting rest,  
And shake the yoke of inauspicious stars  
From this world-wearied flesh. Eyes, look  
your last!*

*Arms, take your last embrace! and, lips, O  
you*

*The doors of breath, seal with a righteous  
kiss*

*A dateless bargain to engrossing death!  
Come, bitter conduct, come, unsavoury  
guide!*

*Thou desperate pilot, now at once run on  
The dashing rocks thy sea-sick weary bark!  
Here's to my love! [Drinks] O true  
apothecary!*

*Thy drugs are quick. Thus with a kiss I die.  
[Dies*

[Enter FRIAR LAURENCE, with a lanthorn,  
crow, and spade, and BALTHASAR]

FRIAR LAURENCE: *Saint Francis be my  
speed! how oft to-night*

*Have my old feet stumbled at graves! Who's there?*

*BALTHASAR: Here's one, a friend, and one that knows you well.*

*FRIAR LAURENCE: Bliss be upon you! Tell me, my good friend, What torch is yond, that vainly lends his light To grubs and eyeless skulls? as I discern, It burneth in the Capel's monument.*

*BALTHASAR: It doth so, holy sir; and there's my master, One that you love.*

*FRIAR LAURENCE: Who is it?*

*BALTHASAR: Romeo.*

*FRIAR LAURENCE: How long hath he been there?*

*BALTHASAR: Full half an hour.*

FRIAR LAURENCE: *Go with me to the vault.*

BALTHASAR: *I dare not, sir.  
My master knows not but I am gone hence;  
And fearfully did menace me with death  
If I did stay to look on his intents.*

FRIAR LAURENCE: *Stay then, I'll go  
alone. Fear comes upon me;  
O! much I fear some ill unlucky thing.*

BALTHASAR: *As I did sleep under this  
yew-tree here,  
I dreamt my master and another fought,  
And that my master slew him.*

FRIAR LAURENCE: [Advances]  
*Romeo!*  
*Alack, alack! what blood is this which stains  
The stony entrance of this sepulchre?  
What mean these masterless and gory swords  
To lie discoloured by this place of peace?*  
[Enters the tomb]  
*Romeo! O, pale! Who else? what! Paris too?*

*And steep'd in blood? Ah! what an unkind  
hour*

*Is guilty of this lamentable chance.*

*The lady stirs.* [JULIET wakes]

JULIET: *O, comfortable friar! where is my  
lord?*

*I do remember well where I should be,*

*And there I am. Where is my Romeo?*

[Noise within]

FRIAR LAURENCE: *I hear some noise.  
Lady, come from that nest  
Of death, contagion, and unnatural sleep:  
A greater power than we can contradict  
Hath thwarted our intents: come, come away.  
Thy husband in thy bosom there lies dead;  
And Paris too: come, I'll dispose of thee  
Among a sisterhood of holy nuns.  
Stay not to question, for the watch is coming;  
Come, go, good Juliet.—[Noise again] I dare  
no longer stay.*

JULIET: *Go, get thee hence, for I will not  
away.*



[Exit FRIAR LAURENCE

*What's here? a cup, clos'd in my true love's hand?*

*Poison, I see, hath been his timeless end.*

*O churl! drunk all, and left no friendly drop  
To help me after! I will kiss thy lips;  
Haply, some poison yet doth hang on them,  
To make me die with a restorative.*

[Kisses him *Thy lips are warm!*

FIRST WATCH [within]: *Lead, boy: which way?*

JULIET: *Yea, noise? then I'll be brief. O happy dagger!*

[Snatching ROMEO'S dagger  
*This is thy sheath; [stabs herself] there rest,  
and let me die.*

[Falls on ROMEO'S body and dies

[Enter Watch, with the Page of PARIS]

PAGE: *This is the place; there where the torch doth burn.*

FIRST WATCH: *The ground is bloody;  
search about the churchyard.*

*Go, some of you; whoe'er you find, attach.*

[Exeunt some of the Watch

*Pitiful sight! here lies the county slain,  
And Juliet bleeding, warm, and newly dead,  
Who here hath lain these two days buried.  
Go, tell the prince, run to the Capulets,  
Raise up the Montagues, some others search:*

[Exeunt others of the Watch

*We see the ground whereon these woes do  
lie;  
But the true ground of all these piteous woes  
We cannot without circumstance descry.*

SHAKESPEARE [stopping]: The rest is but  
the circumstance wherein  
They do descry them. Well, Kit?

MARLOWE [repeating it]: 'Here, O  
here  
Will I set up my everlasting rest  
And shake the yoke of inauspicious stars'—  
God, that we could!

SHAKESPEARE: You like it?

MARLOWE:                                 That we could!  
Will, was it Love or Death or Beauty spoke  
That incantation to you? O I think  
It is the very voice of poetry  
Calling from a rich darkness; it is death,  
Where is the full fruition of our will.  
And could your lovers be more blessed to live  
Than thus to perish on a bed of love?

SHAKESPEARE: I feel half grieved at  
killing them.

MARLOWE:                                 Sweet grief,  
Luxuriating in a bath of sound  
Made odorous with imagined loveliness.  
Will, is it real or is it fantasy?

SHAKESPEARE: Is what real?

MARLOWE:                                 All we mean by poetry  
—  
That's the great question; is it a good game  
Played with sweet fellows for companions

With the mere game for gaining, and their  
praise—  
Or is it more—a knowledge beyond earth's,  
More than the tales of godhead, a divine  
Motion of all our hearts towards ecstasy,  
And our blood beating with the beating  
world?

SHAKESPEARE: Who knows? Ah Kit,  
that's what possesses you;  
You never wrote a play yet but your mind  
Went out beyond it; mine's the steadier sight  
—

MARLOWE: Yes, you turn back, you do  
not love the void,  
I do not—but it holds me: the abyss,  
The whole interminable nothingness  
That opens everywhere on t'other side,  
And the desire to ride on it like a star;  
I know one day it will swallow me.

SHAKESPEARE: Pish, lad;  
We are the lords of poetry, not its slaves;  
And never so drunk with it but that a douche

Of the common world puts all things straight  
again.

[A noise] Hark, hark, your world!

MARLOWE:                Yours, yours, but  
never mine.  
That's why you play such games with Falstaff  
here;  
Did you go out with him?

SHAKESPEARE [grinning]: Before him,  
say,  
And came upon him when he had the gold;  
Lord, Kit, you should have seen him run.

MARLOWE:                Not I;  
My heart's all in a bitterness with your world.  
Have it in, none the less. [He goes to the  
door

                                Jack Falstaff, ho!  
Come in; here's Shakespeare; come in, you  
mad wags.  
And did you stop the carriers yesternight?  
What chanced?



[Enter FALSTAFF, GADSHILL,  
BARDOLPH, POINS, and PETO]

SHAKESPEARE: *Welcome, Jack: where hast thou been?*

FALSTAFF: *A plague of all cowards, I say, and a vengeance too! marry, and amen! Give me a cup of sack, boy. Ere I lead this life long, I'll sew nether stocks and mend them and foot them too. A plague of all cowards! Give me a cup of sack, rogue. Is there no virtue extant? [He drinks*

SHAKESPEARE: *Didst thou never see Titan kiss a dish of butter? pitiful-hearted Titan, that melted at the sweet tale of the sun's! if thou didst, then behold that compound.*

FALSTAFF: *You rogue, here's lime in this sack too: there is nothing but roguery to be found in villanous man: yet a coward is worse than a cup of sack with lime in it. A villanous coward! Go thy ways, old Jack; die*

*when thou wilt, if manhood, good manhood, be not forgot upon the face of the earth, then am I a shotten herring. There live not three good men unchaged in England; and one of them is fat and grows old: God help the while! a bad world, I say. I would I were a weaver; I could sing psalms or any thing. A plague of all cowards, I say still.*

*SHAKESPEARE: How now, wool-sack! what mutter you? ...*

*FALSTAFF: Are not you a coward? answer me to that: and Poins there?*

*POINS: 'Zounds, ye fat paunch, an ye call me coward, by the Lord, I'll stab thee.*

*FALSTAFF: I call thee coward! I'll see thee damned ere I call thee coward: but I would give a thousand pound I could run as fast as thou canst. You are straight enough in the shoulders, you care not who sees your back: call you that backing of your friends? A plague upon such backing! give me them that*

*will face me. Give me a cup of sack: I am a  
rogue, if I drunk to-day.*

*SHAKESPEARE: O villain! thy lips are  
scarce wiped since thou drunkenst last.*

*FALSTAFF: All's one for that. [He drinks.]  
A plague of all cowards, still say I.*

*SHAKESPEARE: What's the matter?*

*FALSTAFF: What's the matter! there be  
four of us here have ta'en a thousand pound  
this day morning.*

*SHAKESPEARE: Where is it, Jack? where  
is it?*

*FALSTAFF: Where is it! taken from us it is:  
a hundred upon poor four of us.*

*SHAKESPEARE: What, a hundred, man?*

*FALSTAFF: I am a rogue, if I were not at  
half-sword with a dozen of them two hours  
together. I have 'scaped by miracle. I am*



*eight times thrust through the doublet, four through the hose; my buckler cut through and through; my sword hacked like a hand-saw— ecce signum! I never dealt better since I was a man: all would not do. A plague of all cowards! Let them speak: if they speak more or less than truth, they are villains and the sons of darkness.*

SHAKESPEARE: *Speak, sirs; how was it?*

GADSHILL: *We four set upon some dozen*  
—

FALSTAFF: *Sixteen at least.*

GADSHILL: *And bound them.*

PETO: *No, no; they were not bound.*

FALSTAFF: *You rogue, they were bound, every man of them; or I am a Jew else, an Ebrew Jew.*

GADSHILL: *As we were sharing, some six or seven fresh men set upon us—*

FALSTAFF: *And unbound the rest, and then come in the other.*

SHAKESPEARE: *What, fought you with them all?*

FALSTAFF: *All! I know not what you call all; but if I fought not with fifty of them, I am a bunch of radish: if there were not two or three and fifty upon poor old Jack, then am I no two-legged creature.*

SHAKESPEARE: *Pray God you have not murdered some of them.*

FALSTAFF: *Nay, that's past praying for: I have peppered two of them; two I am sure I have paid, two rogues in buckram suits. I tell thee what, Will, if I tell thee a lie, spit in my face, call me horse. Thou knowest my old ward; here I lay, and thus I bore my point. Four rogues in buckram let drive at me—*

SHAKESPEARE: *What, four? thou saidst but two even now.*

FALSTAFF: *Four, Will; I told thee four.*

POINS: *Ay, ay, he said four.*

FALSTAFF: *These four came all a-front, and mainly thrust at me. I made me no more ado but took all their seven points in my target, thus.*

SHAKESPEARE: *Seven? why, there were but four even now.*

FALSTAFF: *In buckram?*

POINS: *Ay, four, in buckram suits.*

FALSTAFF: *Seven, by these hilts, or I am a villain else.*

SHAKESPEARE: *Prithee, let him alone; we shall have more anon.*

FALSTAFF: *Dost thou hear me, Will?*

SHAKESPEARE: *Ay, and mark thee too, Jack.*

FALSTAFF: *Do so, for it is worth the listening to. These nine in buckram that I told thee of—*

SHAKESPEARE: *So, two more already.*

FALSTAFF: *Their points being broken,—*

POINS: *Down fell their hose.*

FALSTAFF: *Began to give me ground: but I followed me close, came in foot and hand; and with a thought seven of the eleven I paid.*

SHAKESPEARE: *O monstrous! eleven buckram men grown out of two!*

FALSTAFF: *But, as the devil would have it, three misbegotten knaves in Kendal green came at my back and let drive at me; for it was so dark, Will, that thou couldst not see thy hand.*

SHAKESPEARE: *These lies are like their father that begets them; gross as a mountain, open, palpable. Why, thou clay-brained guts, thou knotty-pated fool, thou obscene, greasy tallow-catch,—*

FALSTAFF: *What, art thou mad? art thou mad? is not the truth the truth?*

SHAKESPEARE: *Why, how couldst thou know these men in Kendal green, when it was so dark thou couldst not see thy hand? come, tell us your reason: what sayest thou to this?*

POINS: *Come, your reason, Jack, your reason.*

FALSTAFF: *What, upon compulsion? 'Zounds, an I were at the strappado, or all the racks in the world, I would not tell you on compulsion. Give you a reason on compulsion! if reasons were as plentiful as blackberries, I would give no man a reason upon compulsion, I.*

SHAKESPEARE: *I'll be no longer guilty of this sin; this sanguine coward, this bed-presser, this horse-back-breaker, this huge hill of flesh,—*

FALSTAFF: *'Sblood, you starveling, you elf-skin, you dried neat's tongue, you bull's pizzle, you stock-fish! O for breath to utter what is like thee! you tailor's yard, you sheath, you bow-case, you vile standing-tuck,*  
—

SHAKESPEARE: *Well, breathe awhile, and then to it again: and when thou hast tired thyself in base comparisons, hear me speak but this.*

POINS: *Mark, Jack.*

SHAKESPEARE: *We two saw you four set on four and bound them, and were masters of their wealth. Mark now, how a plain tale shall put you down. Then did we two set on you four; and, with a word, out-faced you from your prize, and, Falstaff, you carried*

*your guts away as nimbly, with as quick dexterity, and roared for mercy and still run and roared, as ever I heard bull-calf. What a slave art thou, to hack thy sword as thou hast done, and then say it was in fight! What trick, what device, what starting-hole, canst thou now find out to hide thee from this open and apparent shame?*

*POINS: Come, let's hear, Jack; what trick hast thou now?*

*FALSTAFF: By the Lord, I knew ye as well as he that made ye. Why, hear you, my masters—*

*MARLOWE: Out, out! you tire me. Will, can you suffer him?  
'This sanguine coward, this bed-presser, this'—  
Odd's me, I'll hear no more.*

*SHAKESPEARE [aside]: Nay, fair play, Kit.  
My game, my game. I leave the kings to you,*

Leave the fat knights to me. Come, come, Sir  
John;  
Kit's overheated now with too much wine  
Or too much poetry. Back to the other room;  
There's something yet to hear—the money,  
Jack,  
How the poor merchants got their coin again.  
Of honest gratitude, honest reward,  
Whereof some half is yours.  
[Aside to MARLOWE]        When you  
would go,  
Call me and I'll be with you. What, my lad,  
It's a fair world.

MARLOWE:        And you—it's you that  
moan  
So sweetly that all lovers stop to hear,  
Letting their negligent arms slide from their  
girls  
Because no body's softness is so sweet  
As that enchanting sorrow! and you go  
To change bravados with a tavern sot.

SHAKESPEARE: Live and let live. Call me  
when you would go.



Come, Jack, fat Jack, mad Jack! come, brave  
Sir John.

[They go out]

MARLOWE: That's if he holds it; if he  
doesn't lose,  
As some would; if he grows to it, and them.  
I can be good hail-fellow with them all  
And keep my mind to itself, and let it rage  
Within the bars of vigilance, but he  
Lets his mind out to saunter with them all,  
And doffs his hat in church the good old way  
On Sundays, and on Mondays scurries round  
To help the property man, and afternoons  
Sits taking money at the doors. My God—  
'And shake the yoke of inauspicious stars  
From this world-wearied flesh.'—

## SCENE IV

### THE THEATRE

[A rehearsal of *The Taming of the Shrew* has  
been taking place. SHAKESPEARE,

HENSLOWE]

HENSLOWE: What more do you want?

SHAKESPEARE: I want the thing  
itself—  
Not a bad picture of it. They *will* roar—  
See, your Petruchio does it all the time:  
Stamping his feet in passion: waving arms  
In anger. I want quiet and my words.

HENSLOWE: They were word-perfect.

SHAKESPEARE: No, they shook the  
words,  
Bullied them, beat them, thrust them into  
place,  
With Ah's and O's and such like roars of rage  
One would think they threatened the poor  
harmless words  
With being instantly thrown out of the play  
If they should fail to explode about the stage.  
That's not the way. Henslowe, I'll do the  
work,  
I've done it, if they'll only follow on

Docilely; let them sit and walk and turn  
And leave the playing to the words they say.

HENSLOWE: You talk of words as if they  
were living things.

SHAKESPEARE: Yes, with a life not ours.  
O who can tell  
With what amazement words can grow aware  
Of their own being, and, once come of age,  
Take counsel with each other how to live;  
Which are of quality and which are sent  
To be the page boys, posts, and scavengers,  
Within the common utterance of the world.  
Some thrive as lords do, living on the farms  
And product of a minstrel's revenue;  
Some play the herald and the pursuivant  
In tables, charters, and decrees of state;  
Some like good traders bring their masters  
gold  
To profit from sea-going merchandise;  
And some, like beggars, wander up and down  
Snuffing the air in penury and disease,  
And come in attics to a kind of death,  
Being forgotten of our royal tongue.

HENSLOWE: You talk of words as if they were living things.

SHAKESPEARE: That's what you said—  
exactly what you said—  
A minute ago. Well, as to the acting now.  
If you will teach them just to say the words,  
The words will do the play. They shall have  
scenes  
For riot, noise, and women's flutterings;  
Let them have wit enough to keep it there.

[A stage-hand looks in

STAGE-HAND: Master Shakespeare!

SHAKESPEARE:           Aye?

STAGE-HAND:        There's a full crowd  
without  
Of lords and ladies come in search of you.

HENSLOWE: That means no more  
rehearsal. Plague upon't!  
Now you'll go hours preening yourself in glee  
To be amongst the courtiers, dropping bows

And interchanging affabilities,  
And devil take the work.

SHAKESPEARE:        Don't fear for me;  
I put my talent out at market so  
And get it back with usury. Who caught  
The smile of the Queen's Grace for the  
Company  
But I, my Henslowe?

HENSLOWE:        Cloak it as you will:  
'Tis your delight, and not your profit, doffs  
Your hat before gentility. Why, you prink  
Like a shy maiden when the lords come in.

STAGE-HAND: They're coming, Master  
Shakespeare.

SHAKESPEARE:        Let them come.  
Henslowe, I make my profit from my joy  
Like a bee honeying down a walk of flowers,  
And bearing such delight back to his hive  
As builds his house the nobler. O be sure,  
He loses labour who with a gnarled brow  
Wrestling a sweaty hour against the world

Seeks then to pick its pocket. You don't love  
The pageantry of honour-ranking heads,  
The leoparded dais, and the sworded throne,  
All ceremony and solemnity,  
As I do; you don't please it therefore. Hush!

[SOUTHAMPTON, RALEIGH, MARY  
FITTON, and others]

My lord! [bowing] My lord! Sir! Mistress  
Fitton! Sir!

SOUTHAMPTON: 'Tis he at last!

RALEIGH: Hid like the honey in bees  
In the stomach of the theatre!

HENSLOWE [going out]: Bees again!  
I know whom they should sting, if bees were  
I.

SHAKESPEARE: Much welcome to the  
lordship of the land  
From their mere servitor. Gentles, well met.  
And what make you in the poor Globe to-  
day?

SOUTHAMPTON: Why, thus. The Queen's  
Grace sends by me her will  
That your fair company should bring a play  
To Greenwich in a fortnight's space: all  
choice  
She leaves to you—'knowing,' she bade me  
say,  
'She trusts her good friend Shakespeare to be  
clear  
From calumny and treason, such as hurt  
The fair fame of a queen still fancy free,  
And lesser poets soil them with at whiles'.

RALEIGH: God save the Queen! the  
proclamation's done.

SHAKESPEARE: God save the Queen, and  
give the Queen her will.

MARY FITTON: Isn't that you, Will  
Shakespeare, the Queen's Will?

SHAKESPEARE: Queen's Will because the  
Queen's will made me will  
No other Will to serve the Queen so well.

SOUTHAMPTON: God save your willship  
then, worshipful Will!

MARY FITTON: And keep your will-full  
self from wilfulness.

RALEIGH: Lest willy-nilly you be  
'wilderer, Will.

SOUTHAMPTON: Truce, truce, he fails!  
the joke falls down at last.  
Your forfeit, Raleigh; the last flight went  
wide.  
Well, Shakespeare, shall I bless you to the  
Queen?

SHAKESPEARE: God save the Queen—so  
bless me to her Grace—  
What will she have? love scene or history,  
Fantasy, comedy, or tragic roar?

SOUTHAMPTON: Something of yours and  
—harkye! in your ear—  
[He takes him aside  
Something to show how fairly England holds



Her ancient bravery and keeps the sword  
That the Queen's sires flashed o'er the foreign  
lands

Loose in the scabbard. She's in a brave mood,  
And talks at large of battlements abroad—  
Spain, France, I know not. All is naught but  
mood,

To change before the moon's out. Have two  
plays,

One all agog with gentlemen at arms,  
One laughing and home-nurtured, country  
wives

Gossiping 'neath their cows. I'll send you  
word

What humour takes her and what play will fit.

SHAKESPEARE: God save your lordship  
and my ears from cropping.

SOUTHAMPTON: Nay, but she's placable  
and she likes you, Will;

No need to rouse her, though; no dying  
Richard—

That went a thought too near. Daily she lives  
Eyeing each knife that butlers lay on the

board;

Always Elizabeth, but sometimes pale—  
No dark stairs in the palace, and no yards  
Where the night torches flicker shadows  
down.

[Aloud] What's on to-day?

SHAKESPEARE:        *The Taming of the  
Shrew.*

RALEIGH: Yours?

SHAKESPEARE: Say, four fingers, but the  
other six  
Some poet's long dead.

RALEIGH:        Would it had been yours!  
Likely you never had a shrew to tame?

MARY FITTON: All women married to  
poets grow to shrews.  
Don't they, Will Shakespeare? When the  
cupboard's bare,  
And children run barefoot for lack of shoes?

SHAKESPEARE: No woman, Madam, ever

turned a shrew,  
Unless her husband turned cold morsels first  
Upon her trencher; that's when shrewhood  
grows:  
But poets—Will you hear a piece of the play?

SOUTHAMPTON: A moment, Will. But  
poets—what would you say?

SHAKESPEARE: Alas, my lord, I would  
not boast my trade;  
I am but parcel poet; most of me  
Drawn out in plans and lists of properties,  
The honest foreman of a working gang  
Of honest actors. But if you should ask  
What thing it is that keeps a woman sweet  
And a man tender, I would make a guess.

MARY FITTON: What is it then? What  
book has taught you that?

SHAKESPEARE: *O where is any author in  
the world  
Teaches such beauty as a woman's eye?  
Learning is but an adjunct to ourself*

*And where we are our learning likewise is:  
Then when ourselves we see in ladies' eyes,  
Do we not likewise see our learning there?  
O, we have made a vow to study, lords,  
And in that vow we have forsworn our books.  
For when would you, my liege, or you, or  
you,  
In leaden contemplation have found out  
Such fiery numbers as the prompting eyes  
Of beauty's tutors have enrich'd you with?  
Other slow arts entirely keep the brain;  
And therefore, finding barren practisers,  
Scarce show a harvest of their heavy toil:  
But love, first learned in a lady's eyes,  
Lives not alone immured in the brain;  
But, with the motion of all elements,  
Courses as swift as thought in every power,  
And gives to every power a double power,  
Above their functions and their offices.  
It adds a precious seeing to the eye;  
A lover's eyes will gaze an eagle blind;  
A lover's ear will hear the lowest sound,  
When the suspicious head of theft is stopp'd:  
Love's feeling is more soft and sensible  
Than are the tender horns of cockled snails;*

*Love's tongue proves dainty Bacchus gross in taste:*

*For valour, is not Love a Hercules,  
Still climbing trees in the Hesperides?  
Subtle as Sphinx; as sweet and musical  
As bright Apollo's lute, strung with his hair;  
And when Love speaks, the voice of all the gods  
Makes heaven drowsy with the harmony.*

SOUTHAMPTON [after a pause]:  
See, they are drowsy with the harmony.  
Why, Raleigh! Sleep you, Mistress Fitton?  
Troth,  
I cannot blame you, seeing I myself  
Am in enchantment, not a waking world,  
And with a heavy heart must stir again  
Out of this loving spell to common things.

SHAKESPEARE: Then let us prologue it  
with louder spells  
Calling the mirth and tumult of a jest  
To lead you gently into wakefulness.  
Ho there! rehearsal!

[As the actors come in, he speaks to  
HENSLOWE and then goes back to MARY  
FITTON]

MARY FITTON: And do you talk so to  
your wife? O Will,  
Could she let go such music from her ward  
To strum in taverns and in theatres?

SHAKESPEARE: Madam, though Love be  
wiser than the gods,  
He is no conjurer turning stones to bread.

MARY FITTON: Are you not grown a  
wiser than the gods  
To turn our stony hearts to manchet bread?

SHAKESPEARE: No bread that you could  
eat, because no song  
Can teach Love's godhead what Love's  
godhead is.  
See, if one star should dip from all the stars  
That with a planetary music wheel  
Within the abysm and deep gulf of space,  
Should you ... should it ... hear with

contented ear  
The jangling discords of a mortal tongue  
Though blest with sweetness more than  
Virgil's was?

MARY FITTON: With no content, alas! but  
all myself  
Lost and enveloped in the harmony!  
The play! the play!

[Enter KATHARINA and GRUMIO]

GRUMIO: *No, no, forsooth; I dare not for  
my life.*

KATHARINA: *The more my wrong, the  
more his spite appears;  
What, did he marry me to famish me?  
Beggars, that come unto my father's door,  
Upon entreaty have a present alms;  
If not, elsewhere they meet with charity:  
But I, who never knew how to entreat,  
Nor never needed that I should entreat,  
Am starved for meat, giddy for lack of sleep,  
With oaths kept waking and with brawling*

*fed:*

*And that which spites me more than all these  
wants,*

*He does it under name of perfect love;  
As who should say, if I should sleep or eat,  
'Twere deadly sickness or else present death.  
I prithee go and get me some repast;  
I care not what, so it be wholesome food....*

[Enter PETRUCHIO and HORTENSIO  
with meat]

PETRUCHIO: *How fares my Kate? What,  
sweeting, all amont?*

HORTENSIO: *Mistress, what cheer?*

KATHARINA: *Faith, as cold as can  
be.*

PETRUCHIO: *Pluck up thy spirits; look  
cheerfully upon me.  
Here, love; thou see'st how diligent I am  
To dress thy meat myself and bring it thee:  
I am sure, sweet Kate, this kindness merits*



*thanks.*

*What, not a word? Nay, then thou lovest it  
not;  
And all my pains is sorted to no proof.  
Here, take away this dish.*

KATHARINA: *I pray you, let it stand.*

PETRUCHIO: *The poorest service is repaid  
with thanks;  
And so shall mine, before you touch the meat.*

KATHARINA: *I thank you, sir.*

HORTENSIO: *Signior Petruchio, fie! you  
are to blame.  
Come, Mistress Kate, I'll bear you company.*

PETRUCHIO: *[aside] Eat it up all,  
Hortensio, if thou lovest me.  
Much good do it unto thy gentle heart!  
Kate, eat apace: and now, my honey love,  
Will we return unto thy father's house  
And revel it as bravely as the best,  
With silken coats and caps and golden rings,*

*With ruffs and cuffs and fardingales and things;  
With scarfs and fans and double change of bravery,  
With amber bracelets, beads and all this knavery.  
What, hast thou dined? The tailor stays thy leisure,  
To deck thy body with his ruffling treasure.*

*[Enter Tailor]*

*Come, tailor, let us see these ornaments;  
Lay forth the gown.*

*[Enter Haberdasher]*

*What news with you, sir?*

*HABERDASHER: Here is the cap your worship did bespeak.*

*PETRUCHIO: Why, this was moulded on a porringer;  
A velvet dish: fie, fie! 'tis lewd and filthy:  
Why, 'tis a cockle or a walnut-shell,  
A knack, a toy, a trick, a baby's cap:  
Away with it! come, let me have a bigger.*

KATHARINA: *I'll have no bigger: this doth  
fit the time,  
And gentlewomen wear such caps as these.*

PETRUCHIO: *When you are gentle, you  
shall have one too,  
And not till then.*

HORTENSIO [aside]: *That will not be in  
haste.*

KATHARINA: *Why, sir, I trust I may have  
leave to speak;  
And speak I will; I am no child, no babe:  
Your betters have endured me say my mind,  
And if you cannot, best you stop your ears.  
My tongue will tell the anger of my heart,  
Or else my heart concealing it will break,  
And rather than it shall, I will be free  
Even to the uttermost, as I please, in words.*

PETRUCHIO: *Why, thou say'st true; it is a  
paltry cap,  
A custard-coffin, a bauble, a silken pie:  
I love thee well, in that thou likest it not.*

KATHARINA: *Love me or love me not, I  
like the cap;  
And it I will have, or I will have none.*  
[Exit Haberdasher]

PETRUCHIO: *Thy gown? why, ay: come,  
tailor, let us see't.  
O mercy, God! what masquing stuff is here?  
What's this? a sleeve? 'tis like a demi-  
cannon:  
What, up and down, carved like an apple-  
tart?  
Here's snip and nip and cut and slish and  
slash,  
Like to a censer in a barber's shop:  
Why, what, i' devil's name, tailor, call'st thou  
this?*

HORTENSIO [aside]: *I see she's like to  
have neither cap nor gown.*

TAILOR: *You bid me make it orderly and  
well,  
According to the fashion and the time.*

PETRUCHIO: *Marry, and did; but if you be remember'd,  
I did not bid you mar it to the time.  
Go, hop me over every kennel home,  
For you shall hop without my custom, sir:  
I'll none of it: hence! make your best of it.*

KATHARINA: *I never saw a better-fashion'd gown,  
More quaint, more pleasing, nor more commendable:  
Belike you mean to make a puppet of me.*

PETRUCHIO: *Why, true; he means to make a puppet of thee.*

TAILOR: *She says your worship means to make a puppet of her.*

PETRUCHIO: *O monstrous arrogance!  
Thou liest, thou thread, thou thimble,  
Thou yard, three-quarters, half-yard, quarter,  
nail!  
Thou flea, thou nit, thou winter-cricket thou!  
Braved in mine own house with a skein of*

*thread?*

*Away, thou rag, thou quantity, thou remnant;  
Or I shall so be-mete thee with thy yard  
As thou shall think on prating whilst thou  
livest!*

*I tell thee, I, that thou hast marr'd her gown.*

*TAILOR: Your worship is deceived; the  
gown is made  
Just as my master had direction:  
Grumio gave order how it should be done.*

*GRUMIO: I gave him no order; I gave him  
the stuff.*

*TAILOR: But how did you desire it should  
be made?*

*GRUMIO: Marry, sir, with needle and  
thread.*

*TAILOR: But did you not request to have it  
cut?*

*GRUMIO: Thou hast faced many things.*

TAILOR: *I have.*

GRUMIO: *Face not me: thou hast braved many men; brave not me; I will neither be faced nor braved. I say unto thee, I bid thy master cut out the gown; but I did not bid him cut it to pieces: ergo, thou liest.*

TAILOR: *Why, here is the note of the fashion to testify.*

PETRUCHIO: *Read it.*

GRUMIO: *The note lies in's throat, if he say I said so.*

TAILOR [reads]: *'Imprimis, a loose-bodied gown'—*

GRUMIO: *Master, if ever I said loose-bodied gown, sew me in the skirts of it, and beat me to death with a bottom of brown thread: I said a gown.*

PETRUCHIO: *Proceed.*

TAILOR [reads]: *'With a small compassed cape.'*

GRUMIO: *I confess the cape.*

TAILOR [reads]: *'With a trunk sleeve.'*

GRUMIO: *I confess two sleeves.*

TAILOR [reads]: *'The sleeves curiously cut.'*

PETRUCHIO: *Ay, there's the villany.*

GRUMIO: *Error i' the bill, sir; error i' the bill. I commanded the sleeves should be cut out and sewed up again; and that I'll prove upon thee, though thy little finger be armed in a thimble.*

TAILOR: *This is true that I say: an I had thee in place where, thou shouldst know it.*

GRUMIO: *I am for thee straight: take thou the bill, give me thy mete-yard, and spare not me.*



HORTENSIO: *God-a-mercy, Grumio! then he shall have no odds.*

PETRUCHIO: *Well, sir, in brief, the gown is not for me.*

[*Aside*] *Hortensio, say thou wilt see the tailor paid.*

*Go, take it hence; be gone, and say no more.*

HORTENSIO: *Tailor, I'll pay thee for thy gown to-morrow:*

*Take no unkindness of his hasty words:*

*Away! I say; commend me to thy master.*

[*Exit Tailor*]

PETRUCHIO: *Well, come, my Kate; we will unto your father's*

*Even in these honest mean habiliments:*

*Our purses shall be proud, our garments poor;*

*For 'tis the mind that makes the body rich;*

*And as the sun breaks through the darkest clouds,*

*So honour peereth in the meanest habit.*

*What is the jay more precious than the lark,*

*Because his feathers are more beautiful?  
Or is the adder better than the eel,  
Because his painted skin contents the eye?  
O, no, good Kate; neither art thou the worse  
For this poor furniture and mean array.  
If thou account'st it shame, lay it on me;  
And therefore frolic: we will hence forthwith,  
To feast and sport us at thy father's house.  
Go, call my men, and let us straight to him;  
And bring our horses unto Long-lane end;  
There will we mount, and thither walk on  
foot.  
Let's see; I think 'tis now some seven o'clock,  
And well we may come there by dinner-time.*

*KATHARINA: I dare assure you, sir, 'tis  
almost two; And 'twill be supper-time ere you  
come there.*

*PETRUCHIO: It shall be seven ere I go to  
horse:  
Look, what I speak, or do, or think to do,  
You are still crossing it. Sirs, let't alone:  
I will not go to-day; and ere I do,  
It shall be what o'clock I say it is.*

HORTENSIO [aside]: *Why, so this gallant  
will command the sun.*

[Exeunt

[The courtiers rise amid a confusion of  
voices]

SOUTHAMPTON: O the strong fellow!

RALEIGH: O the peevish wench!

MARY FITTON [to SHAKESPEARE, as  
she rises]:

What, must you sing me into insolence  
Because of my own greatness? and then  
scourge

That insolence from me with o'er-riding  
oaths?

Must I be yours?

SHAKESPEARE: Who bids you to be  
mine?

Because I cannot look away from you,  
Is that a reason you should look on me?—  
My lord!

SOUTHAMPTON: A gay hour, but your  
debtors for it  
Must be your debtors, and must mount and  
ride.

RALEIGH: Leaving our laughter for your  
only pay.

MARY FITTON [apart to  
SHAKESPEARE]:  
Poor payers make good givers. I shall dream  
To-night that you have stripped my gown  
away.

SHAKESPEARE [apart to her]:  
Dream that all lovers know a better wear—  
Nay, let me serve your lordship. Gentlemen  
... [They go out

SOUTHAMPTON [without]:  
No farther, Will: we hinder you too long;  
Nay, you shall back.

SHAKESPEARE [without]: My dear  
lord!... All, farewell!

[SHAKESPEARE, returning alone, walks meditatively up and down two or three times; then he takes out several papers and looks at them. He sits down and reads aloud:]

*Whoever hath her wish, thou hast thy Will,  
And Will to boot, and Will in over-plus;  
More than enough am I that vex thee still,  
To thy sweet will making addition thus.  
Wilt thou, whose will is large and spacious,  
Not once vouchsafe to hide my will in thine?  
Shall will in others seem right gracious,  
And in my will no fair acceptance shine?  
The sea, all water, yet receives rain still,  
And in abundance addeth to his store;  
So thou, being rich in Will, add to thy Will  
One will of mine, to make thy large Will more  
. Let no unkind 'No' fair beseechers kill;  
Think all but one, and me in that one Will.*

*In the old age black was not counted fair,  
Or if it were, it bore not beauty's name;  
But now is black beauty's successive heir,  
And beauty slander'd with a bastard's shame:  
For since each hand hath put on Nature's*

*power,  
Fairing the foul with Art's false borrow'd  
face,  
Sweet beauty hath no name, no holy bower,  
But is profan'd, if not lives in disgrace.  
Therefore my mistress' brows are raven  
black,  
Her eyes so suited, and they mourners seem  
At such who, not born fair, no beauty lack,  
Sland'ring creation with a false esteem:  
Yet so they mourn, becoming of their woe,  
That every tongue says beauty should look  
so.*

*In faith, I do not love thee with mine eyes,  
For they in thee a thousand errors note;  
But 'tis my heart that loves what they despise,  
Who (ta ti ta ti ta) is pleas'd to dote.*

[As he stops to make an insertion the curtain  
falls]

## **SCENE V**

**THE COURT**

[An ante-chamber opening on a hall where a performance of *Henry V* is just ending. The final chorus is heard within.]

*Thus far, with rough and all-unable pen,  
Our bending author hath pursued the story;  
In little room confining mighty men,  
Mangling by starts the full course of their  
glory.  
Small time, but in that small most greatly  
liv'd  
This star of England: Fortune made his  
sword,  
By which the world's best garden he achiev'd,  
And of it left his son imperial lord.  
Henry the Sixth, in infant bands crown'd King  
Of France and England, did this king  
succeed;  
Whose state so many had the managing,  
That they lost France and made his England  
bleed:  
Which oft our stage hath shown; and, for  
their sake,  
In your fair minds let this acceptance take.*

[The noise of applause and many voices.  
Some of the players enter]

FIRST ACTOR: This way, this way.

SECOND ACTOR: Will she come  
down?

FIRST ACTOR: Anon.  
She'll come with Will. What, did you see her  
smile?

THIRD ACTOR: Aye, at 'the youth of  
England are on fire'.

FIRST ACTOR: And 'gracious empress'.  
Aye, she nodded then:  
As to say 'So he will'. Back, back, she's here.

[ELIZABETH enters, with  
SHAKESPEARE, SOUTHAMPTON,  
RALEIGH, and the Court]

ELIZABETH: 'Upon the Queen! let us, our  
wives and children ...  
O hard condition.' Nay, I spoil the words.



'Twin-born with greatness' ... how did it go?

Let be.

Will nothing serve you, master, but you must  
Hold an attentive scrutiny of our souls,  
And hang them out for play-bills?

SHAKESPEARE:            Please your Grace

---

ELIZABETH: 'Tis the false melody saves  
your necks, and adds  
Its treasonable practice in my heart,  
To gain your pardon. Witchery! Witchery!  
This is somewhat more or less than manhood.  
Say,  
Have you considered all men's offices  
As closely as our queenship?

SHAKESPEARE:        Madam, no—  
How should not the most eminent height that  
shines  
In the sun's early boldness, and where last  
He himself winks to see his coloured beams  
Ruined against that snow-heaped chastity,  
Take the surprised sight of imagination

Much more than any hill or strewèd plain?

ELIZABETH: Ah, rogue, rogue! Tell me,  
rogue, what is it you do  
When you would peer about the presence,  
find  
The ache in the head that the crown's weight  
brings out,  
And the ache in the heart that rivals it?

SHAKESPEARE: No more  
Than pace my lodging up and down awhile,  
Keeping the active and injurious mind  
Styed in his cell, and feeling dumbly out  
Into the dark that holds us.

ELIZABETH: Say you so?  
Does our best poet guess no more? My lords,  
Gentlemen, which of you will answer us?  
How is it that these fellows do their work—  
Whether by slinking up and down the world,  
Watching men's faces, noting down their  
words,  
Eavesdroppers always of the general grief;  
Or by mere chance and pale-cheeked

inspiration,  
Taking the cloudy message of a god?

RALEIGH: Neither, so please you, Madam.  
Poetry is  
A state of knowledge, and a means to find  
All men's experiencing faculties  
And that which they experience. When some  
mind  
Most perfectly possesses itself therein—  
Not for a little hour, as a poor ghost  
Palely inhabiting a forgotten world,  
In desolation and sad pensiveness,  
From midnight until cockcrow—but with  
power,  
Even as your Grace inherits this wide throne,  
This citadel and domain of empery,  
With a most royal presence, being made  
Not so much England's queen as England;  
when  
Some living mind inhabits poetry  
In such assurance and familiar rate,  
Such plenitude of heirship, all our powers  
Come to him, doffing their particular rights  
In his immediate universal sway—

All thoughts, all instincts, all philosophies,  
All apprehensions, all desires and close  
Communications betwixt man and man,  
'Twixt mind and blood, 'twixt blood and  
action. This

Is our first master of it; what he knows  
He knows in poetry, and stealing out  
Along those channels, passed from word to  
word,  
Translates their several dialects to one  
Gracious, serene, and metropolitan style.

ELIZABETH: Well praised, Sir Walter. He  
knows all things then?

RALEIGH: Not with a common and  
ingenious mind,  
Taking the rich blood's level with a mark  
Of sneaking observation, but his pulse  
Beating accordantly with every rage,  
Shakes his thought free to speak the very  
words  
That rage is choked with in the man himself.

ELIZABETH: Is it so, Master Shakespeare?

SHAKESPEARE:        Please your Grace,  
I am no tutor nor no prophet, but  
A common actor of my company,  
Indifferent honest—honest most in this,  
That I have stolen a few hours from sleep  
Rather than let a line go shuffling out  
When it asked mending of my leisure—mine,  
And my will serving. More I will not say,  
For many a line goes patched enough, God  
wot,  
In the mere hurry of the tailoring.  
Week's wages mean week's work, and I  
myself  
Have a most marvellous gift of idleness.

ELIZABETH: Have you been half as bold  
with many thrones  
As with our own and Harry the Fifth's? God's  
eyes,  
Must you teach kings the way to truss  
themselves?

SOUTHAMPTON: Nay, Madam, ask him  
of his latest toy—  
Nile, and no Thames, is where he lingers

now.

ELIZABETH: Come, sirrah, let us hear.

SHAKESPEARE:       Ah, but your Grace  
Is to consider that a player's mind,  
Seeking a perfect subject, finds itself  
Sore let by duty and observance. Who,  
Having at heart to draw a queen adored  
By the most valiant warrior in the world,  
To outshine Helen—who dare lift his eyes  
To the near portrait? but, looking sideways  
thence,  
Finds an old tale of Nile to body forth  
What a queen might be; if she lacked the  
strait  
Compulsion—as what queen but one hath  
not?—  
And hallowed frost of bright virginity?

ELIZABETH: God's eyes, and must you be  
so bold? On, rogue,  
Let's hear your Egypt. What do you call her  
name?

SHAKESPEARE: Her name, had other stars  
beside this world  
Crowned her with ice, had been Elizabeth,  
But it was Cleopatra.

ELIZABETH: Faith, my lords,  
The actor flatters us, I think. On, on.  
No more; we spoke. [SHAKESPEARE  
goes to the actors]

Walter, your charge looks  
high.

RALEIGH: Madam, he does not dwell, as  
some must do,  
In the continual knowledge of despair.

ELIZABETH [half-absently]:  
Is it a sin to play with words like these,  
When the Scots' woman's son must have my  
throne—  
Because I could not choose 'twixt king and  
king  
Lest the land's knell should drown my  
marriage-peal?  
Back, Walter.

---

[The actors begin]

CLEOPATRA: *He words me, girls, he  
words me, that I should not  
Be noble to myself: but, hark thee, Charmian.*

[Whispers CHARMIAN]

IRAS: *Finish, good lady; the bright day is  
done,  
And we are for the dark.*

CLEOPATRA: *Hie thee again:  
I have spoken already, and it is provided;  
Go put it to the haste.*

CHARMIAN: *Madam, I will.*

[Enter DOLABELLA]

DOLABELLA: *Where is the queen?*

CHARMIAN: *Behold, sir. [Exit.*

CLEOPATRA: *Dolabella!*



DOLABELLA: *Madam, as thereto sworn  
by your command,  
Which my love makes religion to obey,  
I tell you this: Cæsar through Syria  
Intends his journey; and within three days  
You with your children will he send before:  
Make your best use of this: I have perform'd  
Your pleasure and my promise.*

CLEOPATRA: *Dolabella,  
I shall remain your debtor.*

DOLABELLA: *I your servant.  
Adieu, good queen; I must attend on Cæsar.*

CLEOPATRA: *Farewell, and thanks.*

[Exit DOLABELLA

*Now, Iras, what think'st thou?  
Thou, an Egyptian puppet, shalt be shown  
In Rome, as well as I: mechanic slaves  
With greasy aprons, rules, and hammers,  
shall  
Uplift us to the view; in their thick breaths,  
Rank of gross diet, shall we be encloused,  
And forced to drink their vapour.*

IRAS:            *The gods forbid!*

CLEOPATRA: *Nay, 'tis most certain, Iras:  
saucy lictors  
Will catch at us, like strumpets; and scald  
rhymers  
Ballad us out o' tune: the quick comedians  
Extemporally will stage us, and present  
Our Alexandrian revels; Antony  
Shall be brought drunken forth, and I shall  
see  
Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness  
I' the posture of a whore.*

IRAS:            *O the good gods!*

CLEOPATRA: *Nay, that's certain.*

IRAS: *I'll never see't; for, I am sure, my  
nails  
Are stronger than mine eyes.*

CLEOPATRA:        *Why, that's the way  
To fool their preparation, and to conquer  
Their most absurd intents.*

[Re-enter CHARMIAN]

*Now, Charmian!*

*Show me, my women, like a queen: go fetch  
My best attires: I am again for Cydnus,  
To meet Mark Antony: sirrah Iras, go.  
Now, noble Charmian, we'll dispatch indeed;  
And, when thou hast done this chare, I'll give  
thee leave  
To play till doomsday. Bring our crown and  
all.*

*Wherefore's this noise?*

[Exit IRAS. A noise within]

[Enter a Guardsman]

GUARDSMAN: *Here is a rural fellow  
That will not be denied your highness'  
presence:  
He brings you figs.*

CLEOPATRA: *Let him come in.* [Exit  
Guardsman]

*What poor an instrument  
May do a noble deed! he brings me liberty.  
My resolution's placed, and I have nothing*

*Of woman in me: now from head to foot  
I am marble-constant; now the fleeting moon  
No planet is of mine.*

[Re-enter Guardsman, with Clown bringing  
in a basket]

GUARDSMAN: *This is the man.*

CLEOPATRA: *Avoid, and leave him. [Exit  
Guardsman  
Hast thou the pretty worm of Nilus there,  
That kills and pains not?*

CLOWN: *Truly, I have him: but I would not  
be the party that should desire you to touch  
him, for his biting is immortal; those that do  
die of it do seldom or never recover.*

CLEOPATRA: *Rememberest thou any that  
have died on't?*

CLOWN: *Very many, men and women too. I  
heard of one of them no longer than  
yesterday: a very honest woman, but  
something given to lie; as a woman should*

*not do, but in the way of honesty: how she died of the biting of it, what pain she felt: truly, she makes a very good report o' the worm; but he that will believe all that they say shall never be saved by half that they do: but this is most fallible, the worm's an odd worm.*

CLEOPATRA: *Get thee hence; farewell.*

CLOWN: *I wish you all joy of the worm.*

[Setting down his basket

CLEOPATRA: *Farewell.*

CLOWN: *You must think this, look you, that the worm will do his kind.*

CLEOPATRA: *Ay, ay; farewell.*

CLOWN: *Look you, the worm is not to be trusted but in the keeping of wise people; for, indeed, there is no goodness in the worm.*

CLEOPATRA: *Take thou no care; it shall*

*be heeded.*

CLOWN: *Very good. Give it nothing, I pray you, for it is not worth the feeding.*

CLEOPATRA: *Will it eat me?*

CLOWN: *You must not think I am so simple but I know the devil himself will not eat a woman: I know that a woman is a dish for the gods, if the devil dress her not. But, truly, these same whoreson devils do the gods great harm in their women; for in every ten that they make, the devils mar five.*

CLEOPATRA: *Well, get thee gone; farewell.*

CLOWN: *Yes, forsooth: I wish you joy o' the worm. [Exit*

*[Re-enter IRAS with a robe, crown, &c.]*

CLEOPATRA: *Give me my robe, put on my crown; I have Immortal longings in me: now no more*

*The juice of Egypt's grape shall moist this lip:  
Yare, yare, good Iras; quick. Methinks I hear  
Antony call; I see him rouse himself  
To praise my noble act; I hear him mock  
The luck of Cæsar, which the gods give men  
To excuse their after wrath: husband, I come:  
Now to that name my courage prove my title!  
I am fire and air; my other elements  
I give to baser life. So; have you done?  
Come then, and take the last warmth of my  
lips.  
Farewell, kind Charmian; Iras, long farewell.*

[Kisses them. IRAS falls and dies

*Have I the aspic in my lips? Dost fall?  
If thou and nature can so gently part,  
The stroke of death is as a lover's pinch,  
Which hurts, and is desired. Dost thou lie  
still?  
If thus thou vanishest, thou tell'st the world  
It is not worth leave-taking.*

CHARMIAN: *Dissolve, thick cloud, and  
rain; that I may say,*

*The gods themselves do weep!*

CLEOPATRA:        *This proves me base:  
If she first meet the curled Antony,  
He'll make demand of her, and spend that  
kiss  
Which is my heaven to have. Come, thou  
mortal wretch,*

                  [To an asp, which she applies to her  
breast

*With thy sharp teeth this knot intricate  
Of life at once untie: poor venomous fool,  
Be angry, and dispatch. O, couldst thou  
speak,  
That I might hear thee call great Cæsar ass  
Unpolicied!*

CHARMIAN:    *O eastern star!*

CLEOPATRA:        *Peace, peace!  
Dost thou not see my baby at my breast,  
That sucks the nurse asleep?*



CHARMIAN:        *O, break! O, break!*

CLEOPATRA: *As sweet as balm, as soft as  
air, as gentle,—*

*O Antony!—Nay, I will take thee too:*

*[Applying another asp to her arm  
What should I say—        [Dies*

CHARMIAN: *In this vile world? So fare  
thee well.*

*Now boast thee, death, in thy possession lies  
A lass unparallel'd. Downy windows, close;  
And golden Phæbus never be beheld  
Of eyes again so royal! Your crown's awry;  
I'll mend it, and then play.*

*[Enter the Guard, rushing in]*

FIRST GUARD: *Where is the queen?*

CHARMIAN:        *Speak softly, wake her  
not.*

FIRST GUARD: *Cæsar hath sent—*

CHARMIAN:        *Too slow a messenger.*

[Applies an asp  
*O, come apace, dispatch! I partly feel thee.*

FIRST GUARD: *Approach, ho! All's not well: Cæsar's beguiled.*

SECOND GUARD: *There's Dolabella sent from Cæsar: call him.*

FIRST GUARD: *What work is here! Charmian, is this well done?*

CHARMIAN: *It is well done, and fitting for a princess  
Descended of so many royal kings.  
Ah, soldier! [Dies*

[After the presentation all look to the Queen to speak. She remains silent for a moment and then says deliberately:]

I pardon you, Master Shakespeare.

RALEIGH [to SOUTHAMPTON]:  
Lost, all lost. It touched too near.

SOUTHAMPTON [to RALEIGH]: Leave  
Will to make it out.

SHAKESPEARE [kneeling]: Madam and  
Queen, I have desired no more.

ELIZABETH: Has not your stage been  
overthrown ere now  
By some rude fierceness you have mocked  
with shows?

SHAKESPEARE: No poet ever from his  
fellow asked  
More than mere pardon for his insolence  
In making their grief audible. I think  
Perhaps no poet ever knows so much  
Of joy or grief or pain as other men,  
Because the sheer wonder of it dazzles him  
And drives him back to words.

ELIZABETH:           God help the wench  
Who loves you, Master Shakespeare.

SHAKESPEARE:           Madam, why?

ELIZABETH: Because you poets always

slip the end,  
The final desolation, the last joy,  
In making something of it. God's my life!  
You will not slip death so.

SHAKESPEARE:        Ah Madam, death  
—!

ELIZABETH: Sir Walter, you who talk of  
poetry  
As if you overwatched her at her birth,  
Why is this death that we keep off with lights  
So beautiful in words?

RALEIGH:        It is not, Madam—  
Not the mere dying but the perfect close,  
The thought of dear completion, and the end  
Finishing all the story that hath gone  
The round of many voices—boy's and  
youth's,  
Strong man's and old man's—that the tale  
should stop  
And not be mumbled in a chimney-hole  
Through many weary winters—this is good,  
Told of or heard of, played or sung or seen.

But our own story, our best-lovèd tale,  
That we should cease to speak it is too hard.

ELIZABETH [moved]: Let be. So many  
years the tale runs on—  
So many parts to act. Is there no speech  
To list them, sirrah?

SHAKESPEARE:       If your Grace can  
bear ...  
Ho, Tom!

[One of the actors comes forward and, at a  
whisper from SHAKESPEARE, delivers the  
speech]

*All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players:  
They have their exits and their entrances;  
And one man in his time plays many parts,  
His acts being seven ages. At first the infant,  
Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms.  
And then the whining school-boy, with his  
satchel,  
And shining morning face, creeping like snail*

*Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,  
Sighing like furnace, with a woful ballad  
Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then a  
soldier,  
Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the  
pard,  
Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in  
quarrel,  
Seeking the bubble reputation  
Even in the cannon's mouth. And then the  
justice,  
In fair round belly with good capon lin'd,  
With eyes severe, and beard of formal cut,  
Full of wise saws and modern instances;  
And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts  
Into the lean and slipper'd pantaloon,  
With spectacles on nose and pouch on side,  
His youthful hose well sav'd, a world too  
wide  
For his shrunk shank; and his big manly  
voice,  
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes  
And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,  
That ends this strange eventful history,  
Is second childishness and mere oblivion,*

*Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans  
everything.*

ELIZABETH: 'Sans everything.' God's eyes,  
but something gained  
For that 'sans everything'. Harry the Fifth  
Gained somewhat—I hold somewhat.

SHAKESPEARE:       Ah my liege—  
*This royal throne of kings, this sceptred isle,  
This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,  
This other Eden, demi-paradise,  
This fortress built by Nature for herself  
Against infection and the hand of war,  
This happy breed of men, this little world,  
This precious stone set in the silver sea,  
Which serves it in the office of a wall,  
Or as a moat defensive to a house,  
Against the envy of less happier lands,  
This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this  
England,  
This nurse, this teeming womb of royal kings,  
Fear'd by their breed and famous by their  
birth,  
Renowned for their deeds as far from home,*

—  
*For Christian service and true chivalry,—  
As is the sepulchre in stubborn Jewry  
Of the world's ransom, blessed Mary's Son:  
This land of such dear souls, this dear, dear  
land,  
Dear for her reputation through the world,  
England.*

[The Queen rises]

ELIZABETH: Aye, right; you have our  
favour. Walter, see  
This fellow comes to Greenwich somewhat.  
Sirs,

[To the actors]

You have done well and featly—all our  
thanks,  
Larger than our purse lets us show. What else  
We can applaud you with, our goodwill waits  
To know. Farewell; our thanks again to all.

[The Queen goes out with the Court. The  
actors follow]



SHAKESPEARE [mopping his forehead]:  
Ouf!  
My God, Dick, I can't stand it; I'm getting  
old.

BURBAGE: Stand what?

SHAKESPEARE: Her—it—this—  
everything. I felt  
The links about my ankles a score of times  
In the last hour.

BURBAGE: What do you mean?

SHAKESPEARE: Some word  
One never thought of, some line stretched to  
scan  
With an accent on an awkward phrase and—  
woof!

BURBAGE: She couldn't have you put in  
chains for that.

SHAKESPEARE: Umph! no. I dare say not.  
I never hear  
One of her 'God's eyes' but I feel the slime

Sticky about my feet from some damned pit  
In her worst prison. Get these others home.

BURBAGE: And you?

SHAKESPEARE: I'll come when I've seen  
—someone else.

BURBAGE: Come on, Will.

SHAKESPEARE: Yes, I know—'Come on',  
'come on'.

I'm a free man—free? O no, not free now;  
Never free till my credit can be lodged  
At any stall but hers; that cannot be  
Till she release it. I am damned past hope  
In her black eyeballs and more blackest love.

BURBAGE: If you could force your liking  
—

SHAKESPEARE:       Must a man  
Not void his rheum upon his muddy face  
When the sleet whips him? I must snuffle still  
With this enforcèd and despiteful love.

BURBAGE: You do not let this longing  
stay your verse;  
It is your humour still to entertain  
Its visitation in your holiday hours.

SHAKESPEARE: I would not let a man but  
you say so;  
For I too can be spleenful, out of heart  
With this absurdity which is the world.  
And credit me it is to mock myself  
That I indulge you so far. I must have  
Some other spirit to clap hands with mine  
And swear that man's a booby.

BURBAGE:       Very like;  
But, Will—

SHAKESPEARE: 'But, Will'—something  
too much of Will.  
When did I give you leave to use me thus?  
No, no, your pardon. O it grows on me;  
I am as peevish as a seaman's child  
Crying the night long for his father's arm,  
Who, miles off to the windward of the storm,  
Lackeys the canvas stretched upon the yard.

Dick, I am tossed at heart.

BURBAGE:       And yet you write  
Such scenes as this your last in praise of love.

SHAKESPEARE: May not a man veer as a  
weather-vane  
A hundred times an hour? I have loved,  
Lost, tasted, been bemocked and surfeited,  
Played with it as a rattle, drunk it like sack  
To warm my heart—and gone the round  
again  
With many another trick and fantasy—  
And all betwixt my lodgings in Cheapside  
And the stage door. Well, Dick, all's one for  
that.  
Get you home now.

BURBAGE:       What can you ask of Fate  
More than you have—the favour of the  
Queen,  
And the mob's favour—

SHAKESPEARE: O the mob!

BURBAGE: It pays.

SHAKESPEARE: O yes—and there's its use. No, faith, again,  
I wrong it; a's a bluff good-natured rogue,  
A' roars you out with any man, a' likes  
A stamp and a stride and a cockled line of  
verse  
Making it feel good—and a' comes and pays.

BURBAGE: Well, anyway the street and  
Court are one  
In praise of you, and you the central beam  
Of our company, the man we look to all  
For instinct what is right to do and where—  
Houses at Stratford, princes' friend in town,  
Walking in State processions, and chief pen  
Of all the pens the Muses ever blessed.  
That's you.

SHAKESPEARE: That's I—and this  
damned waiting about  
In corners and this thrice damned itch to see  
One no-such-special face—and the usual way  
She moves her shoulders, much like all—

that's I.

Get off, good fellow.

[BURBAGE goes, MARY FITTON comes  
to the entrance, and beckons  
SHAKESPEARE with a movement of her  
head]

O what a piece of work! O now forget  
To know thyself, my Reason, and be dark  
And quite immured! nor send signals through  
To every bitterness of mirth that sits  
In the topmost gallery and splits his sides  
Watching the spectacle of ridiculous love.  
Beckon no more; I come. If thou could'st  
change  
It should be to some log, some wooden doll  
Hewed from a cast-off branch; thou could'st  
not be  
More human nor more fanciful. O too well  
Thou hast 'scaped thyself what thou hast lent  
of hell.

[He follows her out]

## PART II

### SCENE I

#### SHAKESPEARE'S LODGINGS

[SHAKESPEARE at work on *Troilus and Cressida*. After a while he leaves off writing and correcting and settles down to read]

[Enter PRIAM, HECTOR, TROILUS, PARIS, and HELENUS]

PRIAM: *After so many hours, lives,  
speeches spent,  
Thus once again says Nestor from the  
Greeks:  
'Deliver Helen, and all damage else,  
As honour, loss of time, travail, expense,  
Wounds, friends, and what else dear that is  
consum'd  
In hot digestion of this cormorant war,  
Shall be struck off.'* Hector, what say you to

't?

HECTOR: *Though no man lesser fears the  
Greeks than I,  
As far as toucheth my particular,  
Yet, dread Priam,  
There is no lady of more softer bowels,  
More spongy to suck in the sense of fear,  
More ready to cry out 'Who knows what  
follows?'*

*Than Hector is. The wound of peace is surety,  
Surety secure; but modest doubt is call'd  
The beacon of the wise, the tent that searches  
To the bottom of the worst. Let Helen go:  
Since the first sword was drawn about this  
question,  
Every tithe soul, 'mongst many thousand  
dismes,  
Hath been as dear as Helen; I mean, of ours:  
If we have lost so many tenths of ours,  
To guard a thing not ours nor worth to us,  
Had it our name, the value of one ten,  
What merit's in that reason which denies  
The yielding of her up?*



TROILUS: *Fie, fie! my brother,  
Weigh you the worth and honour of a king  
So great as our dread father in a scale  
Of common ounces? will you with counters  
sum  
The past proportion of his infinite?  
And buckle in a waist most fathomless  
With spans and inches so diminutive  
As fears and reasons? fie, for godly shame!...*

HECTOR: *Brother, she is not worth what  
she doth cost  
The holding.*

TROILUS: *What is aught but as 'tis  
valued?*

HECTOR: *But value dwells not in  
particular will;  
It holds his estimate and dignity  
As well wherein 'tis precious of itself  
As in the prizer. 'Tis mad idolatry  
To make the service greater than the god;  
And the will dotes that is inclinable  
To what infectiously itself affects,*

*Without some image of the affected merit.*

*TROILUS: I take to-day a wife, and my  
election  
Is led on in the conduct of my will;  
My will enkindled by mine eyes and ears,  
Two traded pilots 'twixt the dangerous shores  
Of will and judgment. How may I avoid,  
Although my will distaste what it elected,  
The wife I chose? there can be no evasion  
To blench from this and to stand firm by  
honour.*

*PARIS: Else might the world convince of  
levity  
As well my undertakings as your counsels;  
But I attest the gods, your full consent  
Gave wings to my propension and cut off  
All fears attending on so dire a project:  
For what, alas! can these my single arms?  
What propugnation is in one man's valour,  
To stand the push and enmity of those  
This quarrel would excite? Yet, I protest,  
Were I alone to pass the difficulties,  
And had as ample power as I have will,*

*Paris should ne'er retract what he hath done,  
Nor faint in the pursuit....*

*HECTOR: Paris and Troilus, you have both  
said well;  
And on the cause and question now in hand  
Have glaz'd, but superficially; not much  
Unlike young men, whom Aristotle thought  
Unfit to hear moral philosophy.  
The reasons you allege do more conduce  
To the hot passion of distemper'd blood  
Than to make up a free determination  
'Twixt right and wrong; for pleasure and  
revenge  
Have ears more deaf than adders to the voice  
Of any true decision. Nature craves  
All dues be render'd to their owners: now,  
What nearer debt in all humanity  
Than wife is to the husband? if this law  
Of nature be corrupted through affection,  
And that great minds, of partial indulgence  
To their benumbed wills, resist the same;  
There is a law in each well-order'd nation  
To curb those raging appetites that are  
Most disobedient and refractory.*

*If Helen then be wife to Sparta's king,  
As it is known she is, these moral laws  
Of nature, and of nations, speak aloud  
To have her back return'd: thus to persist  
In doing wrong extenuates not wrong,  
But makes it much more heavy.*

SHAKESPEARE [breaking off suddenly]:  
Too wide; all, all too wide! 'Tis well enough,  
This heavy sonorous talk, for what it is,  
The solemn argument of mighty states  
Disputing still if they be vulnerable  
In nature's law or man's—but they might  
think  
The very lines out—no; yet it's not truth  
Neither, this way nor t'other—what they  
could  
Nor what they would. What does it need? It  
needs  
The utter roundness, words and what shapes  
words,  
The thing between the words that makes the  
words  
Its colour and completion. Fair enough—

[Turning the papers

*'Injurious time now with a robber's haste  
Crams his rich thievery up'; and there again*

—

*'Love, friendship, charity are subjects all  
To envious and calumniating time.'  
And yet not—*

[He walks up and down

I am come unto my equipoise; my next  
Shall trim me level with my past, or push  
So far beyond my purpose 'tis too vain  
To prophesy what lies there. Passion's dull  
If it fail now; it must not.

[A knock, FRANCIS BEAUMONT and  
DAVID NICHOLAS come in]

BEAUMONT: Sir, I disturb you.

SHAKESPEARE: Francis? nay, come  
in.

Why, sir, and you too; you are welcome.

NICHOLAS:            Sir,  
One Master Stephen Bellot, whom you know,  
Causes me to be thus vexatious.

SHAKESPEARE:        Nay,  
You are very welcome. Master Nicholas?

NICHOLAS:            He.

SHAKESPEARE: Be so far kind then as to  
cheer your friend  
With promise made to me, through me to  
him,  
That, if he marry her, Mary's father gives  
A matter of fifty pounds in dowry.

NICHOLAS:            Sir,  
Stephen and I will drink your health to-night,  
Even if you shall not spare one kindness  
more.

SHAKESPEARE: What you will, in my  
measure.

NICHOLAS:            Sir, my wife  
Is set below; if you would stretch so far

As to repeat this message in her ear?

SHAKESPEARE: A moment, Francis. Sir, I follow you.

[SHAKESPEARE and NICHOLAS go out.  
BEAUMONT picks up the manuscript and sits down to read]

ULYSSES: *You have sworn patience.*

TROILUS: *Fear me not, sweet lord;  
I will not be myself, nor have cognition  
Of what I feel: I am all patience.*

[Enter CRESSIDA]

THERSITES: *Now the pledge! now, now,  
now!*

CRESSIDA: *Here, Diomed, keep this  
sleeve.*

TROILUS: *O beauty! where is thy faith?*

ULYSSES: *My lord,—*

TROILUS: *I will be patient; outwardly I will.*

CRESSIDA: *You look upon that sleeve; behold it well.  
He loved me—O false wench!—Give't to me again.*

DIOMEDES: *Whose was't?*

CRESSIDA: *It is no matter, now I have't again.  
I will not meet with you to-morrow night.  
I prithee, Diomed, visit me no more.*

THERSITES: *Now she sharpens: well said, whetstone!*

DIOMEDES: *I shall have it.*

CRESSIDA: *What, this?*

DIOMEDES: *Ay, that.*

CRESSIDA: *O! all you gods. O pretty, pretty pledge!*



*Thy master now lies thinking in his bed  
Of thee and me; and sighs, and takes my  
glove,  
And gives memorial dainty kisses to it,  
As I kiss thee. Nay, do not snatch it from me;  
He that takes that doth take my heart withal.*

DIOMEDES: *I had your heart before; this  
follows it.*

TROILUS: *I did swear patience.*

CRESSIDA: *You shall not have it, Diomed;  
faith, you shall not;  
I'll give you something else.*

DIOMEDES: *I will have this. Whose was it?*

CRESSIDA: *'Tis no matter.*

DIOMEDES: *Come, tell me whose it was.*

CRESSIDA: *'Twas one's that loved me  
better than you will.  
But, now you have it, take it.*

DIOMEDES:            *Whose was it?*

CRESSIDA: *By all Diana's waiting-women  
yond,  
And by herself, I will not tell you whose.*

DIOMEDES: *To-morrow will I wear it on  
my helm,  
And grieve his spirit that dares not challenge  
it.*

TROILUS: *Wert thou the devil, and wor'st it  
on thy horn,  
It should be challeng'd.*

CRESSIDA: *Well, well, 'tis done, 'tis past:  
and yet it is not:  
I will not keep my word.*

DIOMEDES:            *Why then, farewell;  
Thou never shalt mock Diomed again.*

CRESSIDA: *You shall not go: one cannot  
speak a word,  
But it straight starts you.*

DIOMEDES: *I do not like this fooling.*

THERSITES: *Nor I, by Pluto: but that that  
likes not me  
Pleases me best.*

DIOMEDES: *What, shall I come? the hour?*

CRESSIDA: *Ay, come:—O Jove!—  
Do come:—I shall be plagu'd.*

DIOMEDES: *Farewell till then.*

CRESSIDA: *Goodnight: I prithee, come—  
[Exit DIOMEDES*

*Troilus, farewell! one eye yet looks on thee,  
But with my heart the other eye doth see.  
Ah! poor our sex; this fault in us I find,  
The error of our eye directs our mind.  
What error leads must err. O! then conclude  
Minds sway'd by eyes are full of turpitude.  
[Exit*

ULYSSES: *All's done, my lord.*

TROILUS: *It is.*

ULYSSES: *Why stay we, then?*

TROILUS: *To make a recordation to my  
soul  
Of every syllable that here was spoke.  
But if I tell how these two did co-act,  
Shall I not lie in publishing a truth?  
Sith yet there is a credence in my heart,  
An esperance so obstinately strong,  
That doth invert the attest of eyes and ears,  
As if those organs had deceptious functions,  
Created only to calumniate.  
Was Cressid here?*

ULYSSES: *I cannot conjure, Trojan.*

TROILUS: *She was not, sure.*

ULYSSES: *Most sure she was.*

TROILUS: *Why, my negation hath no taste  
of madness.*

ULYSSES: *Nor mine, my lord: Cressid was*

*here but now.*

*TROILUS: Let it not be believ'd for  
womanhood!  
Think we had mothers; do not give advantage  
To stubborn critics, apt, without a theme,  
For depravation, to square the general sex  
By Cressid's rule: rather think this not  
Cressid.*

*ULYSSES: What hath she done, prince, that  
can soil our mothers?*

[SHAKESPEARE returns, BEAUMONT  
rises to meet him]

SHAKESPEARE: Did you ever meet with  
Bellot, Francis?

BEAUMONT: Aye.

SHAKESPEARE: A pleasant lad, but  
something over-wise  
In his first love. I run as go-between  
To find how much in dowry the sire gives,  
A Pandarus of purses.

BEAUMONT:        Send your trade  
Be better fated than your pandar's here,  
Unless my memory of the tale goes wrong.

SHAKESPEARE: I never loved the kind, in  
love or trade,  
Nor much more there.

BEAUMONT:        This goes?

SHAKESPEARE:        Aye, somehow;  
pushed  
Through a hedge or two towards fair-day. I  
can't guess.  
Years ago since I ventured on it first  
And now again a sennight since or so.  
The first for lack of inclination stopped;  
This halts for lack of—skill, strength, what  
you choose.  
It doesn't reach that moment when hope ends  
And our despair sends out the final calm  
With the true word englobed in't. O they talk,  
But they talk learnedly, they talk too high—

BEAUMONT: Sir, if a poor practitioner of

verse

May praise—

SHAKESPEARE: You wrong yourself too much. No ... no ...

I am stifled with it. See you, when at first  
The sun we call Apollo strikes on us  
Forth peep the primroses and gillyflowers,  
Up get the cowmen, out run serving-boys,  
All the morn's busy. Then comes change; the  
voice

That once went singing talks of policies,  
Heroes; conceiving morals, values, scope  
For goodman Thought to set his household up  
And push his business further. What's  
beyond?

What's in the sun's self, the vastity  
And circumambulation of that world  
Which lights the rest? I don't misjudge my  
play.

There's freshness in it, youth and decent age;  
But the last secret—but age touched with  
youth,

Ripeness of being, ripeness of poetry;  
No longer life transmuted into words,

But words transmuted into life and veined  
From the blood at the centre, having one beat  
with that;

Immortal not with poor everlastingness  
But out of starry knowledge into ... stuff—  
That's not there. Well, you needed me?

BEAUMONT: Nay, sir,  
Only you promised Jack you'd overlook—

SHAKESPEARE: O *The Two Kinsmen*?  
Why aye, give it me.

BEAUMONT: Not to be troublesome—

SHAKESPEARE: What, you and I?  
No more than Master Bellot with his pounds,  
And yet a little more for friendship's sake.

BEAUMONT: You do not walk yet?

SHAKESPEARE: No, I work.  
Farewell.

BEAUMONT: Farewell, and our best  
service. [He goes



SHAKESPEARE:        To it once more.  
Some argument past the wise Ulysses, some  
Signification of the passionate coil  
That is Troilus' self, now some most cunning  
word.

'What hath she done, prince, that can soil our  
mothers?'

'Nothing, unless'—too low; the swell, the  
swell ...

'What hath she done, prince, that can soil our  
mothers?'

'Nothing at all; it was not she ...'

'Nothing at all; she was not here nor ...'

'What hath she done, prince, that can soil our  
mothers?'

*Nothing at all, unless that this were she.*

[He begins to write it down

## SCENE II

### A ROOM AT THE MERMAID

[SHAKESPEARE, JONSON, BURBAGE,  
at one table. SIR TOBY BELCH and SIR  
ANDREW AGUECHEEK at another.]

SIR TOBY BELCH: *Marian, I say! a stoup  
of wine!*

[Enter Clown]

SIR ANDREW AGUECHEEK: *Here comes  
the fool, i' faith.*

CLOWN: *How now, my hearts! Did you  
never see the picture of 'we three'?*

SIR TOBY BELCH: *Welcome, ass. Now  
let's have a catch.*

SIR ANDREW AGUECHEEK: *By my troth,  
the fool has an excellent breast. I had rather  
than forty shillings I had such a leg, and so  
sweet a breath to sing, as the fool has. In*

*sooth, thou wast in very gracious fooling last night, when thou spokest of Pigrogromitus, of the Vapians passing the equinoctial of Queubus: 'twas very good, i' faith. I sent thee sixpence for thy leman: hadst it?*

*CLOWN: I did impeticos thy gratillity; for Malvolio's nose is no whipstock: my lady has a white hand, and the Myrmidons are no bottle-ale houses.*

*SIR ANDREW AGUECHEEK: Excellent! why, this is the best fooling, when all is done. Now, a song.*

*SIR TOBY BELCH: Come on; there is sixpence for you: let's have a song.*

*SIR ANDREW AGUECHEEK: There's a testril of me too: if one knight give a—*

*CLOWN: Would you have a love-song, or a song of good life?*

*SIR TOBY BELCH: A love-song, a love-song.*

SIR ANDREW AGUECHEEK: *Ay, ay; I care not for good life.*

CLOWN:

*O mistress mine! where are you roaming?  
O! stay and hear; your true love's coming,  
That can sing both high and low.  
Trip no further, pretty sweeting;  
Journeys end in lovers meeting,  
Every wise man's son doth know.*

SIR ANDREW AGUECHEEK: *Excellent good, i' faith.*

SIR TOBY BELCH: *Good, good.*

CLOWN:

*What is love? 'tis not hereafter;  
Present mirth hath present laughter;  
What's to come is still unsure:  
In delay there lies no plenty;  
Then come kiss me, sweet and twenty,  
Youth's a stuff will not endure.*

SIR ANDREW AGUECHEEK: A

*mellifluous voice, as I am true knight.*

SIR TOBY BELCH: *A contagious breath.*

SIR ANDREW AGUECHEEK: *Very sweet and contagious, i' faith.*

SIR TOBY BELCH: *To hear by the nose, it is dulcet in contagion. But shall we make the welkin dance indeed? Shall we rouse the night-owl in a catch that will draw three souls out of one weaver? Shall we do that?*

SIR ANDREW AGUECHEEK: *An you love me, let's do't: I am dog at a catch.*

CLOWN: *By'r lady, sir, and some dogs will catch well.*

SIR ANDREW AGUECHEEK: *Most certain. Let our catch be, 'Thou knave'.*

CLOWN: *'Hold thy peace, thou knave,' knight? I shall be constrain'd in't to call thee knave, knight.*

SIR ANDREW AGUECHEEK: *'Tis not the first time I have constrain'd one to call me knave. Begin, fool: it begins, 'Hold thy peace'.*

CLOWN: *I shall never begin if I hold my peace.*

SIR ANDREW AGUECHEEK: *Good, i' faith. Come, begin.*

[They sing a catch

CLOWN: *Beshrew me, the knight's in admirable fooling.*

SIR ANDREW AGUECHEEK: *Ay, he does well enough if he be disposed, and so do I too; he does it with a better grace, but I do it more natural.* [They drift out

BURBAGE [looking at SHAKESPEARE and quoting]: *O God! that men should put an enemy in their mouths to steal away their brains; that we should, with joy, pleasance, revel, and applause, transform ourselves into*

*beasts.*

JONSON: That's true too; but a man should  
take his drink  
Most like, as all could do, a man whose mind  
Uses his habits to his profit, skims  
The cream o' the milk, and lets the jug stand  
by  
For thirsty neighbours.

SHAKESPEARE:           'Should.' Ben, you  
were made  
For a wise pulpiter.

JONSON:       So were not you.

SHAKESPEARE: I thank God for it.

JONSON:       Do you so—thank God  
That you have never tried to turn a man  
From his foul ways, and what he loves too  
well,  
To cleaner? Honest men must needs be clean.

SHAKESPEARE: The only thing I have  
against you, Ben,

Isn't your doing; you've the rarest touch  
Of old moralities in your humours—aye,  
I almost see the Vice jump out at last  
Scolding the devil to hell.

JONSON: That's the Old Faith  
That works in me—you've neither the old nor  
new,  
Good Catholic nor good Puritan.

SHAKESPEARE: Why no,  
I learned my craft upon another bench  
From quite another master, than your bluff,  
Honest, broad-shouldered master right-and-  
wrong.

JONSON: Meaning—

SHAKESPEARE: Even now I cannot  
think of him  
But with a secret melancholy, him,  
I mean, who was a greater then than I,  
And might be greater now, had he been met  
By no two surly ruffians; who still kept  
His eager eyes on knowledge, his swift feet



Spurning the paltry pavements for the air  
They loved so—Marlowe.

BURBAGE:           Aye; he died the year  
Before we went to Greenwich first.

SHAKESPEARE:       He was  
All excellency, he was my sole friend  
When I was young, and my great master.  
Now  
There are moments when my heart beats  
through my veins  
Those unkind tidings as if all were new—  
Marlowe is dead, and as one dazed by the  
moon  
I stagger at it.

JONSON:            He died in a brawl?

SHAKESPEARE:       He died—  
Let it rest there.... He died of that excess  
Wherein his mighty heart, beating its way  
About the weakness of the thinning air  
Beyond the stars, plunged like a falling star  
Through the great void that took him.

BURBAGE: All's a void  
Beyond our natural shutting-up of eyes.  
Neither of you two, you the Catholic  
Or you the poet, can instruct me there.

JONSON: Go to a priest—if you can find a  
priest  
Hid in a cellar; go to the Spanish lord's  
New chaplain.

SHAKESPEARE: All ends somehow. I  
would have  
No huddled-up and scrabbling end of life,  
Leaving all things put off to the last, as some  
Schoolboy sits gabbling i' the morning o'er  
His book ere yet he gets himself to school  
Half-knowing it. Week's work, week's pay,  
week's end.

[Singers heard without]

By your leave, my friends. Maria, bring them  
in. [They enter  
Well met, good fellows. What, can you sing a  
verse

After a glance at it?

FIRST SINGER:           Master, if it go  
Tunefully—is there music?

SHAKESPEARE:           No, not yet.

[He gives them a paper. They gather round,  
examining and whispering]

Well, can you do it? or hath learning now  
Stolen the natural instinct from our hearts  
To make a song of any likely words?

FIRST SINGER: Why, aye, we'll try it.

SHAKESPEARE:           On then; you'll do  
well.

[They sing]

*Fear no more the heat o' the sun,  
Nor the furious winter's rages;  
Thou thy worldly task hast done,  
Home art gone, and ta'en thy wages;  
Golden lads and girls all must,*

*As chimney-sweepers, come to dust.*

*Fear no more the frown o' the great,  
Thou art past the tyrant's stroke:  
Care no more to clothe and eat;  
To thee the reed is as the oak:  
The sceptre, learning, physic, must  
All follow this, and come to dust.*

*Fear no more the lightning-flash,  
Nor the all-dreaded thunder-stone;  
Fear not slander, censure rash;  
Thou hast finished joy and moan:  
All lovers young, all lovers must  
Consign to thee, and come to dust.*

[SHAKESPEARE gives them money and  
they go out]

BURBAGE: That's a new song?

SHAKESPEARE: Aye.

JONSON: An old song, I think.  
All men have known it.

BURBAGE:           No man has known  
more.  
But there's a speech, Will, in another play,  
Your *Measure for Measure*, that I got by  
heart  
Not for the acting but for the mere dread,  
A thing I keep to love and shudder at—

[He rises and speaks it]

*Ay, but to die, and go we know not where;  
To lie in cold obstruction and to rot;  
This sensible warm motion to become  
A kneaded clod; and the delighted spirit  
To bathe in fiery floods, or to reside  
In thrilling region of thick-ribbed ice;  
To be imprison'd in the viewless winds,  
And blown with restless violence round about  
The pendant world; or to be worse than worst  
Of those that lawless and uncertain thoughts  
Imagine howling: 'tis too horrible!  
The weariest and most loathed worldly life  
That age, ache, penury and imprisonment  
Can lay on nature is a paradise  
To what we fear of death.*

JONSON: A young fool in a dungeon  
whining out  
That his dear body, which is all he knows,  
Having no hint of the victorious mind,  
And lesser as a Christian man than souls  
Such as great Seneca and wise Plutarch were:  
That this most cherished body, which the  
stews,  
And well-served victuals, and warm sheets by  
night,  
Made him enjoy, should go into the dark  
Sobbing for all the good it leaves behind!  
Will, your young heroes are the loathliest  
crew.

SHAKESPEARE: Take them for what they  
are—heroes; naught else.

JONSON: You take no trouble with your  
plays.

SHAKESPEARE:                   My God!  
I take no trouble! I—who spend more time  
Coaxing a vicious troublesome little noun  
Into its place between two adjectives



And sometimes for some notion that has crept  
Into my brain by night of how a man  
Might be or do this, that, or the other, and  
show  
What happens to the mind when that is done;  
And sometimes—to put other people right.

BURBAGE: Will!

JONSON: Doubtless! Me, now?

SHAKESPEARE: O no, Ben, not  
you.  
You know that play that came out t'other day

—  
*King Leir*?—there's chances gone a-begging;  
there

The fellow got an old deserted king  
Out in the country, in a thunderstorm,  
With a murderer after him; where all he did  
Was to cry out on hell and brimstone, how  
It wasn't right to kill a man—boom, boom,  
Goes thunder; wouldn't you like to go to  
heaven?  
Boom, boom; but kill me if you must—boom,



boom,  
Till honest murderer thinks that thunder's sent  
To damn him past redemption and runs off.—  
I'll show him how to write.

BURBAGE:                   What will you do?

SHAKESPEARE: It was a window opened;  
think—he goes,  
An outspurned royalty, from his daughter's  
hearth,  
Swelling, high-vexed, and nigh to madness;  
think—  
Not madness only, but all things at once  
Dissolving in a general horror; think—  
This very being, this manhood, that we are,  
Breaking; our beating centres dispossess  
And all our voices and concerns of life  
Eccentric, underivable, dismayed,  
Till they have changed past knowing; to  
which end—  
As which of you has not feared madness  
once,  
However staunch you sit?—I will have one  
On either side of kingship's toppling brain:

One—a poor born fool, a mad innocent,  
A world without direction; one a world  
Of fierceness, nakedness, and dancing rags—  
And all three worlds sent spinning in a sky  
Wherethrough the greater elements dissolve  
Even as the lesser. O and all around  
High and incestuous and possessive thoughts  
And some few steady fools amid the storm  
Blundering to shelter. You have known it  
then,  
How near the pit we are?

BURBAGE:           Go not too near.

SHAKESPEARE: Then the bare heart  
should crack; then the full main  
Of being, in an uncanonical haste,  
Crawling with greedy, rash, and mountainous  
waves,  
Pre-empt upon the mind's occasion, thwart  
The type of manhood, and there force in him,  
Behind the ungovernable tricks of speech,  
Such blinding fracture of intelligence  
As makes the play. But that's for evening  
time.

I'm for the theatre now. You're coming, Dick?

BURBAGE: You're early, aren't you?

SHAKESPEARE:        Yes—you'll come  
on?

BURBAGE:            Yes,  
In another quarter of an hour.

SHAKESPEARE:        Good. Farewell,  
My learnèd Ben!

JONSON:            Farewell, my unschooled  
Will:

[SHAKESPEARE goes out]

What is it goes there?

BURBAGE:            That's what I ask myself  
When I've been sitting with him.

JONSON:            Indolent  
But alert if need shall call him; full of jest,  
But if one gives, as talk runs, a glance back

To find his silence out, there sits a dim  
Shadow of melancholy on his face;  
No learning, no philosophy, yet a knack  
Of bringing all a philosophic school  
Into a phrase.

BURBAGE:     It is his poetry  
Searches our hearts out. Do you know the  
play  
He goes down to rehearse this afternoon  
Ere it's presented at the Inns of Court?

JONSON: *Macbeth?* no.

BURBAGE:         Ben, I think sometimes  
this man,  
Will Shakespeare, is not all so much a man  
As the wise earth speaking aloud; so fair,  
In such a supernatural wonder, come  
His utterances, and with so deep a sound  
As if they had beaten down the corridors  
Without us and within us, the mid-world  
With our mid-hearts mingled in passages  
Where only the great music that is he  
Goes echoing on for ever.

JONSON:                    But Macbeth?—  
Holinshed's story is it? the Scotch thane?

BURBAGE: Aye, that. The murder of  
Duncan—not alone  
Murder itself treading with ghastly foot  
The crimson and revolted house of life;  
But afterwards—Macbeth and Macbeth's  
Queen,  
Both in their separate ways cut off and  
prisoned  
Within the changeless horror of a sleep  
That dreams of naught but Duncan. She who  
held  
The imperial queendom of the active world,  
As quick, as vigilant, as physical  
As the round earth's self, in her slumber goes  
About the astonished palace, and heaves up  
Her slender hands to all men's terror; he,  
Being apt in meditation and in dreams,  
Finds all his dreams grow round him till they  
close  
All ways between him and material things,  
Immense and incorporeal, and he treads,  
His mind sleepwalking, and his heart—no

sound,  
None, but its solitary beating—through  
Clefts of futility and helplessness,  
Himself most futile.

JONSON:           And he laughs at me  
For being moral!

BURBAGE:           But this doom is none  
Of our inventions and predicaments  
To stay man in from evil. These last years  
He has neighboured with old Nature, and  
gone in  
To the world's bottom; he has been made one  
With the metaphysical principle of things;  
He is made that primal necessary voice  
Proclaiming its vast being. If he turn,  
Now, for a fit of craftsmanship, a sting  
Thrust in him by some folly of this bad play,  
That first necessity against itself,  
And bring man's topmost struggle into the hid  
Cradle and sepulchre of our common life—  
I promise you I fear it.

JONSON:           He's a great man;

But never was a poet yet who took  
The last step into madness—all but that;  
That's held from them. Well, Dick, maybe  
you're right.  
And yet—for all this largeness—he's a friend  
To the common people.

BURBAGE [rising]: Aye, to a point; but if  
Your common people try to cheat him, click!  
There's the law shut on them. Ben, do you  
know  
He's never lost a law case yet?

JONSON [rising]: Well done;  
Praise to the poet who can beat the world  
At its own game.

[As they pay the reckoning]  
Well, child, and what do you  
think  
Of Master Shakespeare?

MARIA: O sir, I don't think  
Of the gentlemen who come here; only this—  
He's got the pleasantest voice in London.





then the masque again. Come, first the  
'Yellow Sands'.

[A boy sings]

*Come unto these yellow sands,  
And then take hands:  
Curtsied when you have, and kiss'd,—  
The wild waves whist,—  
Foot it featly here and there;  
And, sweet sprites, the burden bear.  
Hark, hark!*

[Burden: *Bow, wow,*  
dispersedly  
*The watch-dogs bark:*

[Burden: *Bow, wow,*  
dispersedly  
*Hark, hark! I hear*

*The strain of strutting Chanticleer*  
[Cry: *Cock-a-diddle-dow*

Good, good, my Ariel; sing it cheerly, sprite;  
And now the other. Last night when you sang  
There was a touch of mortal in it. Boy,  
Put off from you the growing hint of man

That makes you human; close the opening up  
Wherein your future threatens.

BOY:            Please you, sir,  
Is Ariel man or woman?

SHAKESPEARE:        Neither, child.  
He is a voice beyond mortality,  
Quite other than ourselves; if you should  
think  
At all of that sea-whelmèd father as  
A son or daughter should, you go too wrong.  
You have no sorrow nor no wonder, nor  
Aught but a plenipotential music, loosed  
From a most faerie and unnatural mouth.  
Come, sing; no mortal! mark, no manhood,  
no  
Grief nor no marvel—only music. Sing.

[The boy sings]

*Full fathom five thy father lies;  
Of his bones are coral made:  
Those are pearls that were his eyes:  
Nothing of him that doth fade,*

*But doth suffer a sea-change  
Into something rich and strange.  
Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell:*

[Burden: *Ding-dong*

*Hark! now I hear them,—ding-dong, bell.*

HENEAGE [to SHAKESPEARE, as the  
song ends]:

Will, I've been looking at it; there's a slip  
Surely.

SHAKESPEARE: A slip?

HENEAGE: Well ... as I read, you  
made  
Caliban, Trinculo, and the other fellow  
Plot against Prospero. Well, does anything  
chance?

SHAKESPEARE: Plot? [Taking the play.]  
So I did, by heavens! No, Heneage, lad,  
Nothing at all has chanced or would have  
chanced  
If you had missed it. So I did. Now where—

Right, right, I have it. Umph.

HENEAGE:            You could cut it out.

SHAKESPEARE: I'd rather put things in  
than cut them out.

Besides, if I cut it, they don't link at all,  
This Caliban group, with the rest. No, they  
must plot ...

Something must go in ... here, at the end of  
the masque.

Look, look, we'll cut the last two speeches,  
so.

Tell Dick to take an earlier scene first, while  
I fudge up something new. What now do I  
want?

HENEAGE: You've got to get the masquers  
out of the way  
And bring in Caliban.

SHAKESPEARE:     Right, I have it; right.  
Tell Dick, the love-scene, say, and then for  
the masque.

[He goes out

[The rehearsal of another scene begins]

PROSPERO: *The fringed curtains of thine  
eye advance,  
And say what thou seest yond.*

MIRANDA:        *What is't? a spirit?  
Lord, how it looks about! Believe me, sir,  
It carries a brave form:—but 'tis a spirit.*

PROSPERO: *No, wench; it eats and sleeps,  
and hath such senses  
As we have, such; this gallant which thou  
see'st  
Was in the wrack; and, but he's something  
stain'd  
With grief,—that beauty's canker,—thou  
might'st call him  
A goodly person: he hath lost his fellows  
And strays about to find 'em.*

MIRANDA:        *I might call him  
A thing divine; for nothing natural  
I ever saw so noble.*

PROSPERO [aside]: *It goes on, I see,  
As my soul prompts it.—Spirit, fine spirit! I'll  
free thee  
Within two days for this.*

FERDINAND:       *Most sure, the goddess  
On whom these airs attend!—Vouchsafe, my  
prayer  
May know if you remain upon this island;  
And that you will some good instruction give  
How I may bear me here: my prime request,  
Which I do last pronounce, is,—O you  
wonder!—  
If you be maid or no?*

MIRANDA:       *No wonder, sir;  
But certainly a maid.*

FERDINAND:   *My language! heavens!—  
I am the best of them that speak this speech,  
Were I but where 'tis spoken.*

PROSPERO:       *How! the best?  
What wert thou, if the King of Naples heard  
thee?*

FERDINAND: *A single thing, as I am now,  
that wonders  
To hear thee speak of Naples. He does hear  
me;  
And, that he does, I weep: myself am Naples,  
Who with mine eyes,—ne'er since at ebb,—  
beheld  
The king my father wrack'd.*

MIRANDA: *Alack, for mercy!*

FERDINAND: *Yes, faith, and all his lords;  
the Duke of Milan  
And his brave son being twain.*

PROSPERO: [Aside] *The Duke of  
Milan,  
And his more braver daughter could control  
thee,  
If now 'twere fit to do 't.—At the first sight  
[aside] They have changed eyes:—delicate  
Ariel,  
I'll set thee free for this!—  
[To FERDINAND] A word, good sir;  
I fear you have done yourself some wrong: a*

word.

MIRANDA [aside]: *Why speaks my father  
so ungently? This  
Is the third man that e'er I saw; the first  
That e'er I sighed for: pity move my father  
To be inclin'd my way!*

FERDINAND: [Aside] *O! if a virgin,  
And your affection not gone forth, I'll make  
you  
The Queen of Naples.*

PROSPERO: *Soft, sir: one word more—  
[Aside] They are both in either's powers: but  
this swift business  
I must uneasy make, lest too light winning  
Make the prize light.—  
[To FERDINAND] One word more: I charge  
thee  
That thou attend me. Thou dost here usurp  
The name thou ow'st not; and hast put thyself  
Upon this island as a spy, to win it  
From me, the lord on't.*



FERDINAND:            *No, as I am a man.*

MIRANDA: *There's nothing ill can dwell in  
such a temple:*

*If the ill spirit have so fair a house,  
Good things will strive to dwell with 't.*

PROSPERO: [To FERDINAND] *Follow  
me.—*

[To MIRANDA] *Speak not you for him; he's  
a traitor.—*

[To FERDINAND] *Come;  
I'll manacle thy neck and feet together:  
Sea-water shalt thou drink; thy food shall be  
The fresh-brook muscles, wither'd roots and  
husks  
Wherein the acorn cradled. Follow.*

FERDINAND:            *No;  
I will resist such entertainment till  
Mine enemy has more power.*

[He draws, and is charmed from moving]

MIRANDA:            *O dear father!*

*Make not too rash a trial of him, for  
He's gentle, and not fearful.*

PROSPERO:       *What! I say,  
My foot my tutor?—Put thy sword up, traitor;  
Who mak'st a show, but dar'st not strike, thy  
conscience  
Is so possess'd with guilt: come from thy  
ward,  
For I can here disarm thee with this stick  
And make thy weapon drop.*

MIRANDA:       *Beseech you, father!*

PROSPERO: *Hence! hang not on my  
garments.*

MIRANDA:       *Sir, have pity: I'll be his  
surety.*

PROSPERO: *Silence! one word more  
Shall make me chide thee, if not hate thee.  
What!  
An advocate for an impostor? hush!  
Thou think'st there is no more such shapes as*

*he,  
Having seen but him and Caliban: foolish  
wench!  
To the most of men this is a Caliban  
And they to him are angels.*

*MIRANDA: My affections  
Are then most humble; I have no ambition  
To see a goodlier man.*

*PROSPERO [to FERDINAND]: Come on;  
obey:  
Thy nerves are in their infancy again,  
And have no vigour in them.*

*FERDINAND: So they are:  
My spirits, as in a dream, are all bound up.  
My father's loss, the weakness which I feel,  
The wrack of all my friends, or this man's  
threats,  
To whom I am subdued, are but light to me,  
Might I but through my prison once a day  
Behold this maid: all corners else o' th' earth  
Let liberty make use of; space enough  
Have I in such a prison.*

PROSPERO [aside]: *It works.*— [To FERDINAND] *Come on.*—  
*Thou hast done well, fine Ariel!*—[To FERDINAND] *Follow me.*—  
[To ARIEL] *Hark, what thou else shalt do me.*

MIRANDA:       *Be of comfort;*  
*My father's of a better nature, sir,*  
*Than he appears by speech: this is unwonted,*  
*Which now came from him.*

PROSPERO: *Thou shalt be as free*  
*As mountain winds; but then exactly do*  
*All points of my command.*

ARIEL:       *To the syllable.*

PROSPERO [to FERDINAND]: *Come, follow.*—*Speak not for him.* [Exeunt]

BURBAGE [to HENEAGE]: *Tell him we've finished.*

[As SHAKESPEARE enters] *Will you have the masque now?*

SHAKESPEARE:           No—  
They're copying out the parts within. Break  
off  
Ten minutes now, and then we'll take the  
masque  
In the new style and go right through to the  
end.  
[The actors disperse; a few remain]  
Heigh-ho!

HENEAGE:   You're weary?

SHAKESPEARE:   Not so much weary,  
lad,  
As something stiff with writing. I grow old,  
And merely glad that all that I must have  
Is the morning walk through Stratford, the  
slow talk,  
And heavy meditation which goes on  
A hundred summers when I am cut and  
thrown  
To autumn bonfires.

BURBAGE:    I have heard men say  
They're growing Puritan down in Stratford

now,  
Forbidding players: does that please you,  
Will?

SHAKESPEARE: No—aye; aye—no.  
Leave to Bartholomew Ben  
Indoctrination of mortality  
With the true way of living. Shall a man  
Not lock his house for his humour in it, and  
bar  
The gates of his garden against trespassers  
Coming to steal his apples?

HENEAGE:           Steal?

SHAKESPEARE:           Aye, steal  
His ripened fruit and the garden celery  
And the roses by the kitchen-window—all  
He grew with such slow toil. More growth,  
more worth  
Than any sly quick-fingered Jack-of-his-heels  
Knows when he nips the pears off. Each to  
each,  
For still the thief says God a' mercy too,  
Pouching the pears.

HENEAGE:            You mean the Puritans  
By the thief?

SHAKESPEARE: I never talked of meaning  
yet  
(Beyond what a spate of verse might lead me  
to)  
More than a prayer for peace and a quiet life  
And some such trifle as you fellows here  
Or the chubby babe that laughed at me to-day  
From Milton the scrivener's house in  
Gracechurch Street.  
The meaning's in the poetry, not in me.  
Heigh-ho! I am more wearied than my wont  
Has been, when need has halloed in my ear  
For a scene in this sort.

HENEAGE:            Have you often slipped  
A fastening in your work? You drive your  
brain  
Like the King's post to Dover.

SHAKESPEARE:        O there comes  
To the heedfullest worker moments when he  
feels

All the fine carving and the careful edge  
Of his new cabinet leaning awry,  
And a chill about his stomach. Lo you now,  
Working upon Othello one fair night,  
I woke to know myself in the third act  
And the preface, as it were, not over. Lord,  
I had to pull myself together and make  
The sloping of the rest precipitous  
Towards the defeat they slid to.

BURBAGE:                Nay, it drops  
In a single speech—almost a single word,  
Which (like the giant in the Italian verse)  
Reaches and clasps and takes us through the  
air  
To plot us somewhere in the pit of hell;  
Syrups—the midmost word of all the play.

[Repeating the lines]

*Look where he comes! Not poppy nor  
mandragora  
Nor all the drowsy syrups of the world  
Shall ever medicine thee to that sweet sleep  
Which thou owedst yesterday.*



SHAKESPEARE: A word, a moment, and  
all's done at whiles,  
Perfectly known, apt for contrivance. Once—  
Folly!—in some old plague, eating my hate,  
And stopping, half o'er London Bridge, to  
feel  
What room might be, he dead who pressed  
me back,  
For my poor shoulder, lo all common life  
Fell from me, my acquaintance stopped, my  
reach  
(Fantastically governing) lost the world  
By an imposition on't; from the whole crew,  
Minutely all myself, I stood resolved;  
The elements abandoned me ... Macbeth!

HENEAGE: It's well your fellows keep their  
plays. Suppose  
Iago labouring to twist Hamlet's mind  
And the Ghost preaching to Othello!

SHAKESPEARE: Faith,  
There'd be an opposition worth the talk  
On one side; on the other a two-act play  
With one corpse honourably poignarded—no

death

Drunk to the lees. But all your young men  
now

Follow fantastic massacre, and their plays  
Reel with a drunken hiccuping to stab,  
Right, left, at any who offer.

HENEAGE: Nay, your name!

BURBAGE: Your warrant, your ensample!  
Webster? Ford?

SHAKESPEARE: What, shall I now turn  
dapper critic? Zounds,  
Andronicus would sneeze out from his tomb  
A bloody laughter. Experience touches home;  
Blood's a good servant (as they say of fire),  
A most unnatural master.

[The actors return with their new parts]

No more talk;  
Come now. I am your debtors, fellows all,  
For your good courtesy to forgetfulness.  
The masque now. Iris!

[A masque. Enter IRIS]

IRIS: *Ceres, most bounteous lady, thy rich  
leas  
Of wheat, rye, barley, vetches, oats, and  
peas;  
Thy turfy mountains, where live nibbling  
sheep,  
And flat meads thatch'd with stover, them to  
keep;  
Thy banks with pioned and twilled brims,  
Which spongy April at thy hest betrimms,  
To make cold nymphs chaste crowns; and thy  
broom groves,  
Whose shadow the dismissed bachelor loves,  
Being lass-lorn; thy pole-clipt vineyard;  
And thy sea-marge, sterile and rocky-hard,  
Where thou thyself dost air: the queen o' the  
sky,  
Whose watery arch and messenger am I,  
Bids thee leave these; and with her sovereign  
grace,  
Here on this grass-plot, in this very place,  
To come and sport; her peacocks fly amain:  
Approach, rich Ceres, her to entertain.*

[Enter CERES]

CERES: *Hail, many-coloured messenger,  
that ne'er  
Dost disobey the wife of Jupiter;  
Who with thy saffron wings upon my flowers  
Diffusest honey-drops, refreshing showers:  
And with each end of thy blue bow dost  
crown  
My bosky acres, and my unshrub'd down,  
Rich scarf to my proud earth; why hath thy  
queen  
Summon'd me hither, to this short-grass'd  
green?*

IRIS: *A contract of true love to celebrate,  
And some donation freely to estate  
On the bless'd lovers.*

CERES: *Tell me, heavenly bow,  
If Venus or her son, as thou dost know,  
Do now attend the queen? since they did plot  
The means that dusky Dis my daughter got,  
Her and her blind boy's scandal'd company  
I have forsworn.*

IRIS:      *Of her society  
Be not afraid; I met her deity  
Cutting the clouds towards Paphos and her  
son  
Dove-drawn with her. Here thought they to  
have done  
Some wanton charm upon this man and maid,  
Whose vows are, that no bed-rite shall be  
paid  
Till Hymen's torch be lighted; but in vain:  
Mars's hot minion is return'd again;  
Her waspish-headed son has broke his  
arrows,  
Swears he will shoot no more, but play with  
sparrows,  
And be a boy right out.*

CERES:      *Highest queen of state,  
Great Juno comes; I know her by her gait.*

[Enter JUNO]

JUNO: *How does my bounteous sister? Go  
with me  
To bless this twain, that they may prosperous*

*be,  
And honour'd in their issue.*

**SONG.**

*JUNO: Honour, riches, marriage-blessing,  
Long continuance, and increasing,  
Hourly joys be still upon you!  
Juno sings her blessings on you.*

*CERES: Earth's increase, foison plenty,  
Barns and garners never empty:  
Vines, with clust'ring bunches growing;  
Plants with goodly burden bowing;  
Spring come to you at the farthest  
In the very end of harvest!  
Scarcity and want shall shun you;  
Ceres' blessing so is on you.*

*FERDINAND: This is a most majestic  
vision, and  
Harmonious charmingly: May I be bold  
To think these spirits?*

*PROSPERO: Spirits, which by mine art*

*I have from their confines call'd to enact  
My present fancies.*

FERDINAND: *Let me live here ever:  
So rare a wonder'd father and a wise,  
Makes this place Paradise.*

[JUNO and CERES whisper, and send IRIS  
on employment]

PROSPERO: *Sweet, now, silence!  
Juno and Ceres whisper seriously,  
There's something else to do: hush, and be  
mute,  
Or else our spell is marr'd.*

IRIS: *You nymphs, call'd Naiades, of the  
windring brooks,  
With your sedg'd crowns, and ever-harmless  
looks,  
Leave your crisp channels, and on this green  
land  
Answer your summons: Juno does command.  
Come, temperate nymphs, and help to  
celebrate*

*A contract of true love: be not too late.*

[Enter certain nymphs]

*You sun-burn'd sicklemen, of August weary,  
Come hither from the furrow, and be merry:  
Make holiday: your rye-straw hats put on,  
And these fresh nymphs encounter every one  
In country footing.*

[Enter certain reapers, properly habited:  
they join with the nymphs in a graceful  
dance; towards the end whereof PROSPERO  
starts suddenly, and speaks\*<sup>\*</sup>; after which, to a  
strange, hollow, and confused noise, they  
heavily vanish]

\*[ From this point the actors seem to read  
their parts.]

PROSPERO [aside]: *I had forgot that foul  
conspiracy  
Of the beast Caliban and his confederates  
Against my life: the minute of their plot  
Is almost come.—[To the Spirits] Well done!*



*avoid; no more!*

*FERDINAND: This is strange: your father's  
in some passion  
That works him strongly.*

*MIRANDA:           Never till this day  
Saw I him touch'd with anger so distemper'd.*

*PROSPERO: You do look, my son, in a  
mov'd sort,  
As if you were dismay'd: be cheerful, sir:  
Our revels now are ended. These our actors,  
As I foretold you, were all spirits and  
Are melted into air, into thin air:  
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,  
The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous  
palaces,  
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,  
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve  
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,  
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff  
As dreams are made on, and our little life  
Is rounded with a sleep.—Sir, I am vex'd:  
Bear with my weakness; my old brain is*

*troubled.*

*Be not disturb'd with my infirmity.*

*If you be pleas'd, retire into my cell*

*And there repose: a turn or two I'll walk,*

*To still my beating mind.*

FERDINAND, MIRANDA: *We wish  
your peace.* [Exeunt]

PROSPERO: *Come with a thought!—[To  
them] I thank thee: Ariel, come!*

[Enter ARIEL]

ARIEL: *Thy thoughts I cleave to. What's thy  
pleasure?*

PROSPERO: *Spirit,  
We must prepare to meet with Caliban.*

ARIEL: *Ay, my commander; when I  
presented Ceres,  
I thought to have told thee of it; but I fear'd  
Lest I might anger thee.*

PROSPERO: *Say again, where didst thou*

*leave these varlets?*

*ARIEL: I told you, sir, they were red-hot  
with drinking;  
So full of valour that they smote the air  
For breathing in their faces; beat the ground  
For kissing of their feet; yet always bending  
Towards their project. Then I beat my tabor;  
At which, like unback'd colts, they prick'd  
their ears,  
Advanc'd their eyelids, lifted up their noses  
As they smelt music: so I charm'd their ears  
That, calf-like, they my lowing follow'd  
through  
Tooth'd briers, sharp furzes, pricking goss  
and thorns,  
Which enter'd their frail shins: at last I left  
them  
I' the filthy-mantled pool beyond your cell,  
There dancing up to the chins, that the foul  
lake  
O'erstunk their feet.*

*PROSPERO: This was well done, my  
bird.*

*Thy shape invisible retain thou still:  
The trumpery in my house, go bring it hither,  
For stale to catch these thieves.*

ARIEL:           *I go, I go.* [Exit

PROSPERO: *A devil, a born devil, on  
whose nature  
Nurture can never stick; on whom my pains,  
Humanely taken, are all lost, quite lost;  
And as with age his body uglier grows,  
So his mind cankers. I will plague them all,  
Even to roaring.*

[Re-enter ARIEL, loaden with glistering  
apparel, &c.]

*Come, hang them on this  
line.*

[PROSPERO and ARIEL remain invisible.

Enter CALIBAN, STEPHANO, and  
TRINCULO, all wet]

CALIBAN: *Pray you, tread softly, that the  
blind mole may not Hear a foot fall: we now  
are near his cell....*

TRINCULO: *O king Stephano! O peer! O worthy Stephano! look, what a wardrobe here is for thee!*

CALIBAN: *Let it alone, thou fool; it is but trash.*

TRINCULO: *O, ho, monster! we know what belongs to a frippery.—O king Stephano!*

STEPHANO: *Put off that gown, Trinculo; by this hand, I'll have that gown.*

TRINCULO: *Thy grace shall have it.*

CALIBAN: *The dropsy drown this fool!  
what do you mean  
To dote thus on such luggage? Let's along,  
And do the murder first: if he awake,  
From toe to crown he'll fill our skins with  
pinches;  
Make us strange stuff.*

STEPHANO: *Be you quiet, monster.—  
Mistress line, is not this my jerkin? Now is  
the jerkin under the line: now, jerkin, you are*

*like to lose your hair and prove a bald jerkin.*

TRINCULO: *Do, do: we steal by line and level, an't like your grace.*

STEPHANO: *I thank thee for that jest; here's a garment for't: wit shall not go unrewarded while I am king of this country: 'Steal by line and level' is an excellent pass of pate; there's another garment for't.*

TRINCULO: *Monster, come, put some lime upon your fingers, and away with the rest.*

CALIBAN: *I will have none on't: we shall lose our time,  
And all be turned to barnacles, or to apes  
With foreheads villanous low.*

STEPHANO: *Monster; lay-to your fingers: help to bear this away where my hogshead of wine is, or I'll turn you out of my kingdom. Go to; carry this.*

TRINCULO: *And this.*

STEPHANO: *Ay, and this.*

[A noise of hunters heard. Enter divers spirits, in shape of hounds, and hunt them about; PROSPERO and ARIEL setting them on]

PROSPERO: *Hey, Mountain, hey!*

ARIEL: *Silver! there it goes, Silver!*

PROSPERO: *Fury, Fury! there, Tyrant, there! hark, hark!*

[CALIBAN, STEPHANO, and TRINCULO are driven out

*Go, charge my goblins that they grind their joints  
With dry convulsions; shorten up their sinews  
With aged cramps, and more pinch-spotted  
make them  
Than pard, or cat o'mountain.*

ARIEL: *Hark! they roar.*

PROSPERO: *Let them be hunted soundly.  
At this hour  
Lie at my mercy all mine enemies:  
Shortly shall all my labours end, and thou  
Shalt have the air at freedom; for a little  
Follow, and do me service.* [Exeunt

SHAKESPEARE: All thanks. To-morrow  
then, and Thursday week  
Shall see it ride or wreck. Goodnight to  
all. [The actors disperse

HENEAGE: For one who is so gracious in  
his talk,  
Heaving the world off with his shoulder, your  
Duke  
Is marvellous careful of his life; a shade  
So active to prim off another shade?

SHAKESPEARE: Why faith, he misses  
somewhat of the end,  
Being something a false poet, something  
wrapped  
In a furred talkativeness: did you not hear  
In the first act? They are wrought all of one



clay,  
These Prosperos and Brutuses—no scope  
But the magniloquence of an inward look  
That meditates upon their bosom's lore.  
They have no outward trick to take the time  
But with a most unpunctual nobleness  
Slipping the exact moment.

HENEAGE:           But within?

SHAKESPEARE: God 'ild them, not there  
neither. Yet, my lad,  
He reaches either way to something more  
Than your quick brains, mayhap, are master  
of.

HENEAGE: He bears no grudge at least; he  
pardons all.

SHAKESPEARE: Aye—he falls down  
there. Yet the play's to end:  
He must speak somewhat. If Miranda now  
Should lay her hand upon Alonzo's mouth—  
No, she has naught to pardon. It's too broad  
Once uttered, this same pardon. O some shy

Half-stammered invocation of all peace,  
Some tender blame of laughter, some rebuke  
Lost in an intimate love! Well, God mend all!

[To BURBAGE

Dick, will you come to my lodging? Ere I go,  
And that's too soon now if the *Tempest* holds,  
There's half a hundred niggling little points  
To settle, and a matter of thirty crowns  
Gone wandering in last month's accounts.

BURBAGE:                    So much?

SHAKESPEARE: Aye—I've as good a head  
for figures as most,  
But your man's fist is so damned crooked it  
gives  
Even me a headache conning them. Ere I go  
I'll have all clear—contract, accounts, and all.  
I can't come up from Stratford every month  
To wrangle if we meant one thing or two,  
At least I won't.

BURBAGE:            I thought it was clear  
enough.

SHAKESPEARE: Not clear enough for me.  
Why in my time  
I've sent a couple of dozen of chapfallen  
rogues  
Bleating through London, sheep themselves,  
who thought,  
Because I spent an hour upon a song,  
I was a sheep for shearing. Why, 'God's eyes',  
As the great queen would say, she being apt  
To tie her pursestrings tighter—a wise queen  
—  
Would they have actors everywhere be spry  
To speak the lines set down for them? Will  
you walk?  
Now, in the matter of these thirty crowns,  
I see the opening. When we spent last May ...

[They go out, SHAKESPEARE'S voice  
dying away in the distance]

## SCENE IV

### ON THE ROAD TO STRATFORD

[AUTOLYCUS comes in on his way to the

sheep-shearing. He begins to limp as  
SHAKESPEARE enters]

AUTOLYCUS: Well met, good father.

SHAKESPEARE:               Well met, godly  
son.

AUTOLYCUS: Ah woe is me for my  
ungodliness!

SHAKESPEARE: What now?

AUTOLYCUS:     Ah woe is me! are you  
by chance  
One of the Lord's confessors?

SHAKESPEARE:               Umph! I have  
Confessed a lord—and almost a queen too—  
In my working days.

AUTOLYCUS:     Nay then, you must be  
one  
Of the Old Faith?

SHAKESPEARE:     Of the very oldest

faith

Your grandam breeched you in.

AUTOLYCUS:            Ah good sweet sir,  
How that rings true! my grandam speaks  
again  
In my hearing. Now, sir—

SHAKESPEARE:        Farther, by your  
leave!

AUTOLYCUS: Well, sir, it chanced thus—

SHAKESPEARE:        Nay, on the  
other side  
Is room to spare.

AUTOLYCUS:        This short half-hour  
ago,  
Leaping out of a hedge down to the lane,  
I missed my footing, sprawled at length, and  
here  
Limp five miles out of my ending, and a foot  
Twisted beneath me.

SHAKESPEARE:        'Las, poor man!

AUTOLYCUS:           Kind sir,  
Sweet sir, an arm a little way!

SHAKESPEARE:       An arm!  
Who would not lend an arm to virtue in pain?  
Nay, a staff too.

[He swings his staff, and as if by accident  
strikes AUTOLYCUS on the legs as the  
Clown enters]

'Las, sir, the staff went  
wide,  
Twisted beneath me!

AUTOLYCUS:           Nay, good sir, sweet  
sir!

CLOWN: Why now, do you beat him?

SHAKESPEARE:       Beat him? I  
beat? Sir,  
Since I perceive you are of quality,  
I would not have you entertain so small  
A thought as beating! Mark, the strangest  
thing!

He trusting to his foot, I to my staff,  
Are both alike made dullards. See! [He  
plays his staff again

AUTOLYCUS:           Sweet sir!

SHAKESPEARE: Such things engage  
philosophers; you are,  
By your sage look, in the schools, and know  
what art  
The moon hath to control our spirits, how  
The crack o' the thunder makes milk sour,  
and if  
The cats that sing on the walls at breeding  
time  
Sing ever in tune with the stars.

CLOWN:                I've looked at stars  
Very often; aye, my father is called wise,  
And a' often talks of the thunder.

SHAKESPEARE:        So it is  
You have a natural air of learning.

CLOWN:                Why,

I've made my pothooks—

SHAKESPEARE:            See now!

CLOWN:                    —can guess you a rogue  
As well as the next man.

SHAKESPEARE: If there were rogues in  
sight,  
You'd harry them as well as the fox you  
drove  
Last week from the hencoops.

CLOWN:                    How did you know?

SHAKESPEARE:            In truth,  
This whisperer of the sun's dear secrets  
breathed  
The knowledge of great happenings in my ear  
At a conjuration.

CLOWN:            Beseech your worships both  
To bear me company to the shearing feast  
In yonder meadow; your honour shall have  
state  
And a many ancient men to sit among,



So learned as you are.

[The feasters are seen]

SHAKESPEARE: Sheep-shearing, ha?  
That's my true lad of wisdom; that's the pin  
In the axle of the world. I come, I come.  
And you, my limping squire of ankles, you  
Shall join in the flurry with an itching hand  
Kept from all pockets and plackets!

[He sees FLORIZEL and PERDITA]

See you now,  
These young ones are among it! O the fresh  
Dew that no sun can dry; not all the suns  
Beating on the foul sewers of London can  
Bid this not be or eyes not see it so.  
That's the fair prophecy a hundred nights  
Spoiled by the hired embraces of a whore  
Never undo! O yet once more to sound  
This young perfection! O new vision, thou  
Be throned with my best Imogen! little care  
Thou hast for't, but let be. Sir, I await  
The courteous custody of your direction

With all my inclination. Shall we on?

[They join the feasters

*SHEPHERD: Fie, daughter! when my old  
wife lived, upon  
This day she was both pantler, butler, cook;  
Both dame and servant; welcom'd all, serv'd  
all,  
Would sing her song and dance her turn; now  
here,  
At upper end of the table, now i' the middle;  
On his shoulder, and his; her face o' fire  
With labour and the thing she took to quench  
it,  
She would to each one sip. You are retir'd,  
As if you were a feasted one and not  
The hostess of the meeting: pray you, bid  
These unknown friends to's welcome; for it is  
A way to make us better friends, more known.  
Come, quench your blushes and present  
yourself  
That which you are, mistress o' the feast:  
come on,  
And bid us welcome to your sheep-shearing,*

*As your good flock shall prosper.*

PERDITA [to SHAKESPEARE]: Sir,  
welcome:

*It is my father's will I should take on me  
The hostess-ship o' the day ...*

*Here's flowers for you;  
Hot lavender, mints, savory, marjoram;  
The marigold, that goes to bed wi' the sun,  
And with him rises weeping: these are  
flowers  
Of middle summer, and I think they are given  
To men of middle age. You're very welcome.*

SHAKESPEARE: *I should leave grazing,  
were I of your flock,  
And only live by gazing.*

PERDITA:                   *Out, alas!*  
*You'd be so lean, that blasts of January  
Would blow you through and through. Now,  
my fair'st friend,  
I would I had some flowers o' the spring that  
might  
Become your time of day; and yours, and*

*yours,  
That wear upon your virgin branches yet  
Your maidenheads growing: O Proserpina!  
For the flowers now that frightened thou let'st  
fall  
From Dis's waggon! daffodils,  
That come before the swallow dares, and take  
The winds of March with beauty; violets dim,  
But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes  
Or Cytherea's breath; pale prime-roses,  
That die unmarried, ere they can behold  
Bright Phæbus in his strength, a malady  
Most incident to maids, bold oxlips and  
The crown imperial; lilies of all kinds,  
The flower-de-luce being one. O! these I lack  
To make you garlands of, and my sweet  
friend,  
To strew him o'er and o'er!*

FLORIZEL:            *What! like a corse?*

PERDITA: *No, like a bank for love to lie  
and play on;  
Not like a corse; or if,—not to be buried,  
But quick and in mine arms. Come, take your*

*flowers:*

*Methinks I play as I have seen them do  
In Whitsun pastorals: sure this robe of mine  
Does change my disposition.*

FLORIZEL:           *What you do  
Still betters what is done. When you speak,  
sweet,  
I'd have you do it ever: when you sing,  
I'd have you buy and sell so; so give alms;  
Pray so; and, for the ordering your affairs,  
To sing them too: when you do dance, I wish  
you  
A wave o' the sea, that you might ever do  
Nothing but that; move still, still so,  
And own no other function: each your doing,  
So singular in each particular,  
Crowns what you are doing in the present  
deed,  
That all your acts are queens....*

CLOWN:               *Come on, strike up.*

DORCAS: *Mopsa must be your mistress;  
marry garlic,*

*To mend her kissing with.*

MOPSA:            *Now, in good time!*

CLOWN: *Not a word, a word: we stand  
upon our manners.  
Come, strike up.*

[Music. Here a dance of shepherds and  
shepherdesses]

AUTOLYCUS

*Lawn as white as driven snow;  
Cyprus black as e'er was crow;  
Gloves as sweet as damask roses;  
Masks for faces and for noses;  
Bugle-bracelet, necklace-amber,  
Perfume for a lady's chamber;  
Golden quoifs and stomachers,  
For my lads to give their dears;  
Pins and poking-sticks of steel;  
What maids lack from head to heel:  
Come, buy of me, come; come buy, come buy;  
Buy, lads, or else your lasses cry:  
Come, buy.*

CLOWN: *If I were not in love with Mopsa, thou shouldst take no money of me; but being enthralled as I am, it will also be the bondage of certain ribands and gloves....*

MOPSA: *Come, you promised me a tawdry lace and a pair of sweet gloves.*

CLOWN: *Have I not told thee how I was cozened by the way, and lost all my money?*

AUTOLYCUS: *And indeed, sir, there are cozeners abroad; therefore it behoves men to be wary.*

CLOWN: *Fear not thou, man, thou shalt lose nothing here.*

AUTOLYCUS: *I hope so, sir; for I have about me many parcels of charge.*

CLOWN: *What hast here? ballads?*

MOPSA: *Pray now, buy some: I love a ballad in print, a-life, for then we are sure they are true.*

AUTOLYCUS: *Here's one to a very doleful tune, how a usurer's wife was brought to bed of twenty money-bags at a burden; and how she longed to eat adders' heads and toads carbonadoed.*

MOPSA: *Is it true, think you?*

AUTOLYCUS: *Very true, and but a month old.*

DORCAS: *Bless me from marrying a usurer!*

AUTOLYCUS: *Here's the midwife's name to't, one Mistress Taleporter, and five or six honest wives' that were present. Why should I carry lies abroad?*

MOPSA: *Pray you now, buy it.*

CLOWN: *Come on, lay it by: and let's first see moe ballads; we'll buy the other things anon.*

AUTOLYCUS: *Here's another ballad of a*



*fish that appeared upon the coast on Wednesday the fourscore of April, forty thousand fathom above water, and sung this ballad against the hard hearts of maids: it was thought she was a woman and was turned into a cold fish for she would not exchange flesh with one that loved her. The ballad is very pitiful and as true.*

DORCAS: *Is it true too, think you?*

AUTOLYCUS: *Five justices' hands at it, and witnesses more than my pack will hold.*

CLOWN: *Lay it by too: another.*

AUTOLYCUS: *This is a merry ballad, but a very pretty one.*

MOPSA: *Let's have some merry ones.*

AUTOLYCUS: *Why, this is a passing merry one, and goes to the tune of 'Two maids wooing a man': there's scarce a maid westward but she sings it: 'tis in request, I can tell you.*

MOPSA: *We can both sing it: if thou'lt bear  
a part thou shalt hear; 'tis in three parts.*

DORCAS: *We had the tune on't a month  
ago.*

AUTOLYCUS: *I can bear my part; you  
must know 'tis my occupation: have at it with  
you.*



AUTOLYCUS: *Get you hence, for I must  
go,  
Where it fits not you to know.*

DORCAS: *Whither?*

MOPSA: *O! whither?*

DORCAS: *Whither?*

MOPSA: *It becomes thy oath full well,*

*Thou to me thy secrets tell.*

DORCAS: *Me too: let me go thither.*

MOPSA: *Or thou go'st to the grange or mill.*

DORCAS: *If to either, thou dost ill.*

AUTOLYCUS: *Neither.*

DORCAS: *What, neither?*

AUTOLYCUS: *Neither.*

DORCAS: *Thou hast sworn my love to be.*

MOPSA: *Thou hast sworn it more to me:  
Then whither go'st? say  
whither?*

SHAKESPEARE [to PERDITA]:  
You are the best of nature; being man,  
I needs must think so, but no more as do  
Impetuous and double-dealing youth,  
Saving your friend this gentleman. Shall I

wrong

So far his right in you as to desire  
To be his tributary with my purse  
But to some riband?

PERDITA:           O sir, I am stocked  
By my own thrift against you both.

SHAKESPEARE:           Nay then,  
I swear that thrift is duller than I thought,  
Forbidding service.

FLORIZEL:       Sir, she stays my hand  
Even though my will outgoes her, and so  
dams  
The full stream of my purpose that my heart  
Levels its flood with its green banks, and  
holds  
The horizon in its glass.

PERDITA:           I would have all  
My own horizon seen, which cannot be  
When the high water sinks, some current sped  
Through pipes of giving.

SHAKESPEARE:            Fairest, hold to  
that,  
The largest vision in the deepest flood.  
Sir, you are fortunate in your plighting.

FLORIZEL:                O  
Beyond all scope of plighting fortunate!

SHAKESPEARE: This single vision is most  
happy—know,  
Young ones, it is a certainty beyond  
Anything else of dreams or waking hours,  
Whether it be true or false.

PERDITA:                 It false!

SHAKESPEARE:            I will  
Suppose it neither; being what it is,  
It is mere that, and gracious. Grace to both,  
And thanks for this hour's knowledge.

FLORIZEL:                But it false!

SHAKESPEARE: O sir, forget me. True  
and false are words,  
And you are troth to things, resorting there

Into the gayest moment earth has fetched  
Out of her journey. Grace to both; farewell.

PERDITA: Farewell and happiness!

FLORIZEL:           Farewell and joy!

SHAKESPEARE: Farewell, and always a  
most quiet farewell!



## **EPILOGUE**

### **THE GARDEN AT NEW PLACE**

[SHAKESPEARE and his son-in-law  
HALL, BEN JONSON]

SHAKESPEARE: Well; it's been merry to  
see you.

JONSON:                   Merry indeed,

But won't you come to London any more?

SHAKESPEARE: No, no; why should I?  
Aye, I know your voice,  
And bears a score of others here with yours  
From theatres, taverns, lodgings—but no  
more.  
I am settled.

JONSON: Will, I think you never loved  
A single one of us with all your heart.

SHAKESPEARE: Perhaps I did not. All my  
heart? My Ben,  
Where's the gross churl will do himself such  
wrong  
As to pretend he pitches his whole life,  
All his degrees of nature, all the kin  
That makes him manhood, by the opening  
door  
Of any kind acquaintance, who, when he  
stales—  
What's to be done then with the panoply  
Of music and the faithful serenade  
Dancing out there in the twilight?

HALL:           Must he stale?  
You underrate the faithfulness of love.

SHAKESPEARE: Not love's, but the kind  
of love's. Ben, I protest,  
Though it sound surly but to hint it you,  
I have nigh as easy and as pleased a heart  
With any casual stranger as with them  
I played my life's advancement with. Who  
comes  
For a sight of me and a cup of sack, why,  
well,  
God bless him, and God bless you; but for me  
—  
I would not go—I know not how it is—  
A step to draw them hither.

JONSON:           I have known  
You always were more loved than loving.

SHAKESPEARE:           Not so,  
Neither; but where's the sense to press the  
earth  
Out of her seasonable course, or cry  
Daffodils up over lords-and-ladies, hawks



Over the farm geese? All's now so much one  
I can sit contented with the very air  
Ruffling my hairs, or with the preacher in  
church,  
So much a Puritan as he seems to be,  
Or with the neighbour that caps me in the  
street,  
Or with the white drake scuffling o'er the  
lane,  
Or ...

JONSON: —me or any of us. Give you joy.

SHAKESPEARE: Well, 'tis beyond rather  
than this side joy:  
And yet, believe me, if I could so choose  
Out of a million and particular joys  
One joy to treasure, I'd more lief have you  
Than any of them all—for memory  
Enhances this love too imperiously  
In the mere use on't.

JONSON:           You were ever hard,  
As hard as your own Hamlet when he bruised  
Ophelia's heart and broke it.

SHAKESPEARE:                No, not hard;  
Nor do I now in any wise hate the earth,  
Conception, and the growing of small things,  
As Hamlet did. Not hard, for I too, Ben,  
Have given my heart from its own spiny  
charge  
To the full circle of the rounded O.

JONSON: The Globe—or what now?

SHAKESPEARE:                Aye, the globe  
perhaps—  
Completion anyhow.

JONSON:                Talking of the Globe,  
What will you do about your plays?

SHAKESPEARE:                My plays?

JONSON: When will you gather them,  
strike the errors out,  
Print them and give them to the world?

SHAKESPEARE:                I print?

JONSON: Leave them, and say: 'There lies



Who chooses 'twixt the twain—turnips or  
plays?

HALL: Must not a poet be a chosen soul,  
A dedicated and elected mind,  
To speak the high things of wisdom?

SHAKESPEARE:           Aye, I know;  
'There are some who think so.'

HALL:                   And it follows then  
It is a part of duteous chastity  
To bring his mite to his Taskmaster?

SHAKESPEARE:           Aye,  
God send his Master thank him. But for me  
I have watched my moons out, written divers  
plays,  
Filled with some poetry and much idleness—  
*Sounds and sweet airs that give delight and  
hurt not—*  
Now let the poetry and the idleness dung  
The earth till earth makes much of them—  
which is  
To make them nothing. But no brag at heart

Of doing more than any other. No,  
No printing, Ben, as you love me.

JONSON:                Be it so;  
No printing, as you don't love me.

SHAKESPEARE:                You wrong  
My willingness too much in saying so.  
Farewell, rare Ben.

JONSON:                Farewell, obdurate  
Will. [He goes

HALL: Does he so wrong you?

SHAKESPEARE:                He will have  
degrees,  
Validity, proportion, one o'er one,  
More than the mere convenience of the world  
Gravely delights in, as I too have done,  
Louting to queens and poets, since I set  
My foot by Marlowe's in the London streets;  
But to choose wisely, here and there, what  
toil  
Manures the earth to bearing, or contrives

Against the doubtful irony of the world  
A thrust beyond its fellows—'faith, son, no.

HALL: This is to undegree the immingled  
zones  
By which discretion rules the world of man.

SHAKESPEARE: O no, for all things in  
true being pitch  
An equal flight; intensity comes in  
Out of its crescent labour to repose,  
Being for that no less intensity,  
But locking up its active powers in one  
Charmed knowledge of so many natural  
growths—  
Careless and careful in one act, at once  
Lessened and broadened, nothing and yet all.

HALL: You will not print your plays then?

SHAKESPEARE:               That were now  
For a brief interval to draw again  
Out of this round, this O, this nothingness,  
This all, I gave my heart to—clutch at odds  
From the midst of evens. I am no more mine.

HALL: You either are the wisest man alive  
Or the most foolish spendthrift under the sun.  
Farewell; I must to dinner.

SHAKESPEARE:       Aye, farewell.  
I'll walk in the sun a little and come in.

[HALL goes. As SHAKESPEARE strolls  
up and down a voice from without sings]

*When that I was and a little tiny boy,  
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain;  
A foolish thing was but a toy,  
For the rain it raineth every day.*

*But when I came to man's estate,  
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain;  
'Gainst knaves and thieves men shut their  
gates,  
For the rain it raineth every day.*

*But when I came, alas! to wive,  
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain;  
By swaggering could I never thrive,  
For the rain it raineth every day.*

*But when I came unto my beds,  
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain;  
With toss-pots still had drunken heads,  
For the rain it raineth every day.*

*A great while ago the world began,  
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain;  
But that's all one, our play is done,  
And will strive to please you every day.*



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[The end of *A Myth of Shakespeare* by  
Charles Williams]