

ACT ONE, SCENE ONE

The apartment of KIT MARLOWE and THOMAS KYD.

THOMAS Kit! (*enters*) There is a dead rat in my doublet. Why did you do it?

KIT You're always blaming everything on me.

THOMAS You're the only roommate I have, Kit. There's no one else to blame.

KIT You know what your problem is, Thomas? You have no sense of humour.

THOMAS I fail to see the humour in finding dead vermin in my clothing.

KIT I wanted to see what your reaction would be.

THOMAS This is so like you. I don't understand why you find entertainment in making me furious with... What are you doing?

KIT Cleaning up.

THOMAS Who are you and what have you done with Kit?

KIT My parents are coming to visit.

THOMAS Good Ud, no.

KIT Would you shut your yap and give me a hand?

Knock at the door.

KIT That couldn't be them already. (*answers door*) Will.

WILL I brought the script!

KIT Will, this is not a good time.

WILL If I have to wait any longer to work on a play with you, I might soil myself.

THOMAS Pleasant. Now if you gentlemen will excuse me, I'm going to dispose of this rat. (*exits*)

WILL I was up all night working on this draft. Tell me what you think.

KIT Listen, Will. I don't have much time left.

WILL Just skim it. I'll be forever in your debt.

KIT Will!

WILL I look up to you! You are so brave! So innovative. So...so well dressed!

KIT Will...

WILL You are three months my elder, but aeons ahead of me in insight

KIT Will...

WILL I want to BE you!

KIT No you don't.

WILL I want to think like you, dress like you, but most of all I want to write plays the way you do. Please help me with my play.

KIT I don't have ti...

WILL *(getting on his knees)* I am your spaniel!

KIT Will, please, no. Not the spaniel thing again.

WILL *(sitting up like a dog)* Bark.

KIT Will, this is not necess...

WILL Bark.

KIT Your embarrassing yourself...

WILL Bark.

KIT For the love of Ud, Will! Don't make me hurt you!

WILL Whimper.

KIT *(sigh)* What's the working title.

WILL Oh! I knew I could count on you, Kit! Because that's the kind of guy you are!

KIT Don't hug me. What's the working title?

WILL *Romeo and Juliet.*

KIT ...Right.

WILL Go ahead. Skim...Skim, skim, skim.

As KIT skims through the script, he tries to suppress laughter. WILL absorbs KIT's every expression. KIT lets out a stifled chortle.

WILL What? What's funny? What?

KIT It's...cute.

WILL Cute? I wasn't going for cute. But cute's good. Now is that your honest opinion?

KIT Not entirely.

WILL Be merciful, Kit! I'm dying here! Tell me what you really think! I can take it! What!

KIT This is the corniest play I have ever read in my life.

WILL What?

KIT Will, this play stinks of cheese.

WILL What's wrong with it?

KIT It's fluff. It's mushy. It's a girl's play. What are you? A girl?

WILL I don't know what to say.

KIT I would never write a play like this.

WILL It's a love story.

KIT I don't write about love. I write about hatred.

WILL And that's what's so endearing about you. Maybe if we collaborated...

KIT I can't. You know how vain I am. To collaborate would mean I would have to share the credit and that is totally out of character for me. Besides, this is your play.

WILL OUR play.

KIT No, Will. It's yours. I can't put my name on this. It's not my style. Sure, there's slaughter and suicide. And I approve of that. But there's not enough destruction. It's not over-the-top. It's not dangerous.

WILL I can be dangerous! I can be dangerous like you! We have a lot more in common than you think.

KIT Will, pay attention. We are not...the same...person.

WILL Oh, fie.

ROBERT invites himself in.

ROBERT Greetings, Christopher! How is the best dressed playwright in England?

KIT I'm well, Robert... Wait a minute. Didn't you die last year?

ROBERT I dropped by to see if my favourite colleague would like to join me at the tavern where we can have drinks and discuss how obscenely intelligent we are.

WILL May I come too, Mr. Greene?

ROBERT What is he doing here? Who let him in?

KIT Both of you, please! I'm running out of time!

ROBERT *(to WILL)* Thou tripe! Thou disease! Thou uneducated eel!

WILL Please stop calling me 'thou.' It makes me uncomfortable.

ROBERT Christopher, what did I tell you about fraternizing with swine? Ignorance is contagious, you know.

WILL I agree with you, Mr. Greene.

KIT He's filling theatres.

WILL Can't argue with you there.

ROBERT I wouldn't stand in the penny yard to watch his drivel.

WILL I don't blame you.

KIT I agree his plays are fluffy, but the rest of England seems to like them.

WILL Absolutely.

ROBERT He's not like us, Christopher. He didn't go to Cambridge. He's not part of the educated elite. Who does he think he is, hogging our audiences? Pure travesty!

WILL He has a point, Kit.

KIT Will, you can't keep agreeing with both of us.

WILL I couldn't agree with you more.

KIT Will...

WILL I don't want to offend anyone.

ROBERT *(to WILL)* Heed my warning. Keep your hindquarters out of the theatre! You don't belong here! Just because everyone loves your plays, doesn't mean they are any good.

KIT You know something, Robert? You really should unwedge whatever it is you have stuck up your arse. And do it before my parents arrive.

WILL Your parents are coming! How lovely! Can I stay and visit?

KIT Absolutely not. Both of you, out!

Knock at the door.

KIT You see? My parents are here already and not only am I ill prepared, I've got you two fops lingering around like a foul odour... Mom? Dad? Is that you?

DICK *(from outside)* It's me!

KIT It's Richard Baines! Hide!

Everyone hides.

DICK I know you're in there! Open up, will you?

KIT reluctantly opens the door.

KIT Dick.

DICK I go by Richard, actually. People don't call me Dick.

KIT That's what you think.

DICK Robert. Will. Make yourselves scarce. I have something of great importance to discuss with Kit.

WILL We were just leaving.

ROBERT If there's one thing you can do, Dick, it's clear a room.

Exit WILL and ROBERT

DICK Mind if I help myself to some ale? Don't mind if I do.

Helps himself to ale.

KIT Don't drink that! I'll have nothing to offer my parents!

DICK Didn't your parents teach you to share?

KIT What was I thinking? I'm sure my parents won't mind drinking from the chamber pot.

DICK Let's get down to business. Kit, I like you. Hang me, I LIKE you. That's why I'm letting you in on a little business negotiation. Kit, how would you like to...

KIT No.

DICK I can make you a wealthy man. Think of it, Kit. You could move out of this seedy neighbourhood. And think of all the pretty clothes you could buy.

KIT I like living in the Liberties, and my brother-in-law is a tailor.

DICK Let me explain something to you...

KIT You've been counterfeiting again, haven't you?

DICK Don't call it counterfeiting. It makes me sound dishonest.

KIT I'll none of it, Dick. You've gotten me in trouble with the law in the past for illicit coining. You will not cozen me into it again.

DICK This ale is horrible. *(dumps ale on the floor)*

KIT Dick! I have an urge to crack this bottle over your skull!

DICK Take a number. So, can I call you a partner?

KIT You are not to be trusted.

DICK You're overreacting.

KIT You tried to wipe out an entire seminary by poisoning their drinking water.

DICK Come on, Kit! The Queen is after me again. I need someone to help me save face, and you are the smartest man I know!

KIT Out!

KIT pushes DICK out the door. KIT leaves the room.

DICK *(from outside)* Kit! I'll make it worth your while! Kit!...Kit?

When KIT does not answer, DICK opens the door and peaks around the corner. Once he sees that no one is around, he sneaks into the apartment and hides in a cupboard.

ACT ONE, SCENE TWO

INGRAM, NICHOLAS AND BLOB are hiding in the bushes outside KIT's apartment.

INGRAM What's he doing now?

BLOB *(looking through the window)* He's wiping a puddle of ale from the floor.

NICHOLAS How can an ex-spy lead such a boring life?

BLOB Hey. This is Christopher Marlowe we're talking about. Give him some time. He'll eventually do something offensive.

NICHOLAS Who would have guessed we would ever get to spy on a former colleague?

BLOB I'm confused. Why does the Queen want us to spy on Kit?

INGRAM The Queen heard a rumour that Marlowe is a double agent. She's afraid for her life.

NICHOLAS How a propos. The three of us spying on a suspected double agent. We, being double agents ourselves. Blob, do you remember the year of 1586?

NICHOLAS & BLOB *(dreamily)* The Babington Plot.

INGRAM I missed that one.

BLOB How could you possibly miss the Babington Plot?

NICHOLAS Don't you have any experience in intelligence work?

INGRAM I have no record of intelligence.

NICHOLAS But it was the BABINGTON Plot!

BLOB Oh, Ingram, it was thrilling! You should have been there!

NICHOLAS Espionage at its finest!

BLOB We plotted against the Queen's life in an attempt to...

NICHOLAS ...replace her with Mary Queen of ...

BLOB ...Scots! And all of the conspirators were executed.

NICHOLAS Except us, of course.

BLOB Because we're sneaky.

INGRAM I envy you, gentlemen. Nothing is more amusing than split loyalties.

NICHOLAS Don't feel bad, Ingram. You're not a bad little liar yourself.

INGRAM Oh, Nicholas. You're just saying that.

NICHOLAS Come on, Mr. Conny-Catching Loan Shark. What about all those unassuming, rich gentlemen you cheated. You should see this guy in action, Blob. He's brilliant. He charges wealthy gentlemen one hundred percent interest on their loans. If they can't pay the interest, he forfeits their property. And here's the kicker. The loans are never forthcoming.

BLOB You jest.

NICHOLAS If I speak the truth, may I never tell a lie again. I'm a big fan of Ingram's work. It's a hobby of mine to act as his frequent accomplice. You would be proud, Blob. I am the one who identifies and lures those foolish gentlemen into Ingram's trap.

INGRAM I couldn't do it without you, Nicholas.

BLOB I'll admit, it takes savvy to be a moneylender, but it takes pure genius to be a pathological liar.

NICHOLAS He's got you there, Ingram. Blob has mastered the art of lying. He is a most cunning counterfeiter and dissembler. A notable knave with no trust in him.

BLOB Oh! You flatter me!

INGRAM Are you telling me you're pathological?

BLOB Would I lie about something like that?

INGRAM Prove it.

BLOB Okay. I will...I am fond of the Queen.

NICHOLAS Oh! That was a good one, Blob! You really had me going there for a minute.

BLOB Notice how I looked you straight in the face when I said that? Not a flinch.

INGRAM Not bad. I wasn't entirely convinced, but...

BLOB What do you mean you were not entirely convinced? I can lie convincingly under any circumstances. I can look the Queen herself right in the eyes and

lie to her ugly face. And I have! On more than one occasion. What about the Babington Plot?

INGRAM Would you let it go? That stupid Babington Plot was over a long time ago!

BLOB What's his problem?

NICHOLAS Don't brag too much about being a better liar than Ingram. He's a bit sensitive about that.

BLOB Fie on me. Listen, Ingram, I'm sorry. You are every bit as good a liar as I am.

NICHOLAS Damn, he's good! Blob Poley, you are the master!

INGRAM Oh! For the love of Ud!

ACT ONE, SCENE THREE

KIT is wiping ale from the floor in his apartment. Enter THOMAS

KIT It's about time. I could have used your help, you know.

THOMAS They're your parents.

KIT What took you so long, anyway? How long could it take to dispose of a dead rat?

THOMAS I didn't exactly dispose of him.

KIT Him? Since when did this dead rat go from being an it to a him?

THOMAS Stuff happens.

KIT So if you didn't dispose of the rat, what did you do?

THOMAS I took him to the tavern.

KIT What for?

THOMAS Drinks.

KIT You took a dead rat to the tavern?

THOMAS Could you please not call him the dead rat anymore? His name is Stiffy.

KIT You named him?

THOMAS I was going to get rid of him. I was! I went to the riverbank, took Stiffy by the tail and was just about to fling him, when something came over me. I looked into his little

face. And...well...I sort of felt sorry for him. I realized that I could relate to this rat. I am a lot like this rat. This rat and I have a lot in common.

KIT In what sense?

THOMAS I've invited Stiffy to live here with us, Kit. I told him you wouldn't mind.

KIT You are not keeping a dead rat in our apartment.

THOMAS His name is Stiffy.

KIT Thomas, that rat is going to decompose and start to stink.

THOMAS Someday you'll decompose and start to stink.

KIT Yes, but when that happens, I don't plan on living here.

THOMAS Kit, this is something I have to do. Whenever I look at this rat, I get this weird feeling. I feel overcome with guilt.

KIT Guilt?

THOMAS I wasn't there for Stiffy when he was alive. I want to spend the rest of my life making it up to him.

KIT That's noble, Thomas. But my parents will be arriving soon, and if there is a dead rat in the apartment, it will be yet another thing for us to fight about.

THOMAS He'll behave.

Knock at the door.

KIT That must be my parents. Hide that thing, will you?

KIT answers the door to reveal two men.

ATHEIST 1 Good afternoon. We represent the London chapter of the Atheist Brigade. Our mission is to go door to door, spreading atheism to misinformed Christians. Are you a misinformed Christian?

KIT I'm afraid you're wasting your time.

ATHEIST 2 That's where you're wrong. We are the bearers of good news. Wouldn't you like to live with the peace of mind that when you die, absolutely nothing will happen?

ATHEIST 1 And won't it be easier to sleep at night knowing that the earth is being randomly hurled around in space with no higher power to keep it secure?

KIT I'm not listening. I...

ATHEIST 2 Atheism promises an eternity of nothingness, along with a satisfying void that most people so mindlessly fill with spirituality.

ATHEIST 1 Would you like to share in our joy as we experience this void together?

KIT You understand that what you are doing is a felony.

ATHEIST 2 We are doing it for the greater good.

ATHEIST 1 It will only take a moment of your time. All you have to do is join hands with us now and say the Sinner's Prayer backwards.

KIT You can't tell me what to believe!

ATHEIST 2 This poor man has a soul. It makes me all weepy.

ATHEIST 1 Why don't we just leave you these brochures. Perhaps if you read them, you will come to your senses and change your mind. Good day.

ATHEIST 2 *(on their way out)* And you can be assured that neither one of us will be praying for you.

Exit Atheists.

THOMAS What was that all about?

KIT It was the Atheist Brigade. They left us more of this bloody, Atheist literature.

THOMAS Again?

KIT Just put it in the closet with the rest of them.

Knock at the door.

KIT Those Atheists never give up! *(answers door)* How many times do I have to tell you, I am not an Atheist!

JOHN That's good to know.

KIT Mom. Dad.

Exit THOMAS.

JOHN Good to see you, Son. *(hands KIT shoes)* Here. Have some shoes.

CATHERINE My adorable, baby boy!

JOHN So, Kit. When are you going to get a real job?

KIT Congratulations, Dad. It only took you twelve seconds this time.

CATHERINE Have you met a nice girl yet, Kitty?

KIT Mom...

JOHN Shoes. That's where the money is, son. Everyone needs shoes. You are a Marlowe, and Marlowe men make shoes.

KIT I've been doing well for myself. The Admiral's Men have been performing some of my work. In fact, they're doing *Dr. Faustus* right now. I was going to invite you to...

JOHN *Dr. Faustus?* Is that the play with the Jew, the racist, the devil or the queer?

KIT YOU read my work?

JOHN Your mother says I should be supportive. So which is it?

KIT The one with the devil.

JOHN My son. The devil-lover.

KIT I do not love the devil.

JOHN No. You just write plays about him.

KIT There are nuns in *The Jew of Malta*. Does that make me a nun?

JOHN Apparently not if you go around writing plays about the devil.

CATHERINE You can meet lots of nice people selling shoes, Kitty. Lady people.

KIT I don't want to be a shoemaker!

JOHN Would you listen to that, Catherine? My first born son would rather prance around on a stage in his leotards than take me up on the invaluable shoe empire I built for him. What's wrong, Kit? You too good to be a Marlowe?

CATHERINE There is no shame in shoe business. Your father is a member of the Shoemaker and Tanner's Guild.

KIT What in frigging hell am I going to do with a profuse education in Classical Literature if I'm making shoes?

JOHN Don't think education makes you better than a shoemaker, because it doesn't, you pompous, little brat!

KIT You think I'M pompous? Ever since you became a clerk at St. Mary's, you strut around like you're some sort of evangelist!

DICK *(peaking from the cupboard, writing something down)* John the Evangelist.

CATHERINE *(lets out a scream)* The agony! The agony! To see my two best boys fighting like mongrels in the street! Woe is me! Woe! Woe!

JOHN Stop being so dramatic, Catherine.

CATHERINE You two used to be as close-knit as netherstocks. John, do you remember when Kitty was wee? He was so afraid of thunder, he used to crawl into bed with you on stormy nights. Remember how cute he was?

DICK *(writing)* ...Bedfellow to John the Evangelist.

KIT Nobody, not even my own father can tell me how to live my life. I am a free thinker!

JOHN You're not old enough to be a free thinker. You're only twelve years old!

KIT I'm twenty-nine!

JOHN As far as your mother and I are concerned, you're twelve!

CATHERINE Kitty, why is there a hole in your wall?

THOMAS *(entering)* It was Kit.

KIT Thomas, go away.

THOMAS Kit got mad and put his fist through the wall.

KIT There you go, blaming me again.

THOMAS Kit has a vicious temper.

JOHN Must get it from his mother's side.

CATHERINE I'm worried, Kitty.

KIT Oh, here we go.

CATHERINE We have discussed your tantrums before.

KIT Mom...

CATHERINE And another thing. I don't think I approve of this neighborhood you live in.

KIT What's wrong with the Liberties?

CATHERINE On our way here we saw two very friendly young ladies who were almost completely naked.

JOHN Arrroooo!

CATHERINE I'm worried.

KIT There's nothing to worry about.

CATHERINE I'm concerned they might be cold. Maybe you should loan them some of your clothes, Kitty. You always have such nice clothes.

JOHN And where, might I ask did you get the money to purchase such lavish attire? Answer me, Mr. Fancy-Pants. Where does a playwright find that kind of money?

THOMAS He and Dick Baines were involved in a counterfeiting scheme a couple of years back.

KIT You little snitch!

CATHERINE Dick Baines. I don't approve of him, Kitty. He's a bad influence.

DICK *(inside cupboard, speaking in stage whisper)* That's not true! You dishonest wench!

JOHN My son is a counterfeiting bastard!

DICK *(writing)* ...Bastard. His mother dishonest.

JOHN What other trouble has my son been getting into, Thomas?

THOMAS Not much. Unless you count the time he was arrested for murder.

JOHN What!

CATHERINE *(face down, pounding her fists on the floor)* Lordy! Lordy! Lordy! I've given birth to a murderer!

KIT I wasn't charged!

THOMAS He started a tavern brawl.

KIT Why is it that every time I happen to be present at a tavern brawl, everyone thinks I'm the one who started it?

THOMAS I don't know, Kit. Could it be your lewd mouth and violent temper?

KIT I never hurt anyone.

THOMAS He's always attempting sudden privy injury to men.

KIT It's my sharp tongue that causes injury.

JOHN So, about this brawl...

KIT I was trying to break it up! Watson the poet got in a tiff with Bradley the inn-keeper's son. I tried to...

JOHN So it was a poet. It's always a poet.

CATHERINE Why can't you be more like Will Shakespeare? He's such a nice boy.

KIT Mother...

CATHERINE He's married, Kitty. And has three children.

KIT Come on, Mom! Two of them are twins. They only count as one.

CATHERINE Level with me, Kitty. Will I ever be a grandmother?

KIT Stop pressuring me!

CATHERINE Is something not functioning? Do you need to see a doctor?

KIT That's enough!

CATHERINE Why, Kitty? All I want to know is why? Why are you denying me my fundamental right to watch my son crank out miniature versions of himself?

KIT It's my business!

CATHERINE Why?

KIT Because I...

CATHERINE Why?

KIT It's not what I...

CATHERINE Why...

KIT Because I...Because...Because I prefer men. That's it. I prefer men.

THOMAS Holy crap!

DICK *(writing vigorously)* This is too easy.

KIT Mother? Mother, speak to me.

CATHERINE I've failed! I've failed! I've failed!

JOHN *(stuffing a shoe in her mouth)* Stuff it, Catherine.

KIT That's right. This is why I'm not married. And anyone who loves not tobacco and boys are fools.

DICK *(writing)* You are so quotable, Kit.

JOHN *(taking KIT aside)* Son, can I have a word with you a moment? *(cuffs him on the head)* Have you fallen on your head?

KIT What!

JOHN You're queer, just like that king in your play!

*CATHERINE swoons and falls into THOMAS' arms.
THOMAS tends to her.*

JOHN You know what they do with queers? They use them for kindling, that's what they do!

KIT Dad, I am not gay!

JOHN But you just said that...

KIT I said that so Mom would stop harassing me to get married.

JOHN You lied to your mother.

KIT It wasn't a lie...exactly...It was more...irony.

JOHN Don't use those fancy Cambridge words with me, boy. I know a lie when I hear one.

KIT It's not a fancy Cambridge word. It's irony. I was being ironic. I was saying the opposite of what I mean to make a point.

JOHN Sounds like a lie to me.

KIT It's a playwriting technique.

JOHN Well, here's a shoemaker's technique. Say what you mean! This irony as you call it, is going to land you in serious trouble! You mark my words! Now where are you taking us for dinner?

KIT *(sigh)* Get your cloaks.

Exit KIT and JOHN. THOMAS drags CATHERINE out. Once everyone is gone, DICK comes out of the cupboard and speaks to the audience.

DICK I've got it all here, in my own handwriting. This will create quite a diversion. The Queen won't waste her time interrogating a meager counterfeiter when there is a blaspheming heathen right under her nose. Marlowe will be sorry he didn't help me out with my ploy. How sweet it is to savour revenge while simultaneously keeping my arse from being hanged. Might as well break two heads with one mace.

THOMAS *(re-entering)* Are you talking to yourself again, Dick?

DICK Thomas! No one was here, so I let myself in. I peed in the corner. I hope you don't mind.

THOMAS Why have you plagued us with your presence?

DICK I was looking for something.

THOMAS Did you find it?

DICK Oh, yes. I did.

ACT ONE, SCENE FOUR

A tavern. WILL is seated at a table with KIT. WILL has a quill and paper. KIT has his head buried in his arms.

KIT Wench! More ale!

WILL So about *Romeo and Juliet*.

KIT Another time, Will.

WILL But I...

Enter ROBERT.

ROBERT What ho! Christopher! How pleasant to...*(sees WILL)* What is the meaning of this?

KIT Moan.

ROBERT This is OUR table, Christopher! This is where the two of us sit and discuss lofty matters. What could a famous gracer of tragedians be doing here with this maggot?

KIT My head is swimming. (*flops head back in his arms*)

ROBERT (*to WILL*) Thou virus. Thou flea. Thou illiterate bard.

WILL Would you like to read my play, Mr. Greene?

ROBERT I've read your work, Shakespeare. And I've seen more tantalizing morsels in my own vomit.

WILL I'm sure you had a good reason for saying that.

ROBERT I warned you to stop infecting our theatres with this brain-numbing puke you so you so ignorantly refer to as drama.

WILL I value your opinion, Mr. Greene. But nonetheless, people seem to be swarming like flies to see my plays.

ROBERT Flies don't swarm to theatres. They swarm around in circles until they find manure to land on.

WILL That is a clever analogy.

ROBERT I deserve success, not you! I will give you one last chance. Go back to Stratford where you belong!

WILL But...

ROBERT You are no genius. (*pulls KIT's head up by the hair, revealing KIT making a stupid, drunk face*) Now THIS is the face of a genius.

WILL I never said I was a genius. I'm just an ordinary guy who likes writing plays.

ROBERT They are not plays. They are shallow puddles. Away with you, thou ruffian. Thou mongrel. Thou menstrual rag!

WILL That reminds me. I need to send a missive to my wife. My twins are having a birthday.

Exit WILL. ROBERT sits next to KIT.

ROBERT Christopher?

KIT Grunt.

ROBERT Shakespeare must be destroyed.

KIT Sure thing, Robert.

ROBERT I did not pursue a higher education only to skulk in the shadow of that buffoon.

KIT Belch.

ROBERT I heard that Shakespeare has taken an interest in writing sonnets. Well, so have I.

KIT Sssonnets.

ROBERT I have written a collection of 154 sonnets, and have signed Shakespeare's name on them.

KIT Lots of pretty sonnets.

ROBERT Oh, these are better than anything Shakespeare could ever write. Especially the ones about the mistress.

KIT Are you sure you're not dead?

ROBERT I'm sure there's a little lady in Stratford who would like to read these sonnets. Surely she would like to know what her loyal husband is up to.

KIT Need ale.

ROBERT I'm sending my masterpiece to Stratford. Today. Shakespeare will wish he had heeded my warning.

ACT ONE, SCENE FIVE

INGRAM, NICHOLAS and BLOB are in the bushes.

INGRAM Someone's coming!

DICK enters. There is a disappointed moan among the spies.

DICK What are you guys doing in the bushes?

BLOB We could tell you, but then we'd have to kill you.

NICHOLAS That's not a bad idea, actually.

BLOB Good point. We have been sent to spy on Christopher Marlowe.

DICK Spies? Do you work for the Queen?

NICHOLAS At times.

INGRAM Let's kill him now.

DICK Before you kill me, I have something that could be of some value to you.

BLOB What say you?

DICK I have evidence that Christopher Marlowe is a heretic. A homosexual one at that.

INGRAM Solid evidence?

DICK Define solid.

NICHOLAS This is not a game, little man. The Queen isn't going to be interested in flimsy evidence.

DICK I was hiding in Marlowe's cupboard and I wrote down everything he said.

INGRAM *(taking notes from DICK)* Let me see this...I don't understand your shorthand. You keep writing a capital letter 'C.' What does the capital letter 'C' signify?

DICK You are spies. You figure it out.

Exit DICK. The spies examine the notes.

INGRAM The capital letter 'C.'

NICHOLAS You morons. It must stand for Christopher.

BLOB Or Christ.

INGRAM Blob has a point. 'Christopher' makes no sense in the context. 'Christ' sounds better. Listen to this..."A note regarding the opinion of one Christopher Marlowe concerning his damnable judgement of religion and scorn of God's word" He says "that St. John the Evangelist was bedfellow to 'C.' That 'C' was a bastard and his mother dishonest."

BLOB Didn't I tell you? That filthy heathen is talking about Christ!

INGRAM And down here it says "all they that love not tobacco and boys are fools."

NICHOLAS Did Marlowe really say that?

BLOB What difference does it make? We have it written down.

NICHOLAS It's payday, Gentlemen! Let's take this to the Queen.

INGRAM Not so fast. What we hold in our hands is blasphemy. An overt attack on God. If the Queen finds this in our possession...

NICHOLAS She'll think it's an attack on her. Because she thinks she is God.

INGRAM She might assume that we had something to do with this.

BLOB We'll be accused of treason.

NICHOLAS And hanged.

INGRAM And that won't look too good on our record.

BLOB So what do we do?

INGRAM These notes need to be found in Marlowe's possession. We'll plant them in his apartment.

NICHOLAS We'll go to the Queen and tell her we have reason to believe that Marlowe is plotting treason.

BLOB We'll request that she issue a search warrant.

INGRAM They'll find the notes.

NICHOLAS And the Queen will give us a beefy raise.

BLOB This is such fun!

ACT ONE, SCENE SIX

The apartment. KIT is lying limply in a chair.

THOMAS Stiffy wants to know why you never told us that you prefer men. He feels that if he is going to live here with us, he has a right to be informed of any major liabilities.

KIT That rat has a lot to say.

THOMAS You're not being fair to Stiffy.

KIT If Stiffy wasn't already dead, I'd...

THOMAS You are so tempermental.

KIT I wouldn't be tempermental if I wasn't surrounded by so many irritating people.

THOMAS I can understand why you didn't tell Stiffy. You hardly know him. But why didn't you tell me? Did you think I would think less of you? Did you think I would turn you in?

KIT I am not gay.

THOMAS You're not gay? OH. This is so like you.

KIT Brace yourself. I feel a sarcastic insult coming on.

THOMAS This is one of your pranks, isn't it? You're going around saying you're gay just to see how many people you can get a rise out of.

KIT Not exactly. But those would be happy results.

THOMAS Don't deny it. I know you. Everything you do has to be like a wet fish in the face. Over the top. Larger than life. Shocking! This sort of thing may work in your plays, but its annoying as hell when you have to live with it day after day!

KIT I'm about due for a public disturbance. May I leave now, or would that be rude?

THOMAS You have got to stop living as though you are a character in one of your plays.

KIT I don't do that.

THOMAS Good Ud! Sometimes I think you have completely confused reality with drama. Isn't that right, Stiffy?

KIT throws STIFFY out the window.

KIT You want to be next?

THOMAS I can't believe you just did that.

KIT The rat had it coming.

THOMAS You're trying to make me mad.

KIT It's so easy to do.

THOMAS I'm having a nervous breakdown!

KIT I'm having a hangover. Want to trade?

THOMAS You are impossible!

KIT You haven't shut up yet.

THOMAS I am going to retrieve Stiffy.

KIT Don't bother coming back.

Exit THOMAS.

KIT Ah! Solitude!

TAMBURLAINE appears.

TAMBURLAINE He's right, you know.

KIT Not you again.

TAMBURLAINE I'm in your imagination. You can't escape me.

KIT Even in my imagination I can't find peace.

TAMBURLAINE Peace? You? The king of civil unrest?

KIT Listen, Tamburlaine, I wrote you and I can erase you.

TAMBURLAINE You can't. I'm part of who you are.

KIT I am nothing like you.

TAMBURLAINE Thomas was right. You are synonymous with the characters in your plays.

KIT I am not a sadistic killer like yourself! I never killed anyone!

TAMBURLAINE You didn't have to. I did it for you.

KIT Tamburlaine...

TAMBURLAINE We are the same. Face it. We're both overreachers. Grabbing what we want.

KIT I worked hard for everything I have!

TAMBURLAINE You were a shoemaker's son. I was a shepherd. You think no one will make the connection?

KIT You don't understand. I...

TAMBURLAINE You want to be the Father of Drama. To brand your insignia on the theatre's flank. To change the very essence of dramatic literature as we know it.

KIT So what's wrong with...

TAMBURLAINE I want to rule the world.

KIT You're just as bad as everyone else, you know that? You think you have me figured out because of the plays I write. That's not fair.

TAMBURLAINE You mean to tell me that parts of yourself never end up in your characters? You are lying to yourself.

KIT You don't know me. You don't know anything about me! Nobody does!

TAMBURLAINE I know you as well as I know myself. We are the same, only I'm better.

KIT What the...

TAMBURLAINE You made me a hero.

KIT I made you a burlesque. I was making fun of...

TAMBURLAINE People think I'm a hero.

KIT Only because they don't understand what I was trying to do. I was trying something different. Nobody has ever done this sort of thing before.

TAMBURLAINE Irony is dangerous, Marlowe. Of late, people have posted racist threats on church doors, and have done it in the name of Tamburlaine.

KIT I have no control over how people react to my work.

TAMBURLAINE Your efforts have backfired.

KIT Out, scab! Get out of my mind!

TAMBURLAINE It's too late. I am in control now. I have taken possession of your thoughts. You will never escape. Stoop thou, and be footstool to great Tamburlaine!

KIT NO!

FAUSTUS appears.

FAUSTUS Why don't you just leave him alone?

TAMBURLAINE Faustus?

FAUSTUS Like the poor guy hasn't been through enough as it is. Marlowe, I know exactly how you feel.

KIT I will not stand here and be defended by a fictitious character.

FAUSTUS Would you look at that? He's in denial. I was in denial once.

KIT Denial?

FAUSTUS Denial about selling your soul to the devil.

KIT I did no such thing.

FAUSTUS Poor wretch. Do you want a hug? Here. Let me give you a hug.

KIT Why are you hugging me?

FAUSTUS I am comforting you in the last meager moments you have on this earth. You are going straight to hell.

KIT What say you?

FAUSTUS You sold your soul to the devil.

KIT That wasn't me. That was you.

FAUSTUS When you were at Cambridge you renounced everything that was important to you for the sake of acquiring knowledge. You gave up your family.

KIT I wanted more than the life of a simple shoemaker.

FAUSTUS You prostituted your morals.

KIT What morals?

FAUSTUS You worked as a spy to put yourself through school.

KIT Students always get the shit jobs.

FAUSTUS You gave up on God.

KIT The church disappointed me. Not God.

FAUSTUS Was it worth it? Was it worth selling your soul for knowledge?

KIT Why must you insist...

TAMBURLAINE Maybe YOU are a character in a play. Ever think of that, Marlowe? Who's to say you are not the product of someone's imagination.

FAUSTUS Don't freak him out.

TAMBURLAINE Marlowe, your life is no different than any of the twisted plots you thought up. Do you think someone wrote YOU?

FAUSTUS Listen, you verbose bag of self-importance, there is no point in worsening his lot. His time is almost up.

KIT What do you mean by that?

TA, MBURLAINE and FAUSTUS disappear.

KIT What do you mean my time is...Faustus? Tamburlaine!

ACT ONE, SCENE SEVEN

INGRAM is alone in the bushes.

INGRAM Every man must leave his mark. What about me? True, I am a lewd moneylender. A shark. I disrupt the lives of cocky, young gentlemen. But it's not the Babington Plot. Nicholas, Blob and that bloody Babington Plot. How can I compete with that? Then there's Marlowe with his controversial plays and public disturbances. That lucky bugger has trouble just falling in his lap. People will remember Marlowe and Nicholas and Blob. When I'm buried, my name will just vaporize and no one will ever remember I was alive. *(enter NICHOLAS)* What ho! Is the deed done?

NICHOLAS It was too easy. I slipped into Marlowe's apartment and left the scandalous notes in his closet.

INGRAM Good, good.

NICHOLAS He was so engrossed in a conversation with William Shakespeare that neither one noticed I was there.

BLOB rushes in.

BLOB The Queen has been informed!

NICHOLAS Blob, you are a marvel!

BLOB I looked the Queen straight in the face and told her about Marlowe's treacherous plottings. She turned a revolting shade of green!

NICHOLAS Blob, I could hug you.

BLOB Please don't.

INGRAM I could have lied to the Queen too, you know. Hell, I could have planted the notes in Marlowe's closet. But instead, I was left alone in the bushes, twiddling my thumbs.

NICHOLAS But you are so good at things like that.

BLOB Excellent twiddling.

INGRAM You don't think I'm a good spy.

NICHOLAS Of course we do.

INGRAM Enough of your pretense! I know what the two of you think of me. You think I'm a half ass spy with the balls of a neutered cat! I'll not be made to look like a court jester! I AM A SPY!

ROBERT walks by and gives INGRAM a weird look.

NICHOLAS Nice going, Ingram.

BLOB What part of SECRET agent confuses you?

INGRAM Fie.

ACT ONE, SCENE EIGHT

WILL and KIT are in KIT's apartment.

WILL How do fairies sound to you? Fairies frolicking in the forest, causing mischief among young lovers. Wouldn't fairies be fun, Kit?

KIT Do your characters ever talk to you?

WILL What say you?

KIT The characters in your plays. Do they talk to you?

WILL Titus Andronicus once appeared to me in a dream and slapped me. Then I remembered he didn't have a hand. But it made so much sense when I was dreaming it.

KIT I'm not talking about dreams, Will. I mean, do your characters walk into your apartment and speak to you the way I'm speaking to you now?

WILL Has this happened to you? OH! Your imagination puts me to shame!

KIT Do you think about death?

WILL I don't have much time to die, really. I busy myself mostly with living.

KIT Surely you ponder death occasionally.

WILL No. living pretty much consumes most of my schedule.

ROBERT enters, smirking.

KIT Robert? Why are you looking so smug?

ROBERT No reason.

ROBERT points to the door at the exact moment someone knocks.

WILL Are you expecting someone, Kit?

ANNE *(from outside)* Open up! I know you're in there, you double crossing bag of horse plop!

KIT Will, is that your wife?

WILL Anne? Is that you, my angelic one?

ANNE Damn straight, it's me! Now open this door so I can break your head!

WILL How wonderful! My little flower has journeyed all the way from Stratford to surprise me!

WILL opens the door. As ANNE storms in, ROBERT stands aside and gloats.

ANNE I thought I might find you here, you little wank!

WILL I'm sure you meant that affectionately.

ANNE Where is she?

WILL She who?

ANNE That little whore you've been slamming!

WILL I'm confused.

ANNE How could you do this to me? How could you do this to little Judith and Hamnet?

WILL Do what?

ANNE You leave me alone in Stratford with a screaming brat on each hip, while you go gallivanting across London! You tell me you're away on business, when all the while you've been going hog wild in the brothels!

WILL Never, my love! I am forever faithful!

ANNE Save it! You have a mistress! Everyone knows about it now!

WILL Scandal!

ANNE They call her the Dark Lady. Since when did you prefer brunettes?

WILL You are the only one! You are my succulent pomegranate! My shapely gourd!

ANNE Eat worms! I read all about your little hussy in this book of sonnets you wrote!

WILL I wrote no sonnets.

ANNE I suppose you're going to tell me her eyes are like the sun!

WILL Her eyes are nothing like the sun!

ANNE SO I'VE READ!

WILL Let me come home with you to Stratford! I'll prove myself worthy...

ANNE Don't bother ever coming home! You are no longer welcome in my house!
(stops, noticing ROBERT) Wait a minute. Didn't you die last year?...Never mind.

ANNE leaves, slamming the door behind her. WILL begins to whimper, and slam his head repeatedly against the wall.

KIT Will, I don't know what to say.

WILL *(thrusting himself into KIT's arms)* Hold me.

KIT Um, well...

ROBERT Serves you right. Thou parasite. Thou fungus. Thou involuntary spasm.

KIT Robert, were you behind this?

WILL I have no mistress. What means this lady?

KIT *(reading sonnets)* Robert, these sonnets are written in your hand.

ROBERT I warned him. He brought this on himself! Yes! I wrote the sonnets! And Shakespeare deserved every couplet!

WILL What did I ever do to you?

ROBERT You mock me! With your success! With your humility! Everybody loves you and it makes me want to throw up!

WILL Everybody loves me except the only person who matters.

ROBERT OH, smeck up!

KIT Get out of my house.

ROBERT You don't mean that.

KIT Out, scab! *(tossing ROBERT out)* And a thousand times, fie!

WILL Aye me! I am out of her favour!

KIT Listen, Will. Why don't you go back to your place and try to get your mind off things. You can write about your fairies. That will make you happy.

WILL Please don't make me leave. I can't be alone right now.

KIT What will you do, then?

WILL Let me stay here with you. Oh, Kit, please! I can't be by myself!

KIT There's not much room. I mean, since the dead rat moved in...

WILL *(grabbing KIT's leg)* Only for one night!

KIT Will, nature calls. Can I leave you alone for ten minutes while I go to the privy?

WILL Don't leave me!

KIT I can't very well take you along to the privy. Nine minutes then.

WILL How can you defecate when my heart is breaking!

KIT Let go of my leg before I mess my pants!

Exit KIT.

ACT ONE, SCENE NINE

*INGRAM, NICHOLAS and BLOB are in the bushes.
KIT walks by.*

INGRAM Where do you think you're going?

KIT I'm going to the privy.

INGRAM The privy?

KIT That's right.

INGRAM Then by all means, continue.

KIT Thank you for your blessing...What are you doing in my bushes?

BLOB Admiring your lovely foliage.

KIT shakes his head and leaves.

INGRAM Did you hear that? He's going to the privy.

BLOB The Queen's Privy Council?

INGRAM What else could he mean?

NICHOLAS Why would he be going to the Queen's Privy Council?

INGRAM It must have been that story we made up about Marlowe plotting treason.

NICHOLAS Cripes! The Queen must be bringing him in for interrogation. We didn't factor this into

the equation.

BLOB You don't suppose he will rat on us, do you?

NICHOLAS Of course he's going to rat on us! He is about to be interrogated by the Queen's Privy Council! They will torture him until he spills everything he knows!

BLOB Marlowe knows everything we've done!

INGRAM My embezzling.

BLOB And the Babington Plot.

INGRAM Bugger off, Blob.

NICHOLAS They'll put Marlowe on the rack! Quarter him! Boil him! Disembowel him! He'll be sure to blurt something out!

INGRAM Marlowe is a loose cannon. He must be silenced.

WILL *(entering)* Kit! It's been longer than nine minutes! Where are you! *(notices spies)* Have you gentlemen in the bushes seen Kit? I don't understand what is taking him so long. I'm rather worried.

BLOB Keep waiting. He won't be back any time soon.

NICHOLAS He's being interrogated by the Queen's Privy Council.

WILL No!

INGRAM He's being charged for treason and will be tortured into confessing.

WILL *(rushing back inside)* Fire and Brimstone!

NICHOLAS What do you suppose we should do?

BLOB Prepare to be hanged.

ACT ONE, SCENE TEN

*WILL is pacing around in KIT's apartment.
Enter KIT.*

WILL Kit! Oh, Kit, thank God you're okay! You survived! Oh praise be to Heaven!

KIT Will...

WILL I want you to sit down and tell me all about it.

KIT Why?

WILL Come on, Kit. Give me details.

KIT It's sort of personal.

WILL Did it hurt?

KIT What's that to the purpose?

WILL It must have hurt. You did a dirty deed.

KIT You're weird.

WILL How did it feel?

KIT I don't know... Refreshing.

WILL Refreshing?

KIT As a matter of fact, it felt rather good to let it all out.

WILL You let it ALL out?

KIT That is the point.

WILL I can't believe you did that. And with the Queen watching.

KIT The Queen was watching?

WILL Of course. She watches everything.

KIT Even THAT?

WILL You shouldn't have done it, Kit. You should have held it in. As painful as it might be.

KIT It's not healthy to hold it in.

WILL Tell me this... Did you let anything out that might have upset the Queen?

KIT To be frank, I don't see how any of this is the Queen's business. A man's...
(*gesturing towards his bowels*) internal affairs are private.

WILL That's not what the Queen says.

KIT I don't give a rat's ass what the Queen says!

WILL (*shrieks*) I didn't hear you say that.

KIT The Queen is a demented woman!

WILL You are full of crap!

KIT Not anymore, I'm not!

Enter THOMAS.

THOMAS Kit, you forgot to empty the chamber pot again.

WILL Chamber pot?

THOMAS Must you forget to empty the chamber pot every time you go to the privy?

WILL The priv...*(hides his face as he leaves)* Excuse me.

THOMAS What's with him?

KIT I don't know, but I learned a little more about the Queen than I needed to know.

THOMAS Never mind. Just empty this chamber pot. I'm not doing it.

Exit KIT with chamber pot.

THOMAS *(to rat)* Can you believe that guy, Stiffy? He never empties the chamber pot. I'll bet he does that on purpose just to irk me. That is so like him.

Knock at the door.

OFFICER 1 Open up in the name of the Queen!

THOMAS opens the door.

THOMAS What the...

OFFICER 2 Christopher Marlowe?

THOMAS The name's Thomas Kyd.

OFFICER 2 Is this the residence of Christopher Marlowe?

THOMAS He's my roommate.

OFFICER 1 Search the premises.

THOMAS You can't come in here! This is private property!

OFFICER 1 We have a search warrant from the Queen.

OFFICER 2 finds Atheist literature in the closet.

OFFICER 2 I found something!

THOMAS What?

OFFICER 2 Brochures of an Atheist nature. Along with some heretic accusations signed by one Richard Baines.

OFFICER 1 Do you know anything about this, Thomas Kyd?

THOMAS I don't know anything!

OFFICER 2 He knows something. Take him away!

*OFFICERS grab THOMAS and drag him out.
THOMAS begs and screams "It was Kit!"
repeatedly on the way out.*

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO, SCENE ONE

*KIT enters the apartment. THOMAS is not there.
He finds STIFFY lying in the middle of the floor.*

KIT Stiffy? What are you doing here all alone? Thomas never goes anywhere without you...Something isn't right.

*Door opens. WILL helps THOMAS walk in.
THOMAS is in a full body bandage with only his
eyes and mouth exposed. THOMAS walks in
stiffly and with great difficulty.*

KIT Thomas?

THOMAS Kit, before you do anything to me, let me remind you that I am in a tremendous amount of pain.

KIT I hate conversations that begin that way.

THOMAS I would also like to say that I love you...in a purely platonic way.

KIT What did you do?

THOMAS Do? I, um...

WILL He told the Queen you are an Atheist.

KIT Thomas! Have you taken leave of your senses?

THOMAS I didn't mean to, Kit! It just sort of slipped out while they were torturing me!

KIT Do you know what they do to Atheists?

THOMAS Um...the same thing they just did to me now?

KIT Thomas!

THOMAS They tortured me! Nearly to death!

KIT Perhaps I should send you back so they can finish the job!

THOMAS It's not as though they tickled it out of me! They put me on the rack! What did you expect me to say?

KIT I don't know. The truth, maybe?

THOMAS I tried the truth! I really did! But the truth wasn't interesting enough for them! They wouldn't stop torturing me until I told them what they wanted to hear!

KIT What they wanted to hear?

THOMAS They came here looking for you, Kit! For you! They searched the apartment and found those Atheist brochures we tossed in the closet. And some prank heretic notes that Dick wrote. You weren't around so they took me in to be interrogated. They asked me who the heretic literature belonged to, and I blurted out, "Malrowe! They belong to Christopher Marlowe!"

KIT I know we've had our differences, but this...

THOMAS They wouldn't stop until I gave them the right answer! They want you to be guilty! The Queen has it in her head that you are an Atheist, and once that woman has her mind set on something...

KIT God save me!

THOMAS They're coming to get you, Kit. *(knock at the door)* There they are.

OFFICER 1 *(from outside)* Open up in the name of the Queen!

KIT Couldn't I open up in the name of someone else?

WILL Just tell them what they want to hear. It will keep you out of trouble.

KIT I suppose it has kept YOU out of trouble, hasn't it, Will?

OFFICER 2 Is Christopher Marlowe in there?

KIT opens the door.

KIT I'm the man you want. How have I offended the Queen this time?

OFFICER 1 Treason.

OFFICER 2 Blasphemy.

KIT Which one is it?

OFFICER 1 We'll let the Queen decide that.

OFFICER 2 Seize him!

The officers each seize KIT by each arm and begin to take him away.

WILL Wait! Don't take him away! *(straightens KIT's ruff and fixes his hair)*

KIT Will, what are you doing?

WILL You're seeing the Queen. You must look your best.

OFFICERS take KIT away.

THOMAS There goes a dead man.

WILL It doesn't make any sense.

THOMAS We are all players in the Queen's charade. The only thing we can do is recite our lines.

Enter CATHERINE and JOHN.

CATHERINE Kitty? Are you here?

JOHN *(noticing THOMAS' bandages)* New outfit?

THOMAS The rack.

JOHN Ah.

CATHERINE I brought Kitty some homemade mustard and cress juice in case he has scurvy.

JOHN I told her she was being a mutton head.

CATHERINE They say scurvy can cause irritability and make people loose control of their actions.

JOHN If that's the case, Kit was born with scurvy.

CATHERINE Has Kitty mentioned having any pains in his loins?

THOMAS Um...Ms. Arthur?

CATHERINE Have his teeth fallen out?

THOMAS Kit isn't here.

CATHERINE Where is he?

THOMAS He's sort of being...tortured.

JOHN What did he do this time?

THOMAS He was charged with possession of heretic literature.

CATHERINE *(throwing herself on the floor)* I've failed! I've failed! I've failed!

JOHN *(shoving a shoe in her mouth)* Stuff it, Catherine.

ACT TWO, SCENE TWO

The stage is dark. KIT is spotlighted, centre stage, facing the audience. He has an officer on either side of him. He is being questioned by the Queen. QUEEN is not visible. Only her voice is heard.

KIT So which is it? Treason or blasphemy?

QUEEN They are the same.

KIT What say you?

QUEEN I am your Queen. If you reject God, you reject me.

KIT I believe in God. But I don't believe in you. If that makes me an Atheist, then go ahead and torture me.

OFFICER 1 Treason!

OFFICER 2 Blasphemy!

QUEEN I will ask you one more time. Are you an Atheist?

KIT Not exactly.

QUEEN Are you a Christian then?

KIT I'm not sure.

QUEEN Then what are you?

KIT Confused!

QUEEN What confuses you? You are either a Christian or you're not. Judging by your less than model lifestyle, all fingers seem to point at Atheism.

KIT I know there's a God somewhere. I just don't know where to find him.

QUEEN And you expect to find him in a tavern?

KIT Why not? I can't find him anywhere else. Everywhere I turn I see blood and gore. Covert death plots. Loveless marriages. Espionage. For the love of Ud, people watch public hangings for fun!

QUEEN The content in your plays is no better.

KIT I'm only commenting on things that need to be changed.

OFFICER 1 Shall we hang him now, your majesty?

QUEEN Let him finish.

KIT Religion has nothing to do with God anymore. God has been replaced with a monarch. You have shoved God in a closet somewhere and taught us to forget about him.

QUEEN I am God.

KIT If that's the case, then you are the blasphemer. Not me.

QUEEN You will be silenced. I shall have your ears cut off.

KIT Why would you cut off my ears to silence me? I don't talk with my ears.

QUEEN Did I give you permission to say such things?

KIT You are not my puppet-master. I can say whatever I bloody well please without any prompting from Queen Elizabeth. Did I say that out loud?

QUEEN Nobody has ever spoken to me in this manner. Unprecedented.

KIT I don't do anything unless it's unprecedented.

OFFICER 1 Shall I call for the rack-master, your majesty?

KIT Go ahead. I value the liberty of speech above my very life.

QUEEN Enough of this privy-nip! You will report to court every day until your next date with the Privy Council. Don't leave town, Marlowe. I'm not done with you yet.

OFFICERS take KIT away.

ACT TWO, SCENE THREE*The apartment.*

THOMAS I can't believe you called her Queen Elizabeth.

KIT I can't explain it, Thomas. I open my mouth and these things just start flying out. It frightens me sometimes.

THOMAS It might be scurvy.

KIT Wha?

THOMAS Your mother was here.

KIT Oh.

WILL How could you say such things to the Queen? What if it offended her?

KIT That is the point, Will.

THOMAS So that's what this was all about. You put on this big performance for the Queen just so you could get a rise out of her. This is so like you.

KIT Thomas...

THOMAS You wanted to see how mad you could get her before she tortured you. Do I know you or do I know you?

KIT Thomas...

THOMAS You always have to push boundaries, don't you, Kit? Challenge limitations. Well, if you're that dumb, you deserve to be tortured.

WILL That wasn't very nice, Thomas.

KIT I may have a big mouth, but every word that comes out of it is the truth.

ANNE is heard screaming outside the door.

ANNE *(from outside)* Did I say you could touch me?

ROBERT *(from outside)* You love it.

Enter ANNE and ROBERT.

THOMAS Robert Greene? Wait. Didn't he die last year?

ANNE Touch me again and I'll give you a bloody coxcomb!

ROBERT I'm only taking what's mine.

WILL Yours?

ROBERT There's no point in letting a perfectly good set of knockers go to waste. After all, Shakespeare, you're not using them.

ANNE Will, do something about this thug, will you?

WILL I don't know if I can.

ANNE And they said chivalry was dead.

KIT Will, are you just going to stand there and let...

ROBERT He won't do anything. He'd rather choke to death on the milk of human kindness than to stand up to me.

WILL Mr. Greene?

ROBERT He's afraid he would offend someone.

WILL Mr. Greene?

ROBERT And even if he had any testosterone, he's too much of a moron to figure out a good revenge plot.

WILL Mr. Greene?

ROBERT Yes. What?

WILL Have you ever read *Arden of Feversham*?

ROBERT The play written by the anonymous dramatist? I know it well.

WILL Remember that really evil character in it named Greene?

ROBERT That greedy, selfish jackass who looks out for none but himself? What about him?

WILL Who do you think wrote *Arden of Feversham*?

ROBERT I just told you, it was anonym... You didn't.

WILL Not bad for an illiterate bard.

ROBERT You wrote a scandalous play and put me in it!

KIT Way to go, Will!

ROBERT First you steal my audience, now my reputation!

WILL And you stole my wench! (*punches ROBERT in the face*)

KIT, THOMAS and ANNE have identical looks of shock on their faces.

ROBERT You hit me in the nose!

WILL I would have gone for the balls, but you don't have any.

KIT I knew you had it in you, Will!

ROBERT *(noticing ANNE)* Ug! Get away from me, Strumpet!

ANNE What the...

ROBERT I will not touch something that William Shakespeare has touched! *(leaving)* You will never amount to anything, William Shakespeare! Never! *(exit)*

WILL *(calling out to ROBERT)* I hope you won't take any of this personally, Mr. Greene!

ANNE You rescued me, my adorable, little Willie Woo Woo!

KIT Willie Woo Woo?

WILL She calls me that sometimes.

ANNE Come here, you! *(grabs WILL by the sides of his head and kisses him aggressively on the mouth)*

WILL looks stunned for a moment and then passes out.

ANNE Not this again.

ANNE flings WILL over her shoulder and carries him out.

KIT Now THAT'S drama.

THOMAS Kit! You have darker matters to concern yourself with.

KIT I don't want to think about it. I may only have a couple of weeks left and I want to savour them.

THOMAS Have you thought about skipping town? Assuming a new identity?

KIT I thought about it. But it's a stupid idea. I am a high profile man. Someone would eventually discover me.

THOMAS So what are you going to do?

KIT Stop ambushing me, will you? I just want to get my mind off things. In fact, I've made plans to have dinner with some friends in Debtford Friday next.

THOMAS You have friends?

KIT Ingram Frizer, Nicholas Skeres and Blob Poley.

THOMAS You're not supposed to leave town. Furthermore, do you think it's safe to be seen in public?

KIT I will be safe as long as I'm in the company of friends.

ACT TWO, SCENE FOUR

*The tavern of MADAM ELEANOR BULL.
KIT, INGRAM, NICHOLAS and BLOB are
seated around a table.*

NICHOLAS Perk up, Kit.

BLOB Yeah. You look like death.

BLOB gets kicked from under the table.

INGRAM The whole point of this evening is to help you get your mind off things. How about a game of backgammon?

MADAM BULL Wine, Gentlemen!

BLOB Wine? We want ale, Eleanor!

MADAM BULL Wine is better for toasting. And you may call me Madam Bull.

NICHOLAS & BLOB Ooooo. Madam.

BLOB Not just a wench, but a classy wench.

NICHOLAS She is practically royalty.

MADAM BULL Not quite royalty. Let's just say I have court connections.

INGRAM *(pulling MADAM BULL on his lap)* Come here, Madam Bull.

MADAM BULL A toast! To cousin Blanche. God rest her soul. *(bursts into laughter followed by the others who do the same)*

KIT Who's cousin Blanche?

MADAM BULL She was the Queen's chief gentlewoman and confidante. Good old Blanche finally kicked off and left me in her will.

INGRAM Ching, ching.

MADAM BULL That's not all she left me. She also left me in the Queen's favour.

NICHOLAS To the Queen!

They all raise their glasses in a toast, except KIT.

INGRAM Kit?

KIT *(no enthusiasm, still not raising his glass)* Klink.

INGRAM There's just no pleasing you, is there, Kit? Here we invite you to Debtford for a nice

evening of gluttony and drunkenness and all you do is mope. And Madam Bull was so kind as to offer us a room for the enire day for a sum of pence.

MADAM BULL What do you mean kind? I'm the one who gets to be surrounded by four devastatingly handsome men. *(to BLOB)* Except maybe you.

KIT Are we here to eat or not?

MADAM BULL Then there's this one. *(drapes her arms around KIT from behind and talks into his ear)*

KIT Me?

MADAM BULL You're my favourite.

INGRAM, NICHOLAS and BLOB pound on the table and make animal noises.

KIT Madam, please.

MADAM BULL Where did you get such pretty clothes?

KIT I'm hungry.

MADAM BULL So am I.

INGRAM, NICHOLAS and BLOB howl like dogs. KIT peels MADAM BULL off of himself.

KIT Terrific. Starve me to death. I'll be spared of the Privy Council.

INGRAM He gets irritable when he's deprived of food.

BLOB Me too. Food, Wench!

NICHOLAS *(grabbing MADAM BULL's hindquarters)* She's not a wench. She's a madam.

MADAM BULL Alright already. I'm taking orders.

BLOB It's Wednesday. Fish night!

INGRAM I'll have an order of eel.

NICHOLAS I'll have the cockle and lamprey combo.

MADAM BULL Do you want filberts or field mushrooms with that?

BLOB How are your oysters?

MADAM BULL They smell a bit off tonight.

BLOB I'll take two dozen.

KIT Pork please.

Everyone stops and gives KIT a look of shock.

BLOB But, Kit. It's fish night.

KIT I want pork.

NICHOLAS But everyone orders fish on Wednesdays.

KIT Right. And I'm ordering pork.

INGRAM Always has to be different.

Exit MADAM BULL.

KIT I have to pee. *(gets up)* Before I go, I just wanted to thank you guys for doing this for me. I've been an ogre all day, taking things out on you. I don't say this often, so savour it. Sometimes I feel like you guys are my only friends. The only constant thing in my twisted life. There aren't many people who I trust but...Hell. I really have to pee. *(leaves)*

NICHOLAS Anyone feel guilty right about now?

After a brief pause, they all burst into laughter.

INGRAM Betraying a good friend makes us all the more skilled as spies.

BLOB Remember the Creed of Spies?

They put their hands on their hearts and recite in unison.

ALL A spy is dedicated to the eternal promise to protect, uphold and defend the life and dignities of her majesty the Queen, and to take pride in the loyalties thereof. To live for the Queen. To die for the Queen. Until someone else gives us a better offer.

INGRAM We must follow through with our plan. Marlowe must be killed. Otherwise, he'll surely reveal unflattering information about us when he is being tortured.

BLOB Who will do the deed?

NICHOLAS Blob and I are the most experienced in death plots.

INGRAM Fie! What makes you think I can't do it!

NICHOLAS Ingram, we never said...

INGRAM You don't think I have it in me! You don't think I'm a good enough spy to betray my own friend!

NICHOLAS Ingram, haven't I always said that when it comes to money-lending, you are the devil incarnate?

BLOB You don't have to prove anything to us, so get this chip off your shoulder.

INGRAM I'll prove to you how worthy I am to bear the Creed of Spies. I will do the deed!

NICHOLAS Whatever...

INGRAM I have the entire conspiracy worked out in my head. We will distract Marlowe by

starting a heated argument.

BLOB No challenge there. It's easy to get Marlowe angry.

INGRAM Who here is in charge of the plot, you or m...

INGRAM notices MADAM BULL nervously skulking about. She is conspicuously carrying a dagger.

INGRAM Madam Bull?

MADAM BULL Dagger? What dagger?

BLOB What would a madam need with a dagger?

MADAM BULL Okay, you caught me. I was going to use this dagger to kill Christopher Marlowe.

NICHOLAS Whatever for?

MADAM BULL As a favour to the Queen. She wants him dead because he humiliated her when he was being questioned.

NICHOLAS Why doesn't she wait a few days and have the Privy Council order his murder?

MADAM BULL It would make her look bad. After all, Marlowe was once in the Queen's secret service. She'd like to have people think that she treats her employees well. Besides, who knows what scandalous things Marlowe would say about the Queen while under torture? Marlowe's mouth has a mind of its own.

INGRAM That's for sure.

MADAM BULL Who's to say Marlowe wouldn't curse and defy the Queen right there in front of everyone? Independent thinkers are dangerous. Others might follow Marlowe's lead and before you know it, there could be a series of treasonous plots against Elizabeth's life. Marlowe must be silenced before the trial.

NICHOLAS This is such a co-incidence. We were just about to murder Marlowe too!

INGRAM Me. I was the one who was...

BLOB This saves us a lot of trouble. Madam Bull can do the dirty work and we won't run the risk being hanged.

INGRAM You all hate me! You think I'm a mockery to spies everywhere! What reason have I to live!

NICHOLAS On second thought, maybe you should let Ingram do the deed, Madam Bull. He has some self-esteem issues. It might help him in the healing process.

MADAM BULL By all means. I'm a sucker for vulnerable men. Would you like to use my dagger, Ingram?

INGRAM I have my own dagger right here in my stocking.

BLOB Shhh! Kit's coming!

Enter KIT.

INGRAM Oh! Am I stuffed!

KIT But our food hasn't arrived yet.

BLOB You took too long. We ate already. Yours too.

MADAM BULL (*caressing KIT's face*) You are such a handsome one. Those brown eyes. It's such a waste. (*kisses him*)

KIT What means this lady?

NICHOLAS Someone has to take care of this bill.

KIT This one's on me, gentlemen.

BLOB What do you mean, on you? We ate your meal.

KIT It's the least I can do after the way I've snapped at you.

NICHOLAS But I wanted to pay for dinner tonight!

KIT Put your purse away, Nicholas.

NICHOLAS MAKE ME!

INGRAM creeps up behind KIT.

KIT I'm trying to be nice here!

BLOB There will be no niceness in this tavern! I am paying the bill!

INGRAM pulls dagger from his stocking.

NICHOLAS Take one more coin out, and you'll be swallowing it!

KIT You paid last time, you bastard!

NICHOLAS Say that to my face!

INGRAM assumes the position to plunge the dagger into KIT.

BLOB Give me that bill, you ruffian!

KIT Your money is no good here!

Lights go out. Arguing continues.

BLOB You want to take this outside!

KIT Maybe I do!

NICHOLAS Why I oughta' ...

MADAM BULL Kit! Look out behind you!

MADAM BULL lets out a blood curdling scream.

ACT TWO, SCENE FIVE

The apartment. THOMAS is still in his full body bandage. WILL is pacing.

WILL It's been three days since Kit went to Debtford. Where in the world is he?

THOMAS It was rather rude of you not to see your wife off when she left for Stratford. You may never see her that amorous again.

WILL I'm worried here. It's been three days.

Enter DICK.

DICK Have you heard?

THOMAS We don't have the patience for you right now, Dick.

DICK If you give me five ducats, I'll tell you what I know.

THOMAS That'll take all of three seconds.

DICK Christopher Marlowe is dead.

THOMAS and WILL stop and look shocked. After a short pause, WILL begins weeping hysterically.

THOMAS What happened?

DICK Five ducats.

THOMAS I'll give you five kicks in the head if you don't tell me.

DICK He was stabbed in a tavern brawl. I don't know all the details, but I hear that it was all Kit's fault.

THOMAS It always is. You know nothing more?

DICK Only that the murderer claims he did it in self-defense.

ACT TWO, SCENE SIX

The stage is black. In the centre of the stage is a spotlight which illuminates DANBY the coroner, OFFICER 1 and the body of KIT on a slab. There is a sheet over the body with a dagger sticking out of the place where the head would be.

DANBY Self-defense?

OFFICER 1 That's what the Queen says.

DANBY But I've read the witness' report and...

OFFICER 1 The Queen says it was self-defense. Don't make her a liar.

DANBY I am a coroner. Not a miracle worker.

OFFICER 1 Danby, you are the Queen's coroner. Do what the Queen says.

DANBY Why wasn't the local coroner in Debtford notified? The Queen's coroner isn't supposed to be involved unless the murder took place within twelve miles of the Queen's person. The Queen was at Nonsuch Palace in Surrey the night of the murder.

OFFICER 1 Stop asking questions. Just have something intelligent for the trial. We need a coroner's inquest.

Exit OFFICER 1.

DANBY I am a dead man. This witness' report is full of inconsistencies. There's no way this could have been self-defense. Come on, Danby. Think of something.

Lights change colour and DANBY is at the trial.

DANBY Gentlemen. I have prepared the coroner's report. The murder weapon cost twelve pence.

OFFICER 1 The body, Danby.

DANBY Yes. The body is dead.

OFFICER 1 Danby, your testimony?

DANBY *(deep breath)* The dagger, belonging to one Ingram Frizer, entered the victim's brain through the entry of the right eye. I know what you're thinking. How could this be done in self-defense if the victim was stabbed in the face with the murderer's own weapon, which had been moments earlier, sheathed in Frizer's stocking? There is a logical explanation. I have choreographed the entire episode in my head and have come up with what I call *The Magic Dagger Theory*. Since the deed was done in self-defense, we know that Marlowe drew arms first. After a dispute over the dinner bill, Marlowe and Frizer got into a struggle. The magic dagger unsheathed itself from Frizer's stocking, floated through the air and landed in Marlowe's hand. Marlowe, being the AGGRESSOR with

the INTENT to kill, used the BLUNT end of the dagger to thwack Frizer on the back of the head. It was not difficult for Marlowe to reach the back of Frizer's head while being pinned down to a bar table, because Marlowe has abnormally long arms and convenient, rubbery elbows.

OFFICER 1 Danby, your story is entirely speculative...I like it. Next witness. Madam Eleanor Bull.

MADAM BULL He did it! He's the one! Ingram Frizer murdered Christopher Marlowe in cold blood!

OFFICER 1 We'll pretend we didn't hear that. Next witnesses. Ingram Frizer, Nicholas Skeres and Robert Poley.

MADAM BULL Wait a minute. Ingram Frizer can't be a defendant AND a witness.

OFFICER 1 What do you mean? Our law has no guidelines for evidence. If we do things right, this murder trial won't take more than ten minutes.

MADAM BULL exits indignantly. INGRAM, NICHOLAS and BLOB each sit on a stool, facing the audience.

OFFICER 1 Where was Christopher Marlowe stabbed?

INGRAM In the eye.

NICHOLAS In the brain.

BLOB In the tavern.

OFFICER 1 *(after giving BLOB an odd look)* Where did the murder take place?

INGRAM A tavern.

NICHOLAS A brothel.

BLOB The home of Eleanor Bull.

OFFICER 1 What was the motive?

INGRAM The dinner bill.

NICHOLAS A gambling debt.

BLOB Suicide.

OFFICER 1 Who's idea was it to kill Marlowe?

INGRAM The spymaster.

NICHOLAS A rival in love.

BLOB Some guy named Frances.

OFFICER 1 Thank you, gentlemen. That clears everything up nicely. The final testimony will be from Christopher Marlowe. *(to corpse)* Mr. Marlowe, do you have anything to say in your defense? *(puts ear to corpse)* He has nothing to say in his defense...Now then, what says

her majesty?

QUEEN I am granting Frances Freezer a pardon on the grounds of self-defense.

OFFICER 1 Who's Frances Freezer?

INGRAM Yes! I got away with it! I am a very good spy!

INGRAM stops to find he is getting odd looks from everyone around him.

ACT TWO, SCENE SEVEN

The apartment. WILL is alone.

WILL Something isn't right...Something...

Enter MADAM BULL.

MADAM BULL Hello?

WILL Who are you?

MADAM BULL Eleanor Bull. Who are you?

WILL William Shakespeare.

MADAM BULL William Shakespeare? Kit spoke very highly of you.

WILL He...he did?

MADAM BULL I brought Kit's hat. I thought someone might want it. I found it in my rooming house the night he was...

WILL It was your rooming house? You saw what happened?

MADAM BULL I have to go now.

WILL You know something, don't you?

MADAM BULL I saw nothing!

WILL He was my friend!

MADAM BULL I'm sorry this happened! I didn't know how fond I'd become of...

WILL Was it self-defense? Did Kit try to...

MADAM BULL It was the blunt end of the dagger!...When Kit hit Ingram on the head. He used the blunt end of the dagger. You figure it out.

Exit MADAM BULL.

WILL The blunt end of the dagger. If Kit wanted to kill Ingram, he would have used the blade. Ingram wasn't trying to defend himself. Kit was.

KIT's ghost appears.

KIT Did I hear my name?

WILL Kit! What are you doing here?

KIT Is that any way to talk to a dead friend?

WILL Don't you know it's a felony to conjure spirits? I could get in deep trouble if someone finds you here!

KIT You did not conjure me. I came on my own.

WILL Why?

KIT Will, you are a nice guy. So nice, in fact, that it is quite irritating. Niceness offends people in this backwards world. But people like to be offended. It gives them something to complain about.

WILL What are you trying to say?

KIT I wanted to change the world, Will. You do it for me.

WILL I have so many things to thank you for.

KIT Whatever it is, your welcome. I have to go.

WILL Where are you going?

KIT *(mischievous grin)* Heaven.

WILL Heaven? But I thought...

KIT You know how I love to shock people.

WILL How wondrous!

KIT One more thing. Look after my mom. She doesn't take things like this very well.

WILL Go figure.

KIT disappears. THOMAS enters with great difficulty, still in his full body bandage.

THOMAS Did I hear voices in here?

WILL Thomas! You'll never guess what I just saw! I...

THOMAS What? You saw what?

WILL A spider. I saw a spider run across the floor.

THOMAS Try not to get too excited, Will. You wouldn't want to overexert yourself.

*CATHERINE and JOHN can be heard
outside the door. CATHERINE is wailing and
weeping.*

JOHN *(from outside)* For the love of Ud, Catherine! Would you stop being so dramatic?
You're creating a spectacle!

*Enter CATHERINE and JOHN. CATHERINE
throws herself on the floor.*

CATHERINE My baby boy! My baby boy! My baby boy!

JOHN Smeck up, Catherine! You must have seen this coming!

THOMAS Marlowe himself couldn't have written a more tragic ending.

CATHERINE Oh, grief! Oh, misery!

JOHN *(moaning)* Oh, Catherine. Would you believe she was outside, digging her own grave this
morning?

CATHERINE My adorable baby boy, with his big, brown eyes and squeezable cheeks!

WILL Ms. Arthur? If I tell you something, do you promise never to tell a soul?

CATHERINE Starting tomorrow I'm taking an oath of silence.

JOHN I'll believe that when I see it.

WILL Kit is not dead.

CATHERINE What?

WILL He faked his death and is hiding in a secret place.

CATHERINE You mean to say...

WILL He's writing my plays for me now.

CATHERINE Kitty is not dead?

WILL You have to be sure never to blow his cover. He's hiding from the Queen.

JOHN See, Catherine? Didn't I say you were overreacting?

CATHERINE Oh! Thanks be to Heaven!

WILL Not so loud! It's a secret!

Exit CATHERINE and JOHN.

THOMAS Now you've done it.

WILL Kit wouldn't have wanted his mother to grieve. It was one, little fib for the greater good. Besides, I made Catherine promise not to tell anyone.

THOMAS Will, if you want news to spread fast, just tell Catherine Arthur.

CATHERINE *(from outside)* MY BABY BOY IS ALIVE!

A look of terror comes over WILL's face

FINIS