

HEMINGS AND CONDELL

A Screenplay by Martin Keady

Based on a True Story

Copyright 2019

Tel: (07570) 898 698

Email: keadym1616@gmail.com

Twitter: @mrtnkeady

Web: <http://theshakespeareplays.com/>

For John and Henry.

BLACK.

A caption appears on screen: "ACT ONE: LONDON, 1594."

It fades and is replaced by another: "OR FOUR DAYS B.S - "

It fades and a final caption appears: "- BEFORE SHAKESPEARE".

The final caption fades, as we fade up to:

1. EXT. STREET. DAY.

A SOLDIER nails a poster onto the door of a theatre.

The words at the top of the poster, in large black lettering, read: "CLOSED BY ORDER OF HER MAJESTIE AND PARLYMENT".

TWO MEN stand behind THE SOLDIER and read the poster - JOHN HEMINGS, a portly 40-year-old, and HENRY CONDELL, a thin 18-year-old - and they are wearing the typical Elizabethan actor's outfit of "doublet and hose" (tight-fitting tunic and trousers).

HEMINGS:

We're being closed - again!

CONDELL nods.

HEMINGS:

Which means we'll have to take to the road - again!

He looks absolutely desolate.

HEMINGS:

I'm not sure I can survive another *tour*.

CONDELL looks at him quizzically.

CONDELL:

What's so awful about going on *tour*?

HEMINGS looks at him in surprise.

HEMINGS:

You'll see!

HEMINGS turns and walks away, looking despondent.

CONDELL takes a last look at the poster before following him.

2. EXT. STREET OUTSIDE HEMINGS'S HOUSE. DAY (EARLY MORNING).

HEMINGS says goodbye to his WIFE and TWO SMALL CHILDREN as CONDELL waits on his horse and holds the reins to HEMINGS's horse. Both horses are laden with props (such as swords), costumes (such as stage armour) and instruments (such as lutes).

HEMINGS (to his wife):

We'll be back as soon as the theatres reopen.

MRS HEMINGS (nodding):

I know.

She looks at the ground, so HEMINGS gently lifts her head.

HEMINGS:

Don't worry. We'll be alright.

MRS HEMINGS (angrily):

I'm not worried about *you* - I'm worried about *us!*

She pulls the CHILDREN around her and looks at him accusingly.

MRS HEMINGS:

You can all protect each other.

She looks up at CONDELL and - behind him - THE FOUR OTHER PLAYERS in the company, all of them on heavily laden horses.

MRS HEMINGS:

Who will protect us while you're away?

Unable to meet her gaze, HEMINGS himself looks at the ground.

CONDELL:

I'm sorry, Mister Hemings, but we have to go.

HEMINGS (nodding):

I know.

He puts his hands on his WIFE'S shoulders and stares at her.

HEMINGS:

I have to go - you know that!

MRS HEMINGS:

I know you do. But that doesn't make your absence any easier to bear.

She leads THE CHILDREN inside and closes the door behind her: for a moment, HEMINGS stares at the door forlornly.

CONDELL (VOICE OFF):

I know it's hard, Mister Hemings, to leave your family.

HEMINGS looks round at CONDELL accusingly.

HEMINGS:

No, you don't, Henry - because you don't have a family!

CONDELL looks shocked - and a little embarrassed.

HEMINGS:

When you do, then you'll know how hard it is.

He takes his reins from CONDELL and climbs up onto his horse: He rides off and THE OTHERS, including CONDELL, all follow him.

3. EXT. CITY GATE. DAY.

A SOLDIER unfurls, then examines, a piece of paper, before looking up at HEMINGS and CONDELL on their horses.

SOLDIER:

You're Lord Strange's Men?

HEMINGS (proudly):

That's right. We are members of his theatrical company.

THE SOLDIER - unimpressed - hands him back the piece of paper.

SOLDIER:

Your licence is in order, so you can leave. But as you can see, most people in the country are heading into the city.

He looks at THE FLOOD OF PEOPLE coming through the gate, then out at the fields FULL OF PEOPLE beyond the city wall.

SOLDIER:

I doubt you'll find a paying audience out there!

HEMINGS smiles grimly.

HEMINGS:

We'll try.

THE SOLDIER steps aside and ushers HEMINGS, CONDELL and THE OTHER PLAYERS through the gate.

4. EXT. ROAD OUTSIDE A SMALL TOWN. DAY.

THE PLAYERS stop on a deserted road outside a small town.

Their POINT OF VIEW: A makeshift barricade, made up of branches, logs and even furniture, has been erected, behind which TWO MEN are standing: one holding an axe; the other a pitchfork.

AXEMAN (suspiciously):

Who goes there?

HEMINGS removes his feathered cap and even though he is sitting on a horse bows extravagantly.

HEMINGS:

We are players, Sir.

AXEMAN:

"Players"?

HEMINGS:

Aye, Sir. We are members of Lord Strange's Men, the *finest* theatrical company in London.

AXEMAN:

Then why aren't you *in* London?

HEMINGS (smiling):

We are currently engaged on a short tour of the inns and taverns of Kent.

AXEMAN:

Well, we don't want you *here!*

HEMINGS looks surprised.

HEMINGS:

Why not?

AXEMAN:

Because players carry *plague!*

HEMINGS looks shocked for a moment, then shakes his head.

HEMINGS:

No, Sir, that's not true.

AXEMAN:

It *is* true! Everyone else has the good sense to stay where they are - where they were *born!* - but you *players* travel round, carrying the *plague* with you. Well, you're not bringing it *here!*

He lifts up the axe, as if ready to strike with it: THE PLAYERS quickly turn round and start riding away.

HEMINGS (calling out):

Philistines! England is *full* of Philistines!

5. INT. TAVERN. NIGHT.

A filthy-looking INNKEEPER smiles, showing his rotten teeth.

INNKEEPER:

Very well - you can play here.

HEMINGS, CONDELL and THE OTHER PLAYERS all look thrilled.

INNKEEPER (smiling):

In return for *half* your takings - and *I'll* collect the money!

Now THE PLAYERS look less thrilled, especially CONDELL.

CONDELL (quietly, to HEMINGS):

He's trying to *rob* us!

HEMINGS (equally quietly, nodding):

Of course he is, but there's *nothing* we can do about it.

CONDELL:

Why not?

HEMINGS (with a sigh):

Because it's late; because there isn't another town for miles; and because even if we made it there before dark, they would probably just turn us away - like *all* the other towns we've been to today! (*He looks at THE INNKEEPER, who is now sweeping the floor and whistling tunelessly.*) We have to accept.

CONDELL (quietly, while eyeing the INNKEEPER):

Alright. But tonight, when I'm playing the "Evil Angel", I shall put a *curse* on him!

HEMINGS laughs.

6. EXT. INN COURTYARD. NIGHT.

HEMINGS and CONDELL are on "stage" (a raised platform at one end of the courtyard), playing the "Good Angel" and "Bad Angel" respectively: HEMINGS all in white, with a silver "halo" above his head; CONDELL all in red, with horns on his head.

HEMINGS (as the Good Angel):

"O, Faustus, lay that damned book aside,
And gaze not on it, lest it tempt thy soul
And heap God's heavy wrath upon thy head.
Read, read the scriptures. *That is blasphemy.*"

CONDELL (as the Bad Angel):

"Go forward, Faustus, in that famous art
Wherein all nature's treasury is contained.
Be thou on earth as Jove is in the sky,
Lord and commander of these elements."

HEMINGS and CONDELL step aside to cede the stage to THE ACTOR PLAYING "FAUSTUS".

ACTOR PLAYING FAUSTUS:

"How am I glutted with conceit of this!
Shall I make spirits fetch me what I please,
Resolve me of all ambiguities?
Perform what desperate enterprise I will?"

THE AUDIENCE (the patrons of the inn) are standing close to the stage, listening intently - even fearfully - to the play.

Suddenly, ONE AUDIENCE MEMBER - a middle-aged man standing in the middle of the crowd - puts both his hands to his forehead.

AUDIENCE MEMBER (quietly):

God help me, I'm hot!

He is sweating profusely and suddenly begins to shake.

THE ACTOR PLAYING FAUSTUS:

"I'll have them fly to India for gold,
Ransack the ocean for orient pearl,
And search all corners of the new-found world - "

THE SICK MAN collapses, clutching his head, and ALL THE OTHER AUDIENCE MEMBERS scream and start to move away from him.

The action on stage stops and HEMINGS, CONDELL and THE ACTOR PLAYING FAUSTUS come forward to see the "action" in THE AUDIENCE.

SECOND AUDIENCE MEMBER (peering down at the SICK MAN):

'Tis the sweat - the plague!

THE OTHER AUDIENCE MEMBERS move further away from the SICK MAN.

THIRD AUDIENCE MEMBER:

How did it get here?

FOURTH AUDIENCE MEMBER:

They brought it!

He points up at THE ACTORS, who look down at him in disbelief.

FIFTH AUDIENCE MEMBER:

We must drive them out before they infect us all!

SIXTH AUDIENCE MEMBER:

Aye!

SEVENTH AUDIENCE MEMBER:

They're not just dressed as devils - they are devils!

Almost as one, SEVERAL THICK-SET MEN move towards the stage (while remaining well clear of THE SICK MAN on the floor).

HEMINGS (calling out to them):

It wasn't us. We're not sick - we're healthy!

As *THE THICK-SET MEN* start climbing onto the stage, *HEMINGS* looks at *CONDELL* and *THE ACTOR PLAYING FAUSTUS*.

HEMINGS:

RUN!

ALL THREE ACTORS start sprinting towards the back of the stage.

7. INT. "DRESSING ROOM". NIGHT.

HEMINGS, *CONDELL* and *THE ACTOR PLAYING FAUSTUS* burst through the back door of the "dressing room" (a storage room full of barrels), where *THE OTHER THREE PLAYERS* (made up and in full costume as a *SOLDIER*, *KING* and *POPE* respectively) wait to go on.

HEMINGS (to *THE SOLDIER*, *THE KING* AND *THE POPE*):

Run! Before they kill us!

ALL THREE look confused until *THE THICK-SET MEN* also burst in and then they join *HEMINGS*, *CONDELL* and *THE ACTOR PLAYING FAUSTUS* as they sprint towards the front door.

8. EXT. COUNTRY ROAD. NIGHT.

About a mile from the town, *HEMINGS*, *CONDELL* and *THE OTHER PLAYERS* stop sprinting and collapse by the roadside. For a moment, all that can be heard is panting - then silence.

CONDELL (looking back nervously):

Do you think they've given up?

HEMINGS:

I hope so. I couldn't run another yard!

Suddenly he sits up.

HEMINGS:

I've just realised.

CONDELL:

What?

HEMINGS:

We left all the props - *and* the costumes. Well, apart from the ones we're wearing, and they're torn to shreds.

He looks down to see that his own costume is ripped and filthy.

HEMINGS:

And the horses - we left them too!

He shakes his head miserably.

HEMINGS:

Strange will make us pay for *everything* we've lost.

CONDELL (looking alarmed):

Really?

HEMINGS:

Of course! He'll take it out of our wages - such as they are!

HEMINGS looks despondent.

HEMINGS:

Well, that settles it. I've had enough!

CONDELL:

Enough of what?

HEMINGS:

ACTING!

CONDELL looks shocked, but HEMINGS looks determined.

HEMINGS:

It's bad enough when the theatres are *open* - even then, we struggle to *scrape* a living - but when they're *shut*, like now, it's *awful!* We're forced to travel the highways and byways of England looking for somewhere to perform, risking our lives in the process. Well, that's it - no more!

He pauses for breath and - being an actor - for dramatic effect.

HEMINGS:

When we return to London, I'm "retiring" from the stage!

CONDELL looks even more shocked.

CONDELL:

You don't mean that, Mister Hemings: you *can't* mean it!
(Pause.) You *live* to act - we *all* do!

THE OTHER PLAYERS all nod.

HEMINGS:

I know, but I can't make a *living* from it.

He sighs heavily.

HEMINGS:

Grocery may be *infinitely* less interesting than acting, but it's *infinitely* more secure!

CONDELL:

Surely it is better to do something you *love* - whatever the dangers - than something you can't *abide*?

HEMINGS (dismissively):

Ha! It's easy for you to say that.

CONDELL:

Why?

HEMINGS:

Because you're *young*!

He sighs deeply and lies back down on the ground: CONDELL looks at him for a moment, then looks away fearfully.

9. EXT. THE STREET OUTSIDE HEMINGS'S HOUSE. DAY.

HEMINGS and CONDELL - still in their "Good Angel" and "Evil Angel" outfits respectively - are approaching Hemings's house, when suddenly A TALL, RED-HAIRED MAN comes out, waving to them.

HEMINGS:

Burbage! What are you doing here?

He looks BURBAGE over: unlike them, he is exquisitely attired.

HEMINGS:

You obviously haven't had to take to the road.

BURBAGE (scoffing):

I spent enough time "on tour" when I was a young man. I couldn't withstand it now.

HEMINGS (glumly):

Neither can I.

BURBAGE:

Well, you won't have to - not anymore.

HEMINGS looks at him in surprise.

HEMINGS:

What do you mean?

BURBAGE:

I have news.

HEMINGS (sceptically):

What news?

BURBAGE (smiling):

Strange news of Lord Strange!

HEMINGS:

For God's sake, don't mention that name!

BURBAGE:

What? Why not?

HEMINGS:

Because, after losing his props and costumes and *horses*, we'll be in his debt *forever*.

BURBAGE (shaking his head and smiling):

Oh no, you won't.

HEMINGS:

Why not? Has he suddenly acquired a *forgiving* nature?

BURBAGE:

No, he has suddenly *died!*

HEMINGS and CONDELL both look at him in amazement.

HEMINGS:

WHAT?!

BURBAGE:

The plague that closed his *theatre*, and every *other* theatre in London, has now claimed *him* too.

Slowly, HEMINGS shakes his head.

HEMINGS:

Well, that confirms it.

BURBAGE:

Confirms what?

HEMINGS:

My retirement from the stage! Without Lord Strange, there'll be no "Lord Strange's Men".

BURBAGE (smiling):

But you don't understand. A new company has been formed from the remnants of Lord Strange's Men.

HEMINGS:

A new company?

BURBAGE (excitedly):

Yes, "the Lord Chamberlain's Men", under the patronage of Lord Hunsdon, the Lord Chamberlain himself - the man in charge of court *revels!*

HEMINGS:

WHAT?!

BURBAGE:

So, in addition to performing for the masses, the new company will be performing regularly at *court* - even, on occasion, for the *Queen* herself!

HEMINGS and CONDELL both look stunned.

HEMINGS:

I don't believe it.

BURBAGE:

You can believe *me*. I've been put in charge of hiring men for the new company.

HEMINGS:

Really?

BURBAGE (nodding vigorously):

Yes. That's why I'm here. (*He smiles at HEMINGS.*) I can't think of a finer *company* manager than you, John.

HEMINGS looks flattered, but CONDELL looks nervous.

CONDELL:

Might there be room in the new company for *me*, Mister Burbage?

BURBAGE looks at him and smiles.

BURBAGE:

Of course, Henry. There's room enough for the Master -

He indicates HEMINGS, who smiles proudly.

BURBAGE:

And the apprentice.

He looks at CONDELL, who smiles with relief.

HEMINGS (to BURBAGE):

Who else have you hired?

BURBAGE:

I have some actors from the Lord Admiral's Men.

He laughs.

BURBAGE:

We even have a *writer*, so we can perform *new plays*.

HEMINGS:

Who is he?

BURBAGE:

Name of Shakespeare.

HEMINGS looks blank.

HEMINGS:

Shakespeare?

HEMINGS looks at CONDELL questioningly.

CONDELL:

He wrote "*Titus Andronicus*".

HEMINGS:

Any good?

CONDELL (with a shrug):

It was full of blood.

HEMINGS:

Well, you've got to give the audience what they want!

BURBAGE:

Shakespeare's no Marlowe, but he's not bad.

HEMINGS (bowing his head):

There'll *never* be another Marlowe.

BURBAGE (also bowing his head):

No, there won't.

HEMINGS:

Poor Kit, God rest his soul. He may have been a
Satanist -

BURBAGE:

And a *Sodomite* -

HEMINGS:

But he could *write* like an angel.

They all lower their heads slightly, as if in respect.

Then -

BURBAGE:

Anyway, the most important thing is that we'll have
proper patronage and a steady income.

HEMINGS looks at him questioningly.

HEMINGS:

No more road?

BURBAGE (smiling):

No more road.

HEMINGS looks at CONDELL and smiles broadly.

CONDELL smiles back.

Fade to:

BLACK.

A caption appears: "WITH SHAKESPEARE WRITING ITS PLAYS, THE NEW COMPANY - THE LORD CHAMBERLAIN'S MEN - WAS AN IMMEDIATE SUCCESS."

This caption is replaced by another: "UNFORTUNATELY, NOT EVERYONE WAS AN ADMIRER OF THEIR WORK."

A final caption appears: "ACT TWO: 1598".

Fade up to:

10. INT/EXT. THEATRE. DAY.

Centre-stage, an OLD MAN with white hair, white beard and an enormous stomach takes a bow and THE AUDIENCE applaud wildly.

THE OLD MAN looks at the back of the stage, where another ACTOR is standing, and beckons him forward: THE ACTOR shakes his head but THE OLD MAN keeps beckoning him.

Slowly THE ACTOR comes forward and THE AUDIENCE applaud him even more wildly than they had applauded THE OLD MAN. THE ACTOR, who is about 35, bows and for the first time his thinning hair, beard and ear-ring in his left ear are visible.

HEMINGS and CONDELL (now 44 and 22 respectively) stand at the side of a stage, wearing stage "armour" and holding spears.

HEMINGS:

Good old Will. He's done it again.

CONDELL (nodding in agreement):

He always does. Rare is the Shakespeare failure.

Like everyone else, on stage and off, they continue to applaud THE ACTOR taking a bow - WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.

11. INT. BACKSTAGE, THEATRE. DAY.

As ALL THE ACTORS come off-stage, HEMINGS collects their costumes while CONDELL counts the takings from the show.

HEMINGS (to an ACTOR DRESSED AS A LORD):

Costume, please.

ACTOR DRESSED AS A LORD:

Oh, come on, Mister Hemings. Can't I have a drink first?

HEMINGS looks at him angrily.

HEMINGS:

No!

ACTOR DRESSED AS A LORD:

Why not?

HEMINGS:

Because like every other actor I've ever met, you'll have one drink, then another and then, before you know it, you'll be mewling and puking like an *infant*, and my beautiful robes will be ruined. So, costume now - please!

ACTOR DRESSED AS A LORD (glumly):

Very well.

The ACTOR starts undressing and looks across at CONDELL.

ACTOR DRESSED AS A LORD:

How are the takings, Mister Condell?

CONDELL doesn't look up as he replies, but just keeps counting.

CONDELL:

Excellent! Audiences adore Falstaff.

HEMINGS (smiling):

Just as they love his Romeo and Juliet, loathe his Shylock and laugh at his *Bottom*!

THE ACTOR laughs, but CONDELL just keeps counting.

THE OLD MAN comes off stage and removes his wig and false beard, then the cushion from under his tunic, to reveal he is actually BURBAGE, now about 35, and with a muscular frame and red hair.

SHAKESPEARE comes up behind him and slaps him on the back.

SHAKESPEARE:

Richard, you are Falstaff! No-one else can ever play him!

BURBAGE looks perplexed.

BURBAGE:

I'm not sure whether that's an insult or a compliment.

SHAKESPEARE (smiling):

BOTH!

ALL THE PLAYERS, including BURBAGE himself, laugh.

BURBAGE:

Now, where are the refreshments? I need a *drink!*

He goes to a table laden with wine bottles and picks one up.

MAN (VOICE OFF):

Is that wine?

EVERYONE, including BURBAGE, turns round to see who has spoken: standing by the door is an OLD MAN dressed in black, including black skull-cap, who is looking at THE PLAYERS with contempt.

Still clutching the wine bottle, BURBAGE goes towards him.

BURBAGE:

Allen! What are you doing here? You're not allowed backstage.

ALLEN:

It's *my* land that you're standing on, Burbage, and I can go wherever I want on *my* property!

He looks at the bottle in BURBAGE's hand.

ALLEN:

Now, I asked you a question - is that *wine*?

He says the word "wine" as if it were the word "excrement".

ALLEN:

I've told you before - *all* of you - that drinking wine, or any other alcohol, is *forbidden* on these premises.

HEMINGS leans in towards SHAKESPEARE and whispers to him.

HEMINGS:

Damn Puritans! Always spoiling other people's fun!

SHAKESPEARE nods in agreement.

BURBAGE (to ALLEN):

But it's our *first* performance.

ALLEN (smiling):

No, it's your *last* performance. Or at least *one* of them.

ALL THE ACTORS look at him in amazement.

SHAKESPEARE:

What does that mean?

ALLEN (still smiling):

It means that I am terminating your tenancy with *immediate* effect.

Now *ALL THE ACTORS* look at him in disbelief.

BURBAGE:

What? You can't do that!

ALLEN (beaming):

I can, and I am.

SHAKESPEARE:

But why?

ALLEN:

For continually flouting the terms of the lease by *drinking* on the premises - (*He looks at BURBAGE*) - and staging plays that celebrate drunks and sinners, like that *oaf* Falstaff!

Both SHAKESPEARE and BURBAGE look offended.

ALLEN:

That's why I'm giving you one month's notice to quit!

ALL THE ACTORS look stunned.

BURBAGE:

A month? But that's barely enough time to remove the seats and stage.

ALLEN (smiling):

Oh, you don't have to worry about *removing* them - I'll be *keeping* them!

THE ACTORS look horrified.

BURBAGE:

You can't do that! The lease says we have permission "to take down any buildings that we might erect".

ALLEN:

Oh, does it?

BURBAGE (firmly):

Yes, it does.

ALLEN:

Well, we can discuss the matter further in court - *if* you can afford a lawyer!

He laughs and turns towards the door.

ALLEN:

Goodnight - (*He stops and corrects himself.*) I was about to say "Gentlemen", but of course you're *not* "Gentlemen", are you?

He looks at them all disdainfully.

ALLEN:

No "player" could ever be a gentleman!

He goes out, laughing, and BURBAGE goes after him.

BURBAGE:

We ought to run him through!

HEMINGS steps between BURBAGE and the door.

HEMINGS:

No, Richard. That way we'll end up in court contesting a murder charge rather than the terms of a lease.

BURBAGE (angrily):

No court would convict us!

HEMINGS:

Why? Because society has such a high opinion of players?

He looks at him questioningly, then shakes his head.

HEMINGS:

Of course not. They use us for their "entertainment" and then, when they've had it, they get rid of us.

He looks round at ALL THE OTHER ACTORS solemnly.

HEMINGS:

'Twas ever thus - 'twill be ever thus!

ALL THE ACTORS look utterly miserable.

12. INT. TAVERN. DAY.

HEMINGS, CONDELL, BURBAGE and SHAKESPEARE sit by a window in a tavern, slowly sipping ale while outside snow falls.

SHAKESPEARE:

So what do we do?

BURBAGE:

Why, we move, of course! That's what we always do! (He laughs.) That's why we're called travelling players!

SHAKESPEARE:

But where to?

HEMINGS:

I have an idea.

SHAKESPEARE, BURBAGE and CONDELL all look at him expectantly.

SHAKESPEARE:

Yes, John?

HEMINGS:

I have a neighbour who recently inherited a plot of land on Bankside.

SHAKESPEARE:

"Bankside"?

HEMINGS:

Yes - beside the river! I'm sure we could lease it from him. (*Grinning.*) It's perfect! There's lots of space and he'll charge less rent than Allen does. To be honest, I was going to suggest we move there *before* Allen evicted us. (*He looks at them all intently.*) Now we have no choice.

BURBAGE:

But the *Rose* is on Bankside. We'd be cutting our *throats* if we moved next door!

HEMINGS:

Not necessarily. Bankside is big enough for *two* theatres, especially if one of them is showing *Shakespeare's* plays!

SHAKESPEARE looks both embarrassed and flattered.

HEMINGS:

Besides, Bankside is where the audience is.

CONDELL:

Exactly! It's where all the bear-pits and brothels are!

They all laugh.

BURBAGE (to HEMINGS):

Would your neighbour really lease the land to us?

HEMINGS:

I'm sure he would. He has no use for it himself.

BURBAGE:

And what kind of lease are we talking about?

SHAKESPEARE:

Yes. How long?

HEMINGS (smiling):

Oh, about thirty years.

SHAKESPEARE:

"Thirty years"?

HEMINGS (nodding):

At least! We could stake our whole *future* there!

SHAKESPEARE looks thrilled but BURBAGE looks troubled.

BURBAGE:

There's a problem.

HEMINGS:

What's that?

BURBAGE:

We have no *stage*, or *seats*! Allen won't let us take them.

For a moment, there is silence around the table.

HEMINGS looks out at the falling snow, before suddenly looking back round at them all and smiling.

HEMINGS (excitedly):

I have *another* idea!

13. EXT. STREET OUTSIDE THE THEATRE. DAY.

It is obviously a few days later: the snow has settled and SHAKESPEARE and BURBAGE are standing in several inches of it.

BURBAGE:

Where are they? *I'm freezing!*

SHAKESPEARE:

Don't worry about John and Henry - they're the most trustworthy men I know. They'll be here shortly.

HEMINGS (VOICE OFF, calling out):

HELLO!

SHAKESPEARE and BURBAGE both turn and look down the street and see HEMINGS and CONDELL, in fur coats and hats, in the front of a horse-drawn cart that is being driven by a THIN, GREY-HAIRED MAN, and the back of the cart is full of WORKMEN. The cart stops beside the theatre and HEMINGS leaps down.

HEMINGS (to SHAKESPEARE and BURBAGE):

This is the man I told you about -

He indicates the THIN MAN, who climbs down from the cart.

HEMINGS (with a flourish):

Mr Peter Street, the finest theatrical carpenter in London - the man who built *The Rose!*

SHAKESPEARE looks impressed, but BURBAGE looks sceptical.

BURBAGE:

It's one thing to *build* a theatre: another to take it down again!

STREET (with a shrug):

It's not so different: it's the same process, just in reverse.

BURBAGE considers this, then nods to concede the point.

SHAKESPEARE (to HEMINGS):

I don't doubt that he can take the theatre apart, but can he do it *quickly*? We only have a few days while Allen is away for Christmas, visiting his relatives.

BURBAGE:

A Puritan Christmas? That'll be *merry*!

They all laugh, even STREET.

STREET:

We can do it - and *quickly*!

He turns to address his WORKMEN.

STREET:

Come on, boys - let's take her apart!

THE WORKMEN climb down, carrying hammers, chisels and saws, and follow STREET towards the theatre - all except TWO BIG MEN.

SHAKESPEARE notices them and nudges HEMINGS.

SHAKESPEARE:

What are *they* doing?

HEMINGS:

Oh, they have *different* tools...

THE TWO BIG MEN begin unloading clubs and axes from the cart.

HEMINGS:

...In case Allen comes back early!

HEMINGS laughs and goes towards the theatre: *SHAKESPEARE* watches *THE TWO MEN* start to arm themselves, then quickly follows *HIM*.

14. INT/EXT. THEATRE. NIGHT.

SHAKESPEARE and *CONDELL* watch as *STREET* and some of his *WORKMEN* start taking up planks from the stage itself.

SHAKESPEARE (admiringly):

They're working fast.

CONDELL:

They ought to be. We're paying *double* their usual rate!

SHAKESPEARE:

"Double"?

CONDELL (with a shrug):

Well, it is Christmas.

SHAKESPEARE groans.

15. EXT. THE STREET OUTSIDE THE THEATRE. NIGHT.

SHAKESPEARE looks in the back of the cart and sees that it is full of planks and benches: HEMINGS, who is sitting in the front of the cart and holding the reins, calls down to him.

HEMINGS:

The first load's ready, Will. We should get going.

SHAKESPEARE (nodding):

Right.

SHAKESPEARE climbs in and sees CONDELL below, waving up at him.

CONDELL:

Godspeed!

The horse starts walking slowly down the street - very slowly.

SHAKESPEARE (to HEMINGS):

We're hardly making any speed, let alone "Godspeed"!

HEMINGS stares at SHAKESPEARE.

HEMINGS:

Stop complaining and enjoy the ride.

SHAKESPEARE looks even more miserable.

16. EXT. RIVERBANK. NIGHT.

SHAKESPEARE tries to huddle up to HEMINGS for warmth, but suddenly HEMINGS sits up straight and pulls hard on the reins.

HEMINGS:

WHOAH!

SHAKESPEARE also sits up with a start as the horse stops.

HEMINGS:

There it is.

SHAKESPEARE:

My God! You were right.

HEMINGS:

Our very own *bridge* across the Thames, direct to Bankside!

Their POINT OF VIEW: Directly ahead is the river Thames - and it is frozen over.

There are A LOT OF PEOPLE on the ice: SOME walking; OTHERS sliding (on sledges or their bottoms); and SOME ice-skating.

SHAKESPEARE:

Are you sure it can take our weight?

HEMINGS:

Of course it can. There are *hundreds* of people on it already!

SHAKESPEARE:

"People", yes, but not horses - and certainly not horses pulling carts laden with *timber!*

He looks along the river and in the distance, he sees London Bridge, the only bridge across the river, which is lined with houses and shops, and full of people on foot and horseback.

SHAKESPEARE:

Why don't we just use the real bridge?

HEMINGS (sighing):

I've already told you: it's too far away and too crowded, even at night, with all the shops and houses on it, let alone the *traffic*. It would take an age just to get a *single* cartload across. We'd never get everything out of the theatre and across the river before Allen comes back from his holiday! (*He looks back at the ice.*) This is the only way.

SHAKESPEARE also looks back - nervously - at the ice.

SHAKESPEARE:

Alright. *Proceed!*

HEMINGS snaps the reins and slowly the horse moves forwards, before stopping right at the edge of the frozen river.

HEMINGS (calling out):

GO ON!

The horse puts one foot forward into the air.

17. EXT. THE FROZEN RIVER THAMES. NIGHT.

The horse carefully puts one foot down on the ice. Then it walks forward and puts down another foot, then another, until finally all four of its feet are on the ice.

It walks forward, pulling the cart onto the ice: as it does so, SHAKESPEARE leans out of the cart and looks down at the ice.

SHAKESPEARE:

It's holding! It's taking our weight!

HEMINGS:

What did I tell you? *(Beaming.)* Like the Good Lord himself, we're walking on water!

SHAKESPEARE laughs and looks around in amazement, seeing CHILDREN playing 'tag', a MAN walking his dog and a CROWD gathered around food stalls, from some of which steam rises.

SHAKESPEARE:

Stay away from the stalls selling hot food!

HEMINGS *(nodding)*:

Don't worry - I will!

HEMINGS takes the reins in one hand and points with the other.

HEMINGS:

There's the Rose!

About 500 yards away on the other bank is The Rose Theatre, its thatched roof towering above the nearby houses and taverns.

HEMINGS *(pointing again)*:

And there's our new home!

About 500 yards along from The Rose is the only empty plot of land on the riverbank, which is otherwise teeming with PEOPLE.

SHAKESPEARE looks at it, then looks back at HEMINGS and smiles.

18. EXT. THE SITE OF THE NEW THEATRE. DAY.

HEMINGS and SHAKESPEARE sit on a pile of timber covered with canvas to stop it getting wet: they are surrounded by about 20 similar piles of timber, each one similarly covered with canvas.

They look across the ice and see CONDELL and BURBAGE in the cart: CONDELL driving and BURBAGE shivering beside him.

CONDELL drives up onto the bank, then leaps down to tie up the horse to the bench that HEMINGS and SHAKESPEARE are sitting on.

CONDELL (indicating the back of the cart):

That's almost everything.

BURBAGE slowly climbs down and smiles up at them.

BURBAGE:

Only the walls are left - and they come down today!

THE OTHERS all laugh as HEMINGS looks around the site.

HEMINGS:

It's not much now, but one day it will be the *finest* theatre in London.

BURBAGE (smiling):

Nay, the world!

They all laugh.

HEMINGS:

Most importantly, it will be *our* theatre.

BURBAGE:

Exactly. We won't have to answer to anyone else.

CONDELL:

Except the censor!

They all smile, ruefully.

SHAKESPEARE:

How long will it take to build?

HEMINGS:

Oh, about six months.

SHAKESPEARE (shocked):

Six months?

HEMINGS:

At most!

SHAKESPEARE:

Why so long? It only took a few *days* to take it down.

HEMINGS (smiling):

Because it will be bigger, better and *grander* than any theatre ever built - as befits *Shakespeare's* theatre!

SHAKESPEARE looks proud, then worried.

SHAKESPEARE:

But what will we do for six months? We'll starve!

HEMINGS:

It's alright, Will. We've negotiated a temporary lease with The Curtain theatre while construction's going on.

CONDELL:

Everything is arranged. All you have to do is write!

HEMINGS:

Yes. More masterpieces, please!

They all laugh, even SHAKESPEARE.

SHAKESPEARE:

I have only one remaining wish.

HEMINGS:

Oh, yes? And what's that?

SHAKESPEARE:

I wish I could see old Allen's face when he returns from his Christmas holiday.

BURBAGE (smiling):

That would be worth seeing!

They all roar with laughter.

19. EXT. THE STREET OUTSIDE THE THEATRE. DAY.

A smiling ALLEN walks towards the theatre, or so he thinks: suddenly he stops smiling and stops walking.

His POINT OF VIEW: Where, a few days before, there had been a theatre, there are now only a few nails lying on the ground in the snow. ALLEN looks at them in disbelief: he even screws up his eyes and opens them again, in a double-take. Then he looks behind him, as if he has somehow walked past the theatre.

Finally he screams.

ALLEN:

CONSTABLE!!!!

Fade to:

BLACK.

A caption appears: "THE NEW THEATRE WAS SOON CALLED "THE GLOBE", BECAUSE SHAKESPEARE'S WRITING WAS SAID TO CONTAIN "THE WHOLE WORLD"."

This is replaced by another caption: "THE COMPANY THRIVED THERE, UNTIL ONE DAY SHAKESPEARE RECEIVED A VISIT FROM A FORMER PATRON."

A final caption appears: "ACT THREE: 1601".

Fade up to:

20. INT. BACKSTAGE OFFICE, THE GLOBE THEATRE. DAY.

HEMINGS, CONDELL and BURBAGE are sitting in the backstage office of The Globe, which is a tiny room stuffed with props and costumes, and through the open door The Globe's thatched roof can just be seen.

HEMINGS is mending a hole in a costume; CONDELL is counting money and making a careful note of it in a register; and BURBAGE is trying to learn his lines.

BURBAGE (to himself, but audibly):

"Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans - "

Obviously not remembering the next word, he looks up in desperation: HEMINGS replies without even looking up.

HEMINGS:

"Everything!"

BURBAGE (remembering):

"Everything"! That's it! Damn!

SHAKESPEARE enters, looking ashen-faced, and approaches them: HEMINGS and BURBAGE look up while CONDELL continues his count.

HEMINGS:

What is't, Will?

SHAKESPEARE (solemnly):

I have a problem.

BURBAGE:

What "problem"?

SHAKESPEARE:

I have received a commission for a special performance.

CONDELL finally stops counting and looks up.

CONDELL (smiling):

"A commission"? That's not a "problem" - it's an opportunity!

Slowly, SHAKESPEARE shakes his head.

SHAKESPEARE:

You don't understand. (Pause.) It's from the Earl of Southampton.

HEMINGS, CONDELL and BURBAGE all stare at SHAKESPEARE in horror.

HEMINGS:

Your so-called "patron"?

SHAKESPEARE (nodding his head):

Exactly!

HEMINGS looks at SHAKESPEARE nervously.

HEMINGS (nervously):

A performance of which play?

SHAKESPEARE sighs deeply.

SHAKESPEARE:

Richard the Second - complete with dethroning scene.

Now HEMINGS, CONDELL and BURBAGE look at him in horror.

HEMINGS:

We can't perform *Richard the Second* - at least not with the dethroning scene.

CONDELL:

The Queen and her advisers, especially Lord Cecil, do not want any depiction of a sovereign *surrendering* their throne, not with all the uncertainty surrounding the succession.

HEMINGS:

If the Queen or any member of the Privy Council - especially *Lord Cecil!* - finds out, we will be *killed!*

BURBAGE:

Or worse - sent to the *Tower!*

HEMINGS and CONDELL smile, but BURBAGE stares at SHAKESPEARE.

BURBAGE:

Why does Southampton even *want* a performance of "*Richard the Second*", "complete with dethroning scene"?

SHAKESPEARE hesitates for a moment before answering.

SHAKESPEARE:

In honour of the Earl of Essex.

BURBAGE, HEMINGS and CONDELL all look amazed.

BURBAGE:

"The Earl of Essex"? But he's under house arrest for treason.

SHAKESPEARE (nodding):

I know.

SHAKESPEARE looks away, as if he is embarrassed - or guilty.

SHAKESPEARE:

Southampton wants to *stir* Essex's followers, including his former *soldiers*, to petition the Queen.

CONDELL (looking alarmed):

To do what?

SHAKESPEARE:

To restore Essex's title of vice-regent and reinstate him as the heir to the throne.

CONDELL looks as if he might collapse in shock.

CONDELL:

The Queen won't give in to any "petition"!

SHAKESPEARE:

I know. I told Southampton that. But he didn't care.

He looks at them all in desperation.

SHAKESPEARE:

He *demands* that I do as he asks. Otherwise, he will demand *immediate* repayment of all the money he supposedly "gave" me over the years, including the money for the "Sonnets" that I wrote in his honour and the money he gave me to invest in the Globe.

He bows his head.

SHAKESPEARE:

I will be *ruined*. I will lose my share in The Globe and everything I have ever worked for.

HEMINGS, CONDELL and BURBAGE look appalled.

HEMINGS:

Perhaps we - the rest of the company -

He looks at BURBAGE and CONDELL.

HEMINGS:

- could find the money to repay him.

BURBAGE (nodding):

Yes. We could *all* help you to repay him.

CONDELL nods in agreement but SHAKESPEARE shakes his head.

SHAKESPEARE:

No. It is typically kind of you all to offer, but no player - or even an entire *company* of players - could find such a large sum at such short notice.

HEMINGS:

But *this* -

He stares at SHAKESPEARE.

HEMINGS:

This is pulling the dragon's tail! You risk everything!

SHAKESPEARE:

I know, but I have no choice.

He sighs, heavily.

SHAKESPEARE:

I owe him and I have to *repay* him. And *this* is the only way I can do it.

HEMINGS:

Then I'll do it too.

SHAKESPEARE looks at HEMINGS in disbelief.

SHAKESPEARE (incredulously):

What? *Why?*

HEMINGS:

For one thing, you can't play all the parts *yourself!*

SHAKESPEARE laughs.

HEMINGS:

For another, I owe you.

SHAKESPEARE looks at him questioningly.

SHAKESPEARE:

You don't owe me anything, John.

HEMINGS (emphatically):

Yes I do! Without *you*, I would still be a *part-time* actor and grocer, reduced to going on tour, rather than a *part-owner* of the greatest theatre company in England - (*then, imitating Burbage's deep, gruff voice*) nay, the world!

SHAKESPEARE laughs and looks surprised - but pleased.

HEMINGS:

I owe you *everything*, Will - my career, my fortune, *everything*!

HEMINGS looks at *BURBAGE* and *CONDELL*.

HEMINGS:

We *all* do.

BURBAGE (nodding):

That's right, Will. Without you, I would never have been Richard the Third, or Henry the Fifth, or *Falstaff*!

CONDELL (also nodding):

And *I* would still be a humble fishmonger!

SHAKESPEARE laughs.

HEMINGS:

We *all* owe you for making us what we are. *That's* why we'll help you to discharge your debt to Southampton, once and for all.

SHAKESPEARE looks at them all warmly and smiles.

SHAKESPEARE:

Thank you - *all* of you.

HEMINGS:

But there are a couple of conditions.

SHAKESPEARE (nodding):

Of course.

HEMINGS:

First, the production will only be for Essex's supporters - his "veterans" - and *not* the general public.

SHAKESPEARE (nodding):

Good. That will make it easier to keep it quiet.

HEMINGS:

And if any of the Queen's men appear, we stop performing *immediately*, or at least *drop* the dethroning scene.

SHAKESPEARE (nodding):

Agreed.

SHAKESPEARE looks at them questioningly, even sceptically.

SHAKESPEARE:

Now we just have to persuade the *men*.

HEMINGS (brusquely):

"The men"? (Pause.) Hang the men!

SHAKESPEARE looks at him in surprise.

SHAKESPEARE:

"Hang them"?

HEMINGS (nodding):

Aye. They'll do what we say or they can find another company.

He smiles at SHAKESPEARE.

HEMINGS:

There are plenty of other companies in London, but there's only one Shakespeare - and they know it!

SHAKESPEARE looks simultaneously flattered and nervous.

21. INT. THE WINGS OF THE GLOBE THEATRE. DAY.

SHAKESPEARE and HEMINGS, in make-up and costume as "John of Gaunt" and "The Duke of York", peer out from the wings.

Their POINT OF VIEW: The Globe (or at least the Groundlings' area in front of the stage) is filling up with an AUDIENCE that is exclusively male and mostly made up of pock-marked, battle-scarred WAR VETERANS.

HEMINGS:

My God! There's a whole army out there!

SHAKESPEARE:

Literally!

HEMINGS looks shocked, but SHAKESPEARE does not notice as he watches a handsome and exquisitely dressed YOUNG MAN take his seat above the Groundlings' area: he is flanked by TWO GUARDS and as he sits down he acknowledges SOME AUDIENCE MEMBERS standing directly below him.

SHAKESPEARE:

Southampton has obviously recognised some old friends.

HEMINGS (scornfully):

They're not "friends": they're just men who fought under him and Essex in Ireland. They serve him - just as we do!

SHAKESPEARE looks shocked, but HEMINGS looks away.

Then a trumpet sounds to announce the start of the play.

HEMINGS:

We are summoned.

SHAKESPEARE nods, then he, HEMINGS and THE OTHER ACTORS in the first scene, including BURBAGE, go on to huge applause.

22. INT/EXT. STAGE, THE GLOBE THEATRE. DAY.

SHAKESPEARE, as "John of Gaunt", sits in a chair, looking sickly and HEMINGS, as "The Duke of York", listens to him carefully.

SHAKESPEARE (as John of Gaunt):

"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*."

SHAKESPEARE pauses and sees that *THE MEMBERS OF THE AUDIENCE* are all staring up at him intently, including *A MAN WITH ONE EYE*.

He is almost thrown by this sight, but manages to continue.

SHAKESPEARE (as John of Gaunt):

"This nurse, this teeming womb of royal kings..."

23. INT. THE WINGS OF THE GLOBE THEATRE. DAY.

SHAKESPEARE, HEMINGS and CONDELL watch as *BURBAGE* (playing King Richard) and *AUGUSTINE PHILIPS* (fresh-faced, about 30 and playing the rebel, Bolingbroke) confront each other on stage.

SHAKESPEARE (whispering):

This is it - the dethroning scene.

HEMINGS (also whispering):

Pray God it's not the last scene we play!

SHAKESPEARE looks at *HEMINGS* in horror but *HEMINGS* looks out at the stage: *SHAKESPEARE* also looks back at the stage and as he does so, he sees *SOUTHAMPTON* standing up in his seat and willing the actors on - indeed, he mouths the lines as they speak them.

Seeing this, SHAKESPEARE looks astonished.

24. INT/EXT. THE STAGE, GLOBE THEATRE. DAY.

BURBAGE removes the crown from his head.

BURBAGE (as King Richard):

"I give this heavy weight from off my head."

25. INT. THE WINGS, GLOBE THEATRE. DAY.

HEMINGS whispers in SHAKESPEARE's ear.

HEMINGS:

The Queen won't give up *her* throne, if that's what they're hoping!

Once again, SHAKESPEARE looks at him in shock.

26. INT/EXT. THE STAGE, THE GLOBE THEATRE. DAY.

BURBAGE (as Richard) lies in a coffin in the centre of the stage, while PHILIPS (as Bolingbroke) weeps over him.

PHILIPS (as Bolingbroke):

"I'll make a voyage to the Holy Land

To wash this blood off from my guilty hand.

March sadly after."

PHILIPS (as Bolingbroke) leads off his "LORDS", who carry the coffin containing BURBAGE (as Richard).

The stage empties and for a moment the theatre is totally silent: then there is applause, followed by a series of loud cries.

AUDIENCE MEMBERS (together):

God save our Gracious General!

OTHER AUDIENCE MEMBERS (together, even louder):

God save the Earl of Essex!

Finally, a cry is taken up by THE WHOLE AUDIENCE.

AUDIENCE (AS ONE):

GOD SAVE THE KING!

27. INT. THE WINGS OF THE GLOBE THEATRE. DAY.

SHAKESPEARE and ALL THE OTHER ACTORS watch in disbelief from the wings as THE AUDIENCE continue to applaud, cheer and chant.

SHAKESPEARE (to HEMINGS):

Should we take a bow?

HEMINGS (shaking his head):

No. It's not us they're applauding. It's Essex - and he's not here to take a bow.

Finally, the chants and the cheers begin to die down. SHAKESPEARE and THE OTHER ACTORS again peer out from the wings and see SOUTHAMPTON'S GUARDS standing beside the exit and putting coins in the hands of the VETERANS as they leave.

HEMINGS:

It's the first time I've seen an audience being *paid*, rather than *paying*, to attend a play.

CONDELL (nodding):

It explains their enthusiasm.

Suddenly SOUTHAMPTON appears, accompanied by SEVERAL OTHER WELL-DRESSED NOBLES, each one grinning as broadly as he is. SOUTHAMPTON heads straight for SHAKESPEARE and shakes his hand.

SOUTHAMPTON:

Thank you, Will. Thank you.

Then he turns to address ALL THE OTHER ACTORS.

SOUTHAMPTON:

Thank you all! You were wonderful - just wonderful!

SOME OF THE YOUNGER ACTORS, like PHILIPS, look flattered but ALL THE OLDER ONES, like BURBAGE and HEMINGS, do not.

SOUTHAMPTON turns back to SHAKESPEARE and takes out a letter from his pocket that is wrapped in a bright red ribbon.

SOUTHAMPTON:

And by way of thanks, Will, here is that letter you sought, signed and notarised by a lawyer, discharging you of all debts to me.

SHAKESPEARE takes the letter and stares at it for a moment.

SHAKESPEARE:

Thank you, my Lord.

SOUTHAMPTON:

And here -

A NOBLE comes forward with a bag bulging with coins.

SOUTHAMPTON:

- Is the final payment for the rest of you. I think that you will find it *exceeding* generous! But you have earned every penny.

CONDELL takes the bag, but almost drops it as it is so heavy.

SOUTHAMPTON:

Thank you once again, from myself and my Master. It was *marvellous* - all that we had hoped for!

He smiles at THE OTHER NOBLES, before addressing THE ACTORS.

SOUTHAMPTON:

After such an *exhilarating* performance, we are *emboldened!*

He and THE OTHER NOBLES depart as quickly as they had come: as they leave, HEMINGS leans in towards SHAKESPEARE and whispers.

HEMINGS:

"Emboldened" to do *what?*

SHAKESPEARE looks at him nervously.

28. INT. STUDY. DAY (EARLY MORNING).

A TALL, RED-HAIRED MAN dressed all in white is standing by the window, looking out at the River Thames: he turns to reveal he is wearing a scabbard with a sword in it. He stares at THE MEN who have assembled: SOUTHAMPTON; THE OTHER NOBLES who had been with SOUTHAMPTON at The Globe; and SEVERAL BATTLE-SCARRED VETERANS who had also been at The Globe.

RED-HAIRED MAN (to SOUTHAMPTON):

How was the performance?

SOUTHAMPTON (smiling):

Magnificent, my lord! It rallied the troops wonderfully!

He beams at the RED-HAIRED MAN - THE EARL OF ESSEX.

SOUTHAMPTON:

Having seen a monarch surrender power *on stage*, they are ready to see one surrender power *for real!*

THE OTHERS all laugh, even ESSEX.

ESSEX:

They have seen that there is a precedent for what we do.

SOUTHAMPTON (nodding):

Indeed, my Lord.

ESSEX:

Like Bolingbroke, *our* cause is *just*. That is why we will triumph.

SOUTHAMPTON:

Indubitably!

ESSEX:

It would be treason *not* to act. After all, if *I* do not claim the throne, who will? Scotland? *France?!?*

SOUTHAMPTON:

Even Spain! Where the Armada failed, so-called "diplomacy" may prevail.

ESSEX (angrily):

That cannot happen.

SOUTHAMPTON:

No. It cannot.

Suddenly ESSEX looks at them all questioningly.

ESSEX:

Once we leave this room, there is no going back. The Queen will have me hung, drawn and quartered just for evading "house arrest", let alone "plotting" against her, as her so-called "advisers", especially Cecil, will no doubt describe it. And the same is true for any man who helps me. (Pause.) If any of you want to leave - to abandon me - go now. Otherwise, you must stay the course.

No-one moves, so ESSEX smiles.

ESSEX:

Good. Then let us claim what is ours!

He goes out and is followed by THE OTHERS: as they leave, they step over THE SOLDIERS who had obviously been keeping ESSEX under "house arrest" but who are now tied up on the floor.

29. EXT. ESSEX'S COURTYARD. DAY (EARLY MORNING).

ESSEX stands on the steps of his house and addresses the 300 or so VETERANS of the Irish war who have assembled in the courtyard.

ESSEX:

Men, thank you for your support - your loyalty!

THE VETERANS cheer.

ESSEX:

We will march to Whitehall and the whole city will rise as one to support us.

Once again, THE VETERANS cheer.

ESSEX:

Then we shall have the glory - and the riches - that the Queen and Lord Cecil denied us!

This elicits the loudest cheer of all and ESSEX strides down the steps towards THE VETERANS, who continue to applaud him.

30. EXT. LUDGATE (LONDON STREET). DAY (EARLY MORNING).

ESSEX, SOUTHAMPTON and THE OTHER NOBLES, who are all on horseback, lead ESSEX'S VETERANS, who are all on foot.

There is no-one else about except a few EARLY RISERS (including a BAKER carrying freshly baked bread) who stop and stare.

SOUTHAMPTON (calling out to them, triumphantly):

Fear not, good fellows. You will soon be liberated!

THE BAKER and THE OTHER EARLY RISERS look shocked - and scared.

31. EXT. LUDGATE. DAY.

A NOBLEMAN is riding down Ludgate, but suddenly stops: he can just see, at the other end of the street, ESSEX'S MEN (on horseback and on foot) coming towards him.

For a moment he looks amazed, but then he wheels his horse round and quickly rides back in the direction he had come from.

He rides up to a guard-post, where about FIFTY SOLDIERS are stretching and yawning in the early morning sun.

NOBLEMAN (calling out):

Quick! We must barricade the street.

THE SOLDIERS all look up at him in surprise.

FIRST SOLDIER:

What?

SECOND SOLDIER:

Why, my Lord?

NOBLEMAN:

Because a group of armed men - a *large* group - is coming this way and they look as if they mean to gain entry to the Palace. (Pause.) We *must* not let them pass.

Finally THE SOLDIERS understand and rush inside the guard-post.

NOBLEMAN:

And for God's sake, send to the Palace for reinforcements!

A THIRD SOLDIER immediately runs off towards the Palace, which is just visible in the distance.

THE OTHER SOLDIERS start bringing chairs and tables from the guard post and the NOBLEMAN nervously looks back down the street.

32. EXT. LUDGATE. DAY.

ESSEX, SOUTHAMPTON and the OTHER NOBLES on horseback are all smiling broadly as they slowly trot down the street. Suddenly they stop smiling and stop riding, forcing THE MEN on foot behind them to stop walking.

Their POINT OF VIEW: Directly ahead of them, a barricade of chairs and tables has been erected to block off the street and behind it are the FIFTY SOLDIERS, spears raised, and the NOBLEMAN on his horse.

NOBLEMAN (calling out):

Halt! I am the Sheriff of London. Who goes there?

Nonchalantly, ESSEX rides forward.

ESSEX:

'Tis I, Sheriff - the Earl of Essex.

THE NOBLEMAN - THE SHERIFF - looks amazed.

SHERIFF:

My Lord Essex?

He looks at the MEN massed behind ESSEX.

SHERIFF:

What do you mean by this show of force?

ESSEX (smiling):

I have come to reclaim my title of vice-regent.

He extends a hand towards the SHERIFF.

ESSEX:

Join us.

THE SHERIFF looks even more astonished, then shakes his head.

SHERIFF:

I must order you to lay down your arms, my Lord - *at once!*

ESSEX laughs.

ESSEX:

I will surrender neither my *rights* nor my *claim*.

SHERIFF (angrily):

Then, Sir, you are a *traitor!*

ESSEX looks furious.

ESSEX:

Those are the words of *Cecil* and his *parasites!*

He pulls out his sword, looks round and gives the order.

ESSEX:

CHARGE!

ESSEX leads his MEN as they rush towards the barricade.

As they approach it, THE SHERIFF looks round at his SOLDIERS.

SHERIFF:

We must hold them at bay.

THE SOLDIERS nod nervously: a few gulp or swallow.

Then ESSEX and THE OTHER NOBLES on horseback smash into the barricade, their horses literally rearing up over it.

The SHERIFF rides forward, his sword drawn to confront ESSEX.

ESSEX and THE SHERIFF's swords crash together as ESSEX'S MEN try to scramble over the barricade: some are about to succeed when there is suddenly a huge roar from behind the barricade.

Everyone, including ESSEX and THE SHERIFF, stops fighting and turns round to see where the noise is coming from.

Their POINT OF VIEW: Hurtling towards the barricade are at least a HUNDRED MEN on horseback and SEVERAL HUNDRED MEN on foot.

SHERIFF (smiling broadly):

Reinforcements! (Pause.) Thank God - and Lord Cecil!

ESSEX'S MEN, or at least those on foot, see the HORSEMEN approaching and immediately turn round and start running away (SEVERAL OF THEM hobbling on crutches, as they are missing legs).

ESSEX watches them go, then looks at SOUTHAMPTON in disbelief.

ESSEX:

Where are they going?

THE SHERIFF calls out to ESSEX from behind the barricade.

SHERIFF:

Your "veterans", my Lord, are obviously tired of fighting!

For a moment, ESSEX looks back at THE SHERIFF in horror but then he wheels his horse round and rides off after his MEN, followed by SOUTHAMPTON and THE OTHER NOBLES on horseback.

THE SHERIFF and HIS TROOPS cheer as the "REINFORCEMENTS" on horseback leap over the barricade to follow ESSEX and his MEN.

33. INT. ESSEX'S STUDY. DAY.

ESSEX, SOUTHAMPTON and THE NOBLES are holed up in Essex's study: they have erected their own "barricade", by blocking the door with furniture, but it is about to be broken down. As they watch, the door begins to splinter and split apart.

ESSEX:

There is nothing left but the Roman way.

THE OTHER NOBLES nod grimly, but SOUTHAMPTON looks terrified.

SOUTHAMPTON:

Kill ourselves? But we will go to hell!

ESSEX:

'Tis better than the Tower!

SOUTHAMPTON looks appalled.

The door is finally broken down and a CAPTAIN enters the room.

CAPTAIN (calling out to his SOLDIERS behind):

Disarm them! The Queen will want them alive!

SEVERAL SOLDIERS enter the room and ONE OF THE NOBLES immediately holds his sword in both hands and stabs himself in the stomach. THE OTHER NOBLES hesitate as they watch him die and SEVERAL SOLDIERS wrestle their swords away and force them to the floor.

ESSEX and SOUTHAMPTON withdraw towards the window as SEVERAL OTHER SOLDIERS advance towards them with their swords drawn. As they reach the window, ESSEX points his sword at SOUTHAMPTON.

ESSEX:

We must do it, Henry, before it's too late.

SOUTHAMPTON shakes his head.

SOUTHAMPTON:

No, I cannot. I'll throw myself on the mercy of the Queen!

ESSEX stares at him in disbelief.

ESSEX:

TURNCOAT!

He thrusts his sword at SOUTHAMPTON, who narrowly evades it. He is about to try again when THREE SOLDIERS grab him from behind, wrestle his sword away and force him to the ground. As ESSEX continues to struggle, even as he lies on the ground, SOUTHAMPTON lowers his sword, kneels down and begins to weep.

34. INT. BACKSTAGE OFFICE, THE GLOBE THEATRE. NIGHT.

The office is illuminated by candle-light as SHAKESPEARE writes, HEMINGS mends a costume and CONDELL counts money.

BURBAGE enters, filling the doorway with his large frame.

BURBAGE:

Have you heard?

They all stop what they are doing and look up at him.

SHAKESPEARE:

Heard what?

BURBAGE:

Essex and Southampton have led a rebellion against the Queen.

SHAKESPEARE:

WHAT?!

HEMINGS:

Oh, my God!

BURBAGE:

The rebellion failed and both men, along with what remains of their "followers", are in the Tower.

CONDELL (softly):

And we shall soon join them.

BURBAGE, HEMINGS and SHAKESPEARE all look at CONDELL in horror.

35. INT/EXT. THE STAGE, GLOBE THEATRE. DAY.

An exhausted-looking SHAKESPEARE, BURBAGE, HEMINGS AND CONDELL (they have obviously not slept) are standing on the stage. THE OTHER ACTORS from "Richard the Second", including AUGUSTINE PHILIPS, are sitting around them looking petrified.

SHAKESPEARE:

So what do we say?

PHILIPS (blankly):

To whom?

SHAKESPEARE (incredulous):

The Queen's men, of course!

He looks off-stage, as if he were looking out into the city.

SHAKESPEARE:

They will be here soon enough. By now, they'll have rounded up all of Essex's "sympathisers" and they will surely come for us next, doubtless having been informed of our "performance" for the rebels. *When they do, what do we say?*

HEMINGS laughs grimly and SHAKESPEARE stares at him in wonder.

SHAKESPEARE:

Pray tell, John, what *amuses* you?

HEMINGS:

You, Will.

SHAKESPEARE:

Me?

HEMINGS:

Yes, *you*, Will - the great "Shakespeare"! For the first time that I can remember, you are lost for words - lost for *lines*!

SHAKESPEARE nods, solemnly.

SHAKESPEARE:

Aye. 'Tis the first time.

HEMINGS:

I say we tell the truth.

SHAKESPEARE:

"The truth"?

HEMINGS:

Aye, that we - the *company* - (*He looks pointedly at SHAKESPEARE as he says this*) owed Southampton a debt and only sought to discharge it.

CONDELL:

And is that debt above the debt of *loyalty* we owe the Queen?

CONDELL looks at HEMINGS and slowly shakes his head.

CONDELL:

I think not.

For a moment, there is silence.

CONDELL:

I say we stick to the money.

SHAKESPEARE:

"The money"?

CONDELL:

Aye. We say that we received a special commission, far in excess of what we would normally earn for a single performance, especially of an old play. (*He smiles, mischievously.*) The authorities all think that players are little better than *whores!* Well, let us *act* like *whores* and say that we did it for the money - and no other reason.

HEMINGS looks at CONDELL admiringly.

HEMINGS:

Good idea, Henry. For once, let's *profit* from their *prejudices!*

CONDELL looks flattered.

ACTOR (VOICE OFF):

Why *not* tell the truth, Will?

EVERYONE looks around and down at an actor called BRYANT (aged 25), who is sitting but looking up at SHAKESPEARE accusingly.

SHAKESPEARE:

What "truth"?

BRYANT (angrily):

That you *loved* Southampton!

SHAKESPEARE (incredulously):

WHAT?!

BRYANT:

I have read the "Sonnets" you wrote in his honour. I know not if it was as a son or as a *lover* -

SHAKESPEARE and THE OTHERS look even more amazed.

BRYANT:

- But you loved him and that is why you have led us to our death!

SHAKESPEARE shakes his head defiantly.

SHAKESPEARE:

I do not "love" Southampton. If I ever *did* "love" him, I do not love him now. Now I *hate* him, for *deceiving* me!

BRYANT (sceptically):

You must have known what he was planning.

SHAKESPEARE (indignantly):

I did not! I knew that he was loyal to Essex - everyone knew that - but I did *not* know that he was planning to start a *rebellion* the day after we performed for him! *Had* I known that, I would *never* have agreed to perform. (*He stares down at BRYANT.*) He misled me. He used my debt to him - a debt I *had* to discharge! - to make me do his bidding.

BRYANT scoffs.

BRYANT:

It must have been a considerable debt.

HEMINGS strides across the stage and stands over BRYANT.

HEMINGS:

It was - and we *all* owed it!

BRYANT (firmly):

I owe no man.

HEMINGS:

Oh, no? (*He indicates SHAKESPEARE.*) You owe Will! Without him, you would still be a tiler, or a carpenter, or whatever menial thing you were before you became a *player*, working twice as hard to earn half as much.

CONDELL:

Aye. And without a *whorehouse* next door to spend it in!

THE OTHERS all laugh and BRYANT looks chastened.

HEMINGS (to ALL THE ACTORS):

We *all* owe Will: without *his* plays, we would not be players! That is why *his* debt is *our* debt. And that is why we will stick together as a *company* - not just a company of *players*, but a company of *men*!

Suddenly A GROUP OF ARMED SOLDIERS enters the theatre, marches forward and stops in front of the stage. THE ACTORS, who are now all on their feet, stare down at them. The soldiers' CAPTAIN comes to the front, near the stage.

CAPTAIN:

As part of the inquiry into the Earl of Essex's *rebellion*, the Lord Chief Justice orders you to appear before him.

He looks up at THE ACTORS massed onstage.

CAPTAIN:

Choose one of your number to speak on your behalf.

ALL THE ACTORS look around at each other as THE CAPTAIN turns away and HIS MEN spread out to block the exits. Then SHAKESPEARE walks into the middle of the group of ACTORS.

SHAKESPEARE:

I will do it.

HEMINGS (firmly):

No, Will. You can't.

SHAKESPEARE looks surprised.

SHAKESPEARE:

Why not?

HEMINGS:

Because your long-standing relationship with Southampton will only *strengthen* the suspicion that we were part of the rebellion.

CONDELL (nodding):

He's right. It's better that you don't mention Southampton *at all!*

HEMINGS nods in agreement.

HEMINGS:

Someone else should speak for us.

CONDELL:

I suggest Augustine.

EVERYONE looks at PHILIPS, who looks terrified.

PHILIPS:

Me? What? *Why?*

CONDELL (smiling broadly):

Because you are the most *innocent-looking* among us!
(*Pause and even wider smile.*) Indeed, you are the *only*
innocent-looking one among us!

HEMINGS, BURBAGE and SEVERAL OTHERS laugh.

HEMINGS (to PHILIPS):

'Tis true. That is why you always play "the hero"!

PHILIPS:

Bolingbroke is no "hero"! And this is not a *play* - this
is *real!*

CONDELL stares at PHILIPS.

CONDELL:

You are best equipped to play the role of "spokesman",
Augustine.

HEMINGS and BURBAGE (together):

Aye.

PHILIPS still looks frightened, so HEMINGS goes over to him.

HEMINGS:

Don't worry. We'll prepare you.

CONDELL:

Aye. We'll stick to the "money" story.

SHAKESPEARE:

And I will compose a few lines for you to say to the Lord Chief Justice - *(He glances at HEMINGS and CONDELL)* omitting all mention of Southampton.

HEMINGS and CONDELL both nod in agreement, then HEMINGS comes over and stands right beside SHAKESPEARE.

HEMINGS (to SHAKESPEARE, quietly):

Compose them well. *(Pause.)* You have never written anything so important!

SHAKESPEARE suddenly looks very nervous - even scared.

36. INT. COURTROOM. DAY.

A fearful-looking PHILIPS stands before THE LORD CHIEF JUSTICE and TWO OTHER JUDGES, all of whom are seated. THE LORD CHIEF JUSTICE - a fearsome-looking old man - studies a piece of paper he is holding, then puts it down on the desk.

LORD CHIEF JUSTICE:

This is your statement, Mister Philips? On behalf of all your company?

PHILIPS (nodding quickly):

Yes, my Lord.

LORD CHIEF JUSTICE (furiously):

Then you are a *liar* as well a traitor!

PHILIPS (shaking his head):

No, my Lord.

LORD CHIEF JUSTICE:

You were part of the conspiracy against Her Majesty, weren't you? *All of you!*

PHILIPS:

No, my Lord. We knew of no conspiracy.

FIRST JUDGE:

Then why perform the play?

SECOND JUDGE:

Yes - especially such a politically *inflammatory* play?

PHILIPS:

As I said in my statement, my Lord -

He points at the piece of paper on the desk.

PHILIPS:

- We did it for the *money*. No other reason.

For a moment, ALL THREE JUDGES look at him accusingly. Then the LORD CHIEF JUSTICE looks round at his colleagues and smiles.

LORD CHIEF JUSTICE:

Well, he is a *player*.

FIRST JUDGE:

They are *all* players.

SECOND JUDGE:

And players are little more than *whores*! I can well believe that they would do *anything* for money.

They all laugh and PHILIPS smiles uneasily.

LORD CHIEF JUSTICE:

Alright, Mister Philips. At the moment, there is no other evidence linking you and your company to the conspiracy, so for now you are dismissed - *pending* further inquiries.

PHILIPS looks almightily relieved.

PHILIPS:

Thank you, my Lords. Thank you.

He bows, as if he were on stage. He turns and is about to go out when a MESSENGER enters, carrying a note that he gives to the LORD CHIEF JUSTICE. THE LORD CHIEF JUSTICE looks at it, then looks at PHILIPS.

LORD CHIEF JUSTICE:

It is for you, Mister Philips.

PHILIPS turns round, looking absolutely dumbfounded.

PHILIPS:

Me, my Lord?

LORD CHIEF JUSTICE (nodding):

That is what I said.

PHILIPS:

But who is it from?

THE LORD CHIEF JUSTICE smiles at PHILIPS.

LORD CHIEF JUSTICE:

The Queen!

For a moment, PHILIPS looks as if he might collapse in shock, but then he steps forward and takes the note.

37. INT/EXT. THE STAGE, GLOBE THEATRE. DAY.

ALL THE ACTORS are on stage, looking at PHILIPS questioningly.

HEMINGS:

Well?

PHILIPS:

We are *not* suspected of being part of the conspiracy.

THE ACTORS all sigh with relief - ONE OR TWO even cheer.

SHAKESPEARE:

You must have been a convincing witness, Augustine.

PHILIPS:

'Twas not me that convinced them, Will. 'Twas your "testimony".

SHAKESPEARE smiles, looking a little pleased with himself.

CONDELL:

So they were persuaded by the "money" story?

PHILIPS:

Aye. As you thought they would be.

CONDELL (smiling):

Good.

CONDELL also looks pleased with himself and HEMINGS laughs.

HEMINGS:

Thank God we players are of such low repute! They would never have believed us otherwise.

Now EVERYONE laughs, except PHILIPS, which SHAKESPEARE notices.

SHAKESPEARE:

What is it, Augustine? Why do you look so anxious?

PHILIPS takes out the note he had received in the courtroom.

PHILIPS:

Because we have received another commission.

SHAKESPEARE:

What? From who?

PHILIPS (solemnly):

From the Queen!

SHAKESPEARE and ALL THE OTHER ACTORS look at him in amazement.

PHILIPS hands SHAKESPEARE the note and SHAKESPEARE quickly unfurls it as THE OTHERS crowd round, also trying to read it.

HEMINGS:

What is it, Will? What does it say?

SHAKESPEARE:

It says Her Majesty desires that we perform for her.

For a moment, they are all speechless.

HEMINGS:

When?

SHAKESPEARE checks the note again.

SHAKESPEARE:

Tomorrow. (Pause.) The night before Essex's execution.

HEMINGS:

WHAT?!

CONDELL (nervously):

And what play?

SHAKESPEARE takes a final look at the note, then looks up.

SHAKESPEARE:

"Richard the Second".

HEMINGS:

WHAT?!

SHAKESPEARE:

Complete with dethroning scene.

Once again, for a moment there is total, stunned silence.

HEMINGS:

I don't understand. Having *banned* it, why does the Queen want us to perform *"Richard the Second"* - complete with dethroning scene - for *her*?

SHAKESPEARE:

Because she wants *revenge!*

HEMINGS:

"Revenge"?

SHAKESPEARE:

Aye. We will perform for her, as we performed for the conspirators, and then we will be *killed* - just like the conspirators.

SHAKESPEARE and ALL THE ACTORS look horrified.

38. INT. BACKSTAGE AT COURT. NIGHT.

SHAKESPEARE, HEMINGS and CONDELL, made up and in costume for their roles in "Richard", peer out from the "wings" (in reality, the side of a raised platform serving as a "stage").

Their POINT OF VIEW: Sitting in a high-backed chair in the great hall that is being used for the performance is the QUEEN - ELIZABETH I. She is surrounded by OFFICIALS, including a thin, bearded, cruel-looking man.

HEMINGS (quietly):

They're all out there - even Lord Cecil himself!

The cruel-looking man - LORD CECIL - turns and looks directly at them, so they quickly duck back into the wings. Then SHAKESPEARE looks at HEMINGS and CONDELL - and looks terrified.

SHAKESPEARE:

We should have fled!

HEMINGS:

Where to? The Queen has spies all over England - all over Europe! She would find us wherever we went.

CONDELL:

Besides, if we ran away it would only confirm their suspicions.

HEMINGS and CONDELL both look at SHAKESPEARE.

HEMINGS:

We must go on.

CONDELL nods.

Finally, SHAKESPEARE nods too. Then the three of them turn round to face THE REST OF THE COMPANY, who are standing behind them. THE OTHER PLAYERS, including BURBAGE as Richard and PHILIPS as Bolingbroke, who are also made up and in costume, stare back.

SHAKESPEARE (addressing them all):

Gentlemen, I want to *thank* you - and *apologise* to you.

HEMINGS:

What for, Will? You owe us no apology.

CONDELL:

Nor explanation.

SHAKESPEARE:

I do. Unwittingly, perhaps *carelessly*, I have led us all to this point and if my *fears* are proved correct, then -

HEMINGS (interrupting):

Quiet, Will!

SHAKESPEARE (surprised):

What?

HEMINGS:

For once, you *must* be quiet.

CONDELL:

Aye. Say nothing!

They all laugh, except SHAKESPEARE, who looks confused.

SHAKESPEARE:

Why?

HEMINGS:

For one thing, we are about to go on stage and must concentrate our minds. For another, you owe us nothing - and certainly not an *apology!*

SHAKESPEARE (emphatically):

I do!

HEMINGS (equally emphatically):

No! 'Tis we who owe you - our careers, our *lives.*

CONDELL:

If we lose them now, well, at least we *have* something to lose. Before we had *nothing!*

HEMINGS:

That's right. Without you, Will, we'd all still be tiling walls, or thatching roofs, or selling *fruit* -

CONDELL:

Or *fish.*

HEMINGS:

While *waiting* for a chance to act! Instead, here we are -

He looks around at the great hall briefly, before turning back.

HEMINGS:

- About to perform for the Queen of England herself!
(Pause.) That's something a mere *grocer* -

CONDELL:

Or *fishmonger*!

HEMINGS:

- Could only *dream* of!

He smiles at SHAKESPEARE and SHAKESPEARE smiles back.

HEMINGS:

Take your positions, Men.

ALL THE ACTORS immediately stand to attention.

HEMINGS:

Tonight's performance is a very special one. It may even
be our *last* performance together.

SOME ACTORS, especially the younger ones, look tearful.

HEMINGS:

So let us make it a memorable one -

SHAKESPEARE (interrupting him):

- One fit for a *Queen*!

EVERYONE laughs, and HEMINGS smiles at SHAKESPEARE.

HEMINGS:

You always have to have the last word, don't you?

SHAKESPEARE laughs.

SHAKESPEARE:

Tonight I do.

A trumpet sounds to announce the start of the performance and THE ACTORS who are not in the first scene take a step back, leaving those who are - including SHAKESPEARE, HEMINGS and BURBAGE - standing in the wings, looking frightened. Then, as one, they walk onstage.

39. INT. THE "STAGE", COURT. NIGHT.

THE ACTORS stand on the "stage" and look out at the audience and THE COURT, with THE QUEEN at its centre, looks back at them. For a moment, THE ACTORS seem to be frozen with fear. Then BURBAGE - the consummate professional - begins to speak.

BURBAGE (as King Richard):

"Old John of Gaunt, time-honoured Lancaster,
Hast thou according to thy oath and bond
Brought hither Henry Hereford, thy bold son..."

As BURBAGE continues to speak, SHAKESPEARE stares at THE QUEEN.

His POINT OF VIEW: THE QUEEN is old, perhaps even close to death, with an incredibly wrinkled face, but she is wearing so much make-up - even more than THE ACTORS themselves - that the effect is quite incongruous, like the presence of lipstick on a corpse.

SHAKESPEARE is still staring at her when he becomes aware that THE OTHER ACTORS, including BURBAGE, are staring at him: for a moment he is puzzled, then realises why they are looking at him.

Finally, remembering his line, he speaks.

SHAKESPEARE (as John of Gaunt):

"I have, my liege."

HEMINGS looks at him and mouths the word, "Concentrate": SHAKESPEARE nods in acknowledgement and BURBAGE resumes.

BURBAGE:

"Tell me moreover..."

40. INT. "THE STAGE", COURT. NIGHT.

BURBAGE (as Richard) is centre-stage, surrounded by COURTIERS.

BURBAGE (as King Richard):

"For God's sake, let us sit upon the ground,
And tell sad stories of the death of kings -
How some have been deposed, some slain in war,
Some haunted by the ghosts they have deposed,
Some poisoned by their wives, some sleeping killed - "

41. INT. "THE WINGS", THE COURT. NIGHT.

SHAKESPEARE is watching the QUEEN. THE QUEEN is staring at BURBAGE and as he says the next line, "All murdered", she nods and mouths the words along with him, so that they seem to be coming out of her mouth. SHAKESPEARE is so surprised that he almost falls forward onto the stage in shock, but just manages to steady himself in time.

42. INT. "THE STAGE", THE COURT. NIGHT.

It is the dethroning scene and PHILIPS (as Bolingbroke) holds the crown and sceptre that BURBAGE (as Richard) has given him.

BURBAGE (as King Richard):

"What more remains?"

43. INT. "THE WINGS", THE COURT. NIGHT.

HEMINGS whispers in SHAKESPEARE's ear.

HEMINGS:

Indeed! "What more remains" of *us*, once the play ends?

SHAKESPEARE looks at him fearfully.

44. INT. "THE STAGE", THE COURT. THE NIGHT.

BURBAGE (as Richard) is in the coffin in the centre of the stage.

PHILIPS (as Bolingbroke):

"I'll make a voyage to the Holy Land
To wash this blood off from my guilty hand.
March sadly after."

PHILIPS (as Bolingbroke) leads off his "LORDS", who carry the coffin containing BURBAGE (as Richard).

45. INT. "THE WINGS", THE COURT. NIGHT.

As soon as BURBAGE is carried into the wings, he leaps out of the coffin and looks at SHAKESPEARE eagerly.

BURBAGE:

Well...?

SHAKESPEARE (confused):

"Well" what?

BURBAGE looks at him in shock, then looks out at THE QUEEN.

BURBAGE:

Did she *like* it?

SHAKESPEARE looks at him in disgust.

SHAKESPEARE:

Honestly, Richard. You and your *ego!* How could that possibly matter now?

BURBAGE (as if explaining to an idiot):

Because if she *liked* it, she may not *kill* us - *that's* why!

SHAKESPEARE looks unconvinced by this argument and turns round.

His POINT OF VIEW: He sees that THE QUEEN is sitting in her chair, not moving. Her OFFICIALS, including LORD CECIL, are all staring at her, obviously waiting to follow her lead. Then, slowly, as if it was an effort almost beyond her, she lifts her spindly, wrinkled arms. Finally, she begins to clap. It is quiet, almost tentative, but it is undeniably applause. Seeing - and hearing - this, THE REST OF THE COURT follow suit and begin to applaud, much more loudly.

SHAKESPEARE looks at BURBAGE in disbelief, before HEMINGS virtually pushes them both towards the stage.

HEMINGS:

For God's sake, don't keep her *waiting!* Get back on stage!

SHAKESPEARE and BURBAGE exchange a final, startled look, then quickly join THE OTHER ACTORS as they go back onstage.

46. INT. "THE STAGE", THE COURT. NIGHT.

ALL THE ACTORS, with SHAKESPEARE and BURBAGE centre-stage, bow deeply as the applause continues and as they do so, they continue to exchange looks of surprise.

Suddenly THE QUEEN stops applauding and so - instantaneously - does THE REST OF THE COURT. THE ACTORS, along with THE OFFICIALS, all stare at her: they are all obviously wondering what she will say, or do, next. There is a long - an agonisingly long - pause. Then, slowly, she raises a solitary finger. She opens her mouth to speak and when she does speak, it is with a quiet, almost inaudible voice: if everyone else in the hall were not silent, it would be impossible to hear her.

QUEEN:

Master Shakespeare...

With an almost skeletal finger, she points at SHAKESPEARE.

For a moment, SHAKESPEARE looks stunned, but then - silently urged on by THE OTHER ACTORS - he finds his voice.

SHAKESPEARE:

Yes, your Majesty?

QUEEN:

Come here.

With the same skeletal finger, she beckons him forward. SHAKESPEARE looks around nervously at THE OTHER ACTORS, especially HEMINGS, but again they all silently urge him on. He moves forward, slowly, then steps down off the "stage". He walks towards THE QUEEN, until he is right in front of her, and finally kneels down in front of her.

SHAKESPEARE:

Your Majesty.

QUEEN (even more quietly):

Closer.

Looking even more surprised, SHAKESPEARE stands up and moves towards her, until he is literally standing right beside her. Once again, she beckons him to come closer. He leans down towards her, until his ear is beside her mouth: when she speaks, only he can hear her.

QUEEN:

Fortunately for you, Master Shakespeare, I am a great admirer of your work.

SHAKESPEARE replies with a whisper as he is so close to her.

SHAKESPEARE:

Thank you, your Majesty. You are too kind.

She looks up at him pointedly.

QUEEN:

I know!

SHAKESPEARE is almost taken aback, then quickly regains his composure and leans in even closer to listen to her.

QUEEN:

I enjoyed the play, but you will never perform it again with the dethroning scene while I am alive. Do you understand?

SHAKESPEARE goes to nod, but stops: his head is so close to THE QUEEN's that if he nods he will hit her head with his, so instead he just replies, quietly.

SHAKESPEARE:

Yes, your Majesty. Of course.

QUEEN:

Good. And one final thing...

He leans in even closer, so that he is almost touching her, and she looks up at him again - directly into his eyes.

QUEEN:

I am Richard the Second. Know ye not that?

SHAKESPEARE looks absolutely astonished. Slowly, so as to avoid touching her head, he shakes his head.

SHAKESPEARE:

No, your Majesty. I did not know.

She nods, slightly.

QUEEN:

I am.

And with that, she half-sits, half-slumps back in her chair and casually flicks a finger to dismiss SHAKESPEARE.

Instantly, he begins withdrawing, bowing as he goes.

SHAKESPEARE:

Thank you, your Majesty. Thank you.

He continues bowing all the way back to the stage. He bumps into the stage, then carefully climbs backwards onto it, all the while looking at THE QUEEN and bowing. Once on the stage, and still bowing, he begins moving slowly toward the wings, followed by ALL THE OTHER ACTORS.

47. INT. "BACKSTAGE", THE COURT. NIGHT.

As they come off stage, HEMINGS, BURBAGE and THE OTHER ACTORS all look at SHAKESPEARE questioningly.

HEMINGS:

What did she say?

SHAKESPEARE stops walking and stares at him.

SHAKESPEARE:

She said she enjoyed the play.

HEMINGS:

Yes?

SHAKESPEARE:

But we are *not* to perform it again with the dethroning scene while she is alive.

HEMINGS (nodding):

Yes?

SHAKESPEARE:

And then she said, "I am Richard the Second. Know ye not that?"

HEMINGS:

WHAT?!

HE and ALL THE OTHER ACTORS look at SHAKESPEARE questioningly.

HEMINGS:

What did she mean?

SHAKESPEARE (shaking his head):

I don't know. And I certainly wasn't going to ask!

Now he looks at them all intently.

SHAKESPEARE:

Now I suggest that we all "exit" *immediately*, before she changes her mind and has us *killed!*

HEMINGS:

Agreed!

ALL THE PLAYERS quickly begin changing out of their costumes.

48. EXT. PALACE GROUNDS. NIGHT.

SHAKESPEARE, HEMINGS, CONDELL and ALL THE OTHER PLAYERS leave the Palace through a side door and enter the grounds smiling and laughing - they are obviously delirious with relief.

Suddenly, they all stop laughing and stop walking.

Their POINT OF VIEW: Straight ahead, a gallows is being erected by several WORKMEN.

ALL THE PLAYERS stare at it.

HEMINGS:

That must be for Essex.

SHAKESPEARE:

Aye. And Southampton.

They all continue to stare at the gallows.

HEMINGS:

But why here? Why not the Tower?

SHAKESPEARE (ruefully):

Obviously, this is another "show" the Queen wants to see for herself.

As they watch, a rope is slung over the top of the gallows. They watch it being put in place, then tightened, before walking on in silence towards the palace gates.

49. EXT. OUTSIDE THE PALACE GATES. NIGHT.

THE PLAYERS, led by SHAKESPEARE and BURBAGE, walk away from the Palace, watched suspiciously by THE GUARDS manning the gates. For a few moments, they walk in complete silence. Then BURBAGE turns his head and looks at SHAKESPEARE.

BURBAGE:

You know, Will, *this* would be fitting subject matter for a play.

SHAKESPEARE looks at him questioningly.

SHAKESPEARE:

What would?

BURBAGE:

This - this night, this whole story!

SHAKESPEARE stops walking (forcing EVERYONE behind him to stop) and stares at BURBAGE, prompting him to stop walking.

HEMINGS looks at BURBAGE and shakes his head.

HEMINGS:

Not in *our* lifetime.

CONDELL:

And certainly not in the *Queen's!*

BURBAGE considers this for a moment, then nods in agreement.

BURBAGE:

True, but it *is* a great story. It has *everything*: treason, rebellion and, most importantly, *majesty!*

They all consider this for a moment, then nod in agreement.

SHAKESPEARE looks at BURBAGE, then looks back at the Palace.

SHAKESPEARE:

'Tis a plot more fanciful than any I wrote.

For a moment, ALL THE PLAYERS stare at SHAKESPEARE, then he walks on and they follow, heading away from the Palace.

Fade to:

BLACK.

A caption appears: "QUEEN ELIZABETH DIED IN 1603 AND WAS SUCCEEDED BY HER DISTANT COUSIN, KING JAMES THE SIXTH OF SCOTLAND, WHO BECAME KING JAMES THE FIRST OF ENGLAND. HE WAS SUCH AN ADMIRER OF SHAKESPEARE THAT HE BECAME THE PATRON OF THE COMPANY, GIVING THEM A DEGREE OF FINANCIAL SECURITY."

It is replaced by another caption: "OVER THE NEXT DECADE, WHILE HE WAS A MEMBER OF "THE KING'S MEN", SHAKESPEARE WROTE MANY OF HIS GREATEST PLAYS, INCLUDING THE FOUR GREAT TRAGEDIES - HAMLET, KING LEAR, MACBETH AND OTHELLO - ALL OF WHICH ARE BASED ON THE IDEA OF A PLOT AGAINST A KING OR ANOTHER LEADER."

A final caption appears: "ACT FOUR: 1613".

Fade up to:

50. INT. BACKSTAGE, THE GLOBE THEATRE. DAY.

CONDELL, now 37 and dressed as a Cardinal (in lavish white robes and tall triangular hat), hurries backstage.

HEMINGS - now 57, very fat and also dressed as a Cardinal - is kneeling to mend a SOLDIER'S costume, but looks up at CONDELL.

HEMINGS:

Did you greet the Ambassador?

CONDELL (nodding):

Yes.

HEMINGS:

And give him the tour of the theatre?

CONDELL:

Of course. By now, I can do it in my *sleep!*

HEMINGS looks at CONDELL angrily.

HEMINGS:

It's a small price to pay to keep in the King's favour, Henry. After all, he is our patron now.

CONDELL:

I know. I'm sorry.

HEMINGS laughs and shakes his head.

HEMINGS:

How things change! Under Elizabeth, we almost lost our heads; now, under James, everyone wants to shake our *hands!*

CONDELL shakes his head.

CONDELL:

They don't want to shake *our* hands - just Will's.

He "quotes" the Ambassador, adopting a strong German accent.

CONDELL:

"The hand that wrote *"Hamlet"*, *"Macbeth"* and *"Lear"*.

SHAKESPEARE joins *THE OTHER PLAYERS* about to go on: he is 49, almost bald and wearing long white flowing robes like a Druid.

CONDELL:

The Ambassador would like to meet you afterwards, Will.

SHAKESPEARE (wearily):

Don't they all?

Now *HEMINGS* looks up at *SHAKESPEARE* angrily.

SHAKESPEARE (to *HEMINGS*):

Don't worry - I will be at my most servile!

HEMINGS stands up and goes over to *SHAKESPEARE*.

HEMINGS:

Are you ready?

SHAKESPEARE looks at him in surprise.

SHAKESPEARE:

After all this time, do you really need to ask me that?

HEMINGS looks shocked.

HEMINGS:

No, I suppose not.

SHAKESPEARE:

Then *don't!*

SHAKESPEARE goes forward to wait in the wings.

CONDELL (to HEMINGS, quietly):

I think he's had enough of *performing*.

HEMINGS:

What? No!

HEMINGS shakes his head.

HEMINGS:

He'd never stop performing. He loves it too much.

CONDELL:

We'll see.

Trumpets signal the start of the play and SHAKESPEARE goes on.

51. INT. THE STAGE, THE GLOBE. DAY.

SHAKESPEARE is greeted with a tremendous burst of applause: THE ENTIRE AUDIENCE, from GROUNDINGS in front of the stage to WEALTHY PATRONS in the seats above, stands to applaud him. Then, he raises a hand and the applause stops instantly.

SHAKESPEARE (as Prologue):

"Think ye see

The very persons of our noble story

As they were living; think you see them great,

And followed with the general throng and sweat

Of thousand friends; then, in a moment, see
How soon this mightiness meets misery.
And if you can be merry then, I'll say
A man may weep upon his wedding day."

He exits and once again THE AUDIENCE applaud wildly.

52. INT. THE WINGS, THE GLOBE THEATRE. DAY.

As SHAKESPEARE comes off-stage, he is met by a smiling HEMINGS.

HEMINGS:

You've still got the old magic!

SHAKESPEARE (angrily):

It's not "magic" - it's hard work!

He marches past HEMINGS, his robes flowing behind him.

CONDELL (to HEMINGS):

I told you - he's had enough of acting!

HEMINGS looks worried.

53. INT/EXT. THE STAGE, THE GLOBE THEATRE. DAY.

RICHARD BURBAGE, now old and fat, is - appropriately enough - playing Henry the Eighth and a BOY ACTOR playing Anne Boleyn smiles at him seductively. HEMINGS - playing Cardinal Wolsey - approaches BURBAGE.

HEMINGS (as Cardinal Wolsey):

"There's fresher air, my Lord, in the next chamber."

BURBAGE (as Henry the Eighth):

"Lead in your ladies, every one."

He takes THE BOY ACTOR's arm.

BURBAGE (as Henry the Eighth):

"Sweet partner, I must not forsake you."

THE BOY ACTOR smiles and they walk off-stage together.

As THE OTHER PLAYERS, including HEMINGS, go off, there is a loud cannon blast, which startles some of THE GROUNDINGS.

54. INT. THE WINGS, THE GLOBE THEATRE. DAY.

HEMINGS is the last player to come off stage and he meets CONDELL - who is waiting to come on - in the wings.

HEMINGS (to CONDELL):

Where's Robert?

CONDELL shrugs and looks blank, so HEMINGS looks at the stage.

His POINT OF VIEW: THE SOLDIER whose costume he had been mending is now standing at the front of a stage, right next to a cannon. He has his back to HEMINGS and is looking out at the audience.

HEMINGS calls out to him - as quietly as he can, so as not to attract the audience's attention.

HEMINGS:

Robert! Hurry up! Other people are waiting to go on.

The SOLDIER - ROBERT - slowly turns round to face HEMINGS.

He is holding a lighted candle in one hand, with which he has just lit the fuse on the cannon, and he looks terrified.

HEMINGS:

What is it?

ROBERT turns back round and looks up at the roof.

HEMINGS also looks up at the roof.

His POINT OF VIEW: In the thatched roof of The Globe, a small fire is burning.

HEMINGS:

Oh my God!

CONDELL comes forward and he too sees the fire immediately.

CONDELL:

The whole place will go up!

On stage, ROBERT looks at them both in horror.

55. INT/EXT. STANDING AREA, THE GLOBE. DAY.

*SOME OF THE GROUNDINGS, alerted by what is happening - or rather **not** happening - on stage, look behind them. Immediately they see the fire and ONE of them calls out.*

GROUNDLING:

FIRE!

Instantly ALL THE GROUNDINGS turn and look up at the roof.

56. INT. SEATED AREA, THE GLOBE. DAY.

THE WEALTHY PATRONS in the very top tier see everyone below - on stage and on the ground - looking up in their direction. They also look up and as they do so the fire starts to spread swiftly across the roof, directly above their heads.

WEALTHY PATRON (CALLING OUT):

Get out! Get out! Before we all burn!

THE WEALTHY PATRONS run for the stairs, as the GROUNDINGS run towards the exits and - on stage - ROBERT runs into the wings.

57. INT. THE WINGS, THE GLOBE. DAY.

Having heard the commotion, SHAKESPEARE pushes his way forward until he is standing next to HEMINGS and CONDELL in the wings. He looks up at the roof, which is now ablaze. He looks shocked, then walks onstage to get a better view.

58. INT/EXT. THE STAGE, THE GLOBE THEATRE. DAY.

SHAKESPEARE stops centre-stage and looks at the burning roof.

HEMINGS (VOICE OFF):

Will! Come on!

CONDELL (VOICE OFF):

Before it's too late.

He turns round to see HEMINGS and CONDELL are next to him.

Suddenly they grab him and start pulling him from the stage.

As they do so, The Globe's roof starts to collapse and the fire starts to spread to the rest of the theatre.

59. EXT. THE SITE OF THE GLOBE. DAY.

HEMINGS, CONDELL, BURBAGE and SHAKESPEARE (still in their costumes, which are now dirty and blackened with smoke) stand in the still-smouldering ruins of the Globe.

HEMINGS:

It must have been a stray piece of paper from the cannon.

CONDELL:

At least nobody was killed.

SHAKESPEARE:

Only our hopes and dreams.

HEMINGS strides forward into the middle of the site.

HEMINGS:

We'll rebuild it!

SHAKESPEARE (wearily):

Will we?

HEMINGS:

Of course we will! We've already rebuilt it once, after we carted it across the river!

SHAKESPEARE:

We were young then.

HEMINGS:

We are *still* young - at least in spirit!

SHAKESPEARE (shaking his head):

I'm not. I'm *old* - in body *and* spirit!

For a moment HEMINGS looks surprised, but then he continues.

HEMINGS:

By the time we've finished, it will be bigger, better and - most importantly - *safer!*

CONDELL:

We can get a *tiled* roof.

HEMINGS (nodding):

Exactly! And no more cannons.

BURBAGE (shaking his head):

Definitely no more cannons.

HEMINGS:

And while the rebuilding's going on, we can negotiate a temporary lease at "The Curtain" or "The Swan", just as we did when we *first* arrived here.

He smiles enthusiastically.

HEMINGS:

We'll survive. We always do.

SHAKESPEARE (VOICE OFF, LOUDLY):

NO!

HEMINGS, CONDELL and BURBAGE look round at SHAKESPEARE and see that he is shaking his head.

SHAKESPEARE:

I cannot do it.

HEMINGS:

Do what?

SHAKESPEARE:

Just "survive". I'm tired of "surviving". I want to *live*.

He stops shaking his head and stares at them.

SHAKESPEARE:

That's why I'm retiring.

HEMINGS, CONDELL and BURBAGE (together):

WHAT?!

They all look at him in amazement.

HEMINGS:

You're retiring from the stage?

SHAKESPEARE (nodding):

Yes.

CONDELL looks at HEMINGS knowingly.

CONDELL (to HEMINGS):

I told you - he's had enough of acting.

He looks at SHAKESPEARE sympathetically.

CONDELL:

That's understandable, Will. I imagine you just want to concentrate on *writing* now.

SHAKESPEARE:

No. I'm retiring from the theatre *completely*.

CONDELL:

WHAT?!

Now CONDELL looks alarmed.

CONDELL:

Why?

SHAKESPEARE:

Because I want to go *home!* My family are in Warwickshire and I want to see them again - *live with them again!* - before they forget me completely. (*Pause.*) If they haven't already!

HEMINGS continues to stare at him.

HEMINGS:

You want to leave now?

SHAKESPEARE:

I know the timing is not ideal -

HEMINGS (interrupting, angrily):

I'll say!

SHAKESPEARE:

But I've been thinking about it for a while.

He looks around him at the ashes.

SHAKESPEARE:

The fire just confirmed that it's the right thing to do.

Seeing THE OTHER THREE staring at him, he smiles at them.

SHAKESPEARE:

Don't worry - I won't go *immediately*! I'll wait until The Globe's rebuilt before I return to Stratford.

HEMINGS, CONDELL and BURBAGE continue to look anxious.

BURBAGE:

But how would we survive without you, Will?

SHAKESPEARE:

You don't need *me* - just my *plays*! And you can keep those.

Now HEMINGS, CONDELL and BURBAGE look surprised.

BURBAGE:

Really?

SHAKESPEARE (nodding):

Yes, of course. They belong to the *company*, not me.

HEMINGS looks at CONDELL nervously.

HEMINGS:

What do you think?

CONDELL:

Well, we *already* run the company.

He suddenly looks at SHAKESPEARE apologetically.

CONDELL:

No offence, Will.

SHAKESPEARE (smiling):

None taken. It's *true* - you *do* run it!

CONDELL looks at HEMINGS again.

CONDELL:

As long as we have Will's *plays*, we'll be alright.

SHAKESPEARE smiles at them all.

SHAKESPEARE:

You'll manage: I have no doubt of it! After all, you've always looked after me - not the other way round.

HEMINGS considers this for a moment.

HEMINGS (nodding):

That's true.

SHAKESPEARE laughs.

SHAKESPEARE:

I owe it all to you!

He looks at HEMINGS, affectionately.

SHAKESPEARE:

With your ability to run a company, John -

HEMINGS looks flattered, as SHAKESPEARE turns to CONDELL.

SHAKESPEARE:

And your mastery of money, Henry -

CONDELL looks flattered, as SHAKESPEARE turns to BURBAGE.

SHAKESPEARE:

And with Richard as your *Hamlet*, *Romeo* and *Othello* -

BURBAGE looks flattered.

SHAKESPEARE:

You'll make a *fortune!* And you'll only have to share it
three ways, not four!

HEMINGS, CONDELL and BURBAGE all laugh.

SHAKESPEARE looks at them all questioningly.

SHAKESPEARE:

So what do you think? Will you buy my share in the company
- at a *reduced price*, of course, to help pay for the
rebuilding?

HEMINGS, CONDELL and BURBAGE look at each other, then all nod.

HEMINGS:

We will.

SHAKESPEARE looks ecstatic.

SHAKESPEARE:

Thank you. Oh, thank you.

He comes forward and starts shaking their hands.

HEMINGS:

On *strict* condition that you don't go until we've finished
rebuilding -

SHAKESPEARE (nodding):

Of course. I've already said that.

CONDELL:

And that you oversee any new writers we have to employ.

SHAKESPEARE (smiling):

I'll rewrite them, if necessary!

They all laugh.

Finally they stop laughing and SHAKESPEARE stares at them.

SHAKESPEARE:

It's all yours, Gentlemen - The Globe is yours!

HEMINGS, CONDELL and BURBAGE look around them at the ruins of The Globe, looking both terrified and excited.

Fade to:

BLACK.

A caption appears: "THE GLOBE WAS SOON REBUILT, WITH A TILED ROOF, AND LIFE FOR HEMINGS, CONDELL AND BURBAGE WENT ON MUCH AS BEFORE. SHAKESPEARE MAY HAVE GONE, BUT HIS PLAYS REMAINED."

Another caption appears: "UNTIL ONE DAY, A FEW YEARS LATER, WHEN THEY WERE REHEARSING FOR A REVIVAL OF ROMEO AND JULIET..."

A final caption appears: "ACT FIVE: 1616".

Fade up to:

60. INT/EXT. THE STAGE, THE GLOBE THEATRE. DAY.

HEMINGS and CONDELL are standing in the groundlings' area of the rebuilt Globe theatre, its new tiled roof visible above.

As CONDELL (who has a script in his hand) sighs, HEMINGS marches towards the stage to confront a frightened-looking ACTOR.

HEMINGS (to the ACTOR):

Will Shakespeare may no longer be here, but this is still *his* theatre, and you will say *his* words, not your own! Do you understand?

The ACTOR, now looking completely terrified, nods his head.

HEMINGS:

Good! Now try it again!

HEMINGS turns and walks back to stand beside CONDELL.

HEMINGS:

Honestly! Actors today have no respect for an author's words.

CONDELL nods and they both look up at the stage.

On-stage, the ACTOR turns round and looks upwards.

His POINT OF VIEW: Standing in a balcony above the stage is another young actor, a boy, dressed as JULIET.

ACTOR:

"But, soft! what light through yonder window breaks?
It is the east, and Juliet is the sun."

As HEMINGS and CONDELL watch the action on-stage, a YOUNG MAN enters the theatre, holding a furred-up piece of paper, and goes up to CONDELL.

MESSENGER:

I have a letter for you, Sir, from Stratford.

CONDELL (to HEMINGS):

It'll be from Will, explaining why he didn't make it to London last month.

HEMINGS:

I hope he has a good excuse.

CONDELL takes a coin from his pocket, gives it to the YOUNG MAN and takes the piece of paper, as HEMINGS looks back at the stage.

ACTOR:

"Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,
Who is already sick and pale with grief -"

CONDELL:

Oh my God!

HEMINGS immediately turns and stares at him.

HEMINGS:

What is it?

CONDELL:

It's Will.

HEMINGS:

What's wrong with him? Is he ill?

CONDELL slowly shakes his head.

CONDELL:

No. He's dead.

HEMINGS looks at him in disbelief.

HEMINGS:

"Dead"?

CONDELL slowly nods, so HEMINGS takes the letter from him.

As HEMINGS begins to read the letter, on-stage the ACTOR PLAYING ROMEO looks up at the ACTOR PLAYING JULIET.

ACTOR PLAYING ROMEO (mouthing silently):

Who's "Will"?

The ACTOR PLAYING JULIET looks down at him in amazement for a moment, then silently mouths back.

ACTOR PLAYING JULIET (mouthing silently):

Will Shakespeare!

ACTOR PLAYING ROMEO (mouthing silently):

Oh!

Off-stage, HEMINGS, having finally read the letter, begins to cry while CONDELL just looks stunned.

61. EXT. STREET OUTSIDE THE GLOBE THEATRE. NIGHT.

HEMINGS is sitting on a horse, looking ahead blankly, while CONDELL finishes loading his horse and climbs up onto it.

CONDELL looks across at HEMINGS and smiles thinly.

CONDELL:

'Tis like going on tour again.

HEMINGS nods.

HEMINGS:

Aye. A farewell tour.

Slowly, he rides forward.

CONDELL hesitates for a moment, then follows him.

62. EXT. STREET OUTSIDE SHAKESPEARE'S HOUSE. DAY.

HEMINGS and CONDELL, dressed all in black, lead THE OTHER PALLBEARERS as they carry the coffin out of the house.

They are followed by THE MEMBERS OF SHAKESPEARE'S FAMILY: his wife, ANNE, a rather plain-looking woman of about 60; SUSANNA, his eldest daughter, aged about 32, and her husband, JOHN HALL, and daughter, ELIZABETH, who is about nine; and finally, his youngest daughter, JUDITH, who is aged about 30.

THE PALLBEARERS stop for a moment to adjust the weight of the coffin between them. Then they walk on towards the church, the steeple of which is just visible in the distance.

63. INT. CHURCH. DAY.

THE PALLBEARERS set the coffin down in front of the altar.

As the PRIEST comes forward towards the coffin, they all take a step back, and then take their places in the pews.

HEMINGS and CONDELL watch the PRIEST bless the coffin.

HEMINGS (quietly):

Apparently, he will be buried directly in front of the altar.

CONDELL (equally quietly):

That's appropriate.

HEMINGS looks confused.

HEMINGS (quietly):

How so?

CONDELL (equally quietly):

Well, whatever his protestations to the contrary, Will always enjoyed being the centre of attention.

HEMINGS smiles.

64. INT. DINING ROOM, SHAKESPEARE'S HOUSE. DAY.

HEMINGS, CONDELL, DRAYTON, JONSON and SEVERAL OTHER MOURNERS sit at the table: food has been laid out, but nobody is eating. There is total silence, until HEMINGS whispers to CONDELL.

HEMINGS:

I still can't believe it.

CONDELL (equally quietly):

I know. I can't either. Less than two months ago, we were sitting here celebrating his daughter's wedding.

HEMINGS nods solemnly and again there is silence for a moment.

HEMINGS (quietly):

It's not right.

CONDELL (equally quietly):

What isn't?

HEMINGS (quietly):

The cause of *death!* (Pause.) Will survived fire, ice, *plague*, even becoming involved in a plot against the *Queen*, and then - finally! - a *fever* finishes him off.

CONDELL (equally quietly):

I know. 'Tis not a fitting end.

HEMINGS nods and the dining room is quiet once more, apart from the faint sound of crying somewhere else in the house.

65. INT. BACKSTAGE OFFICE, THE GLOBE THEATRE. DAY.

HEMINGS and CONDELL are in the backstage office of The Globe: CONDELL is sitting at a desk, reading a letter aloud, while HEMINGS stands over him, listening.

CONDELL (reading):

"...And finally, I give to my fellows Richard Burbage, John Hemings and Henry Condell twenty-six shillings and eight pence apiece to buy them mourning rings."

He finishes reading and puts the letter down on the desk: HEMINGS stares down at him, then at the letter.

HEMINGS:

"Mourning rings"?

CONDELL nods.

HEMINGS:

That's how he wants us to remember him?

CONDELL (nodding):

Apparently.

HEMINGS sighs deeply.

Fade out to:

BLACK.

There is a long pause, then a caption appears: "EPILOGUE".

Fade up to:

66. INT. BACKSTAGE OFFICE, THE GLOBE THEATRE. DAY.

HEMINGS stares at the ring on his left little finger, next to his wedding ring, which has a skull or death's head on it.

HEMINGS:

I still can't get used to wearing a mourning ring.

CONDELL, who is counting money at his desk, is wearing an identical ring on his left little finger.

HEMINGS:

I've been wearing it for months now, but it still makes me shudder every time I look at it.

Once again, he looks down at *CONDELL*, who does not look up.

HEMINGS:

It doesn't even fit! Last week, when I tried to hail a fellow in the street - (He raises his left hand to indicate "hailing a fellow".) It nearly flew off!

Finally *CONDELL* looks up at him.

HEMINGS:

If I had lost it, I'd have nothing to remember Will by!

CONDELL holds up a piece of paper to show *HEMINGS*.

CONDELL:

Here is a list of the props we need.

Then he pushes a few coins towards him.

CONDELL:

And here is the money to buy them.

Then he looks at HEMINGS angrily.

CONDELL:

So would you please stop complaining about *wills* and *rings* - and *Will's rings!* - long enough to do some work? After all, we still have a *theatre* to run!

HEMINGS snatches the piece of paper from CONDELL, picks up the coins and goes out.

67. EXT. STREET. DAY.

HEMINGS walks along a typically crowded London street, carrying a leather bag out of which several peacock feathers are poking. Suddenly he stops walking and stares straight ahead.

*His POINT OF VIEW: Directly ahead of him is St Paul's Cathedral, in front of which there are about A DOZEN BOOKSELLERS, but rather than manning book **shops** they are manning book **stalls**.*

HEMINGS goes towards them and glances at their contents, which range from flimsy paper pamphlets to leather-bound Bibles.

Suddenly he stops walking.

*His POINT OF VIEW: Directly ahead of him is a stall that apparently has only **one** book for sale: laid out on top of it are about a dozen copies of the same large, leather-bound book.*

The book is entitled, "THE WORKES OF BENJAMIN JONSON".

HEMINGS continues to stare at the stall for a few moments before he finally approaches it.

THE BOOKSELLER smiles at him from behind his stall.

BOOKSELLER:

Good day, Sir. How can I help you?

HEMINGS:

I would like to see a copy of Ben Jonson's "Workes", please.

BOOKSELLER (beaming):

Excellent choice, Sir. Allow me to show you one.

THE BOOKSELLER picks up a copy - in fact, it is so heavy that he struggles to lift it.

BOOKSELLER (proudly):

It's only just been published.

HEMINGS:

Really?

BOOKSELLER (nodding):

Oh, yes. And as it says on the magnificent frontispiece -

He indicates the cover of the book, which is indeed magnificent: it is made of thick leather that has been decorated, or carved, with pictures of classical statues.

BOOKSELLER:

It contains *all* of his plays, from "The Alchemist" to "Volpone".

HEMINGS reaches out and gently touches the front cover, almost caressing it.

As he does so, he looks even more amazed - and impressed.

BOOKSELLER:

It is a remarkable book - historic even!

HEMINGS looks surprised.

HEMINGS:

Really? How so?

BOOKSELLER (beaming):

It is the *first* collection of plays by an English playwright. (*He leans forward and whispers to HEMINGS conspiratorially.*) Did you know, Sir, that - incredible as it sounds! - there is no law of ownership, or possession, for playwrights?

HEMINGS stops looking at the book and looks up at the BOOKSELLER.

HEMINGS:

Is that so?

BOOKSELLER (nodding):

It is. That's why most playwrights never *published* their plays, because if they *had*, every other company in London would simply have bought a copy and put on a production of their own.

HEMINGS:

Really? (*Pause and smile.*) How remarkable!

BOOKSELLER:

The only copies of plays that were ever printed were *unauthorised* copies that were printed without the consent of their authors. (*Laugh.*) Apparently, some printers even resorted to *bribing* actors, or even *audience members*, to *regurgitate* what they could remember of a play.

HEMINGS shakes his head.

HEMINGS:

I imagine such copies must have been of poor quality.

BOOKSELLER:

They were *terrible!* They always read as if someone had reconstructed the play from *memory* - and in the process, *forgotten* half the lines.

He laughs, but HEMINGS just smiles thinly.

BOOKSELLER:

That's why Mister Jonson was so anxious to publish his own plays himself - to preserve them for posterity, in *all* their glory.

He indicates the book again.

BOOKSELLER:

I think you'll agree that he's done a *fine* job.

HEMINGS:

He has.

BOOKSELLER:

His collection of plays confirms his reputation as the *pre-eminent* English playwright.

HEMINGS looks at him in amazement.

HEMINGS:

"Pre-eminent"?

BOOKSELLER (nodding):

Indeed.

HEMINGS:

But what about Shakespeare?

BOOKSELLER:

Who?

HEMINGS looks even more amazed.

HEMINGS:

William Shakespeare.

BOOKSELLER:

Oh! *Him!* (*THE BOOKSELLER laughs.*) He hardly ranks alongside Mister Johnson. Granted, he had a certain *populist* touch that allowed him to entertain the *masses*, but he lacked Mister Jonson's *rigorous* classicism.

HEMINGS looks as if he might explode, but restrains himself.

HEMINGS:

Do you have any of his work?

BOOKSELLER:

Who? *Shakespeare?*

HEMINGS (nodding, patiently):

Yes.

The BOOKSELLER considers this question for a moment.

BOOKSELLER:

I may have *something*, but as I've explained it almost certainly *won't* be of high quality.

HEMINGS (smiling thinly):

That's alright. I'd still like to see it.

THE BOOKSELLER looks surprised for a moment, then ducks down to rummage in the boxes underneath his stall.

Suddenly he calls out.

BOOKSELLER:

Aha! I knew I had something.

HEMINGS:

What is it?

THE BOOKSELLER stands up, clutching something close to his chest, so that it cannot be seen.

BOOKSELLER:

THIS!

He holds it out for HEMINGS to see, but HEMINGS looks horrified.

68. INT. BACKSTAGE OFFICE, THE GLOBE THEATRE. DAY.

CONDELL is still counting money and making a note of it in his ledger when the door opens, quietly. There is a pause, the faint sound of footsteps, then a book - a large, heavy book - is dropped onto his desk, knocking over all of his carefully constructed piles of coins. CONDELL looks up angrily at HEMINGS, who is standing in front of him with his hands behind his back.

CONDELL:

What are you doing?

HEMINGS does not say anything, but simply looks down at the book, directing CONDELL's gaze towards it.

CONDELL (reading):

"The Workes of Benjamin Jonson."

Like HEMINGS before him, he stares at the book in disbelief.

HEMINGS:

Big, isn't it?

CONDELL (nodding):

Enormous!

HEMINGS:

It has to be, to accommodate all of Jonson's plays - and his massive sense of self-worth!

CONDELL *laughs, then looks admiringly at the book again.*

HEMINGS:

Apparently, it confirms his reputation as the "pre-eminent English playwright".

CONDELL *looks up at HEMINGS in surprise.*

CONDELL:

What?

HEMINGS:

That's how he's being described.

CONDELL:

But Will was an *infinitely* better writer.

HEMINGS (nodding):

I know that; we *both* know that; anyone who's ever seen a Jonson play knows that! But will future generations?

CONDELL *does not answer, but simply stares at HEMINGS blankly.*

HEMINGS:

By contrast with Jonson's "Workes", *this* is what will remain of Shakespeare.

He takes from behind his back a slim, grubby play-script and lets it fall on to CONDELL's desk: unlike Jonson's "Workes", it lands gently, indeed, it almost floats down.

CONDELL *looks at it.*

His POINT OF VIEW: The torn front page reads, "The Tragicall Historie of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, by William Shakespeare".

HEMINGS:

At the stall where I bought Jonson's book, that was all they had of Will's work.

The script of "Hamlet" lies forlornly on top of Jonson's "Workes", barely covering half of its front cover.

HEMINGS:

Read it.

CONDELL:

What?

HEMINGS:

I have. In fact, allow me to read it to you, or at least some *prize* extracts.

He picks up the script and begins reading - quoting - from it.

HEMINGS:

"O, that this too, too *sullied* flesh should melt."

CONDELL winces and HEMINGS flicks ahead to another page.

HEMINGS:

"The play's the thing,
Wherein we'll catch the King *and* Queen."

Once again, CONDELL winces and HEMINGS flicks ahead.

HEMINGS:

And best - or rather, worst - of all:

"To be or not to be, aye, there's the *POINT!*"

He closes the script and looks down at CONDELL in disgust.

HEMINGS:

If they can't get *that* right, they won't get *anything* right!

He tosses the script down on the desk and CONDELL stares at it.

He looks distraught.

HEMINGS:

I can't bear it. After all we went through together - building The Globe, *rebuilding* it after it burned down, surviving the *plot* against the Queen - *this* -

He points - accusingly - at the "script" of "Hamlet".

HEMINGS:

- And *trash* like it, is all that will survive of "Shakespeare"!

Suddenly he stares at CONDELL.

HEMINGS:

We have to print the plays ourselves.

CONDELL looks at him in amazement.

CONDELL:

WHAT?!

HEMINGS:

Why not? If Jonson can print *his* plays, why can't we print all of *Will's*?

CONDELL:

Because we don't even have *copies* of some of the plays, especially the *early* ones.

HEMINGS looks horrified.

HEMINGS:

What? (*Pause.*) Why not?

CONDELL:

They must have been destroyed in the fire, or just *lost* over time.

HEMINGS looks even more horrified.

CONDELL:

And the plays that we *do* have copies of are mostly old prompt-books.

HEMINGS:

So?

CONDELL:

So they've been *scribbled* on and *scribbled* on until they're virtually *illegible*!

HEMINGS:

"Illegible"?

CONDELL (nodding):

Aye. *Will* could decipher them, but we can't.

HEMINGS looks distraught.

CONDELL:

While *Will* was still alive, it didn't matter: if we had any problems with a play, we could just ask him, even if we had to wait until he visited London. But now - well, we *can't* ask him!

HEMINGS looks at him pleadingly.

HEMINGS:

I'm sure that, given time, we could "decipher" them and prepare them for publication.

CONDELL looks appalled.

CONDELL:

It would take an age - *years*, at least - especially when we've still got a *theatre* to run.

HEMINGS (smiling):

So? What are a few years compared with *immortality*?

CONDELL looks at him sceptically.

CONDELL:

Whose immortality? His, or ours?

HEMINGS looks upset, even offended.

HEMINGS:

Why, his of course!

CONDELL doesn't look convinced.

He looks around.

His POINT OF VIEW: The tiny, cramped office is, as ever, stuffed full of props and costumes, but now we see (for the first time) that it is also full of scripts. They are scattered around the room: some are stacked on bookshelves; some have been shoved into drawers; and others are just piled up on the floor.

Seeing all this, CONDELL sighs heavily.

CONDELL:

The truth is that over the years we've probably paid more attention to preserving the company's *props* and *costumes* than we have *Will's plays*. (Pause.) Now the best that we can do is to print those plays that we have fair copies of, which is about half of them.

HEMINGS looks at him in disbelief.

HEMINGS:

"Half"?

CONDELL (nodding):

That's still about twenty or so.

HEMINGS shakes his head angrily.

HEMINGS:

That's not enough! Half a Shakespeare is no Shakespeare at all - half a Shakespeare is a Jonson, or a Marlowe!

Suddenly he stops shaking his head.

HEMINGS:

We have to show the *whole man*, to show what *one man* is capable of.

He stares at CONDELL.

HEMINGS:

We *have* to do it.

CONDELL:

Do what?

HEMINGS smiles.

HEMINGS:

Print the plays - *all* the plays, with *all* the right words.

Once again, CONDELL stares at him in amazement.

CONDELL:

Are you mad? I've just told you: we don't even have copies of some of the plays.

HEMINGS:

Then we'll find them. They must exist somewhere.

CONDELL looks even more amazed.

CONDELL:

And where exactly do you propose looking for them?

HEMINGS (triumphantly):

EVERYWHERE!

69. INT. ROOM. DAY.

A little old lady - obviously a LANDLADY - lets HEMINGS and CONDELL into a dingy little room.

HEMINGS (VOICE OFF):

"Everywhere he ever lived..."

HEMINGS and CONDELL start looking around the room (HEMINGS even looks under the bed) while the LANDLADY watches them curiously.

70. EXT. STREET OUTSIDE A RUNDOWN THEATRE. DAY.

HEMINGS and CONDELL stand outside a run-down old theatre.

HEMINGS (VOICE OFF):

"Everywhere he ever worked."

HEMINGS and CONDELL go towards the theatre, stepping through the debris that surrounds it.

71. INT. A TAVERN. DAY.

HEMINGS and CONDELL stand at the bar in a TAVERN, talking to the TAVERN-OWNER.

HEMINGS (VOICE OFF):

"And most importantly, everywhere he ever drank..."

THE TAVERN-OWNER directs HEMINGS and CONDELL's attention towards the staircase and they duly look up.

HEMINGS (VOICE OFF):

"And laid his head..."

Their POINT OF VIEW: THE MADAM (suitably attired) who runs the "bawdy house" (or brothel) upstairs smiles down at them.

HEMINGS (VOICE OFF):

"Or any other part of his anatomy."

Slowly, nervously, HEMINGS and CONDELL start walking upstairs.

72. INT/EXT. THE GLOBE THEATRE. DAY.

HEMINGS and CONDELL are standing on the stage of The Globe.

HEMINGS (VOICE OFF):

"Then, when we've found all the plays, we have to check them, to make sure that nothing has been added or omitted."

They look out at the Groundlings' area in front of them.

HEMINGS (VOICE OFF):

"We'll gather together all the actors who ever worked for the company, or at least those who are still alive, to see what they remember."

Their POINT OF VIEW: The "Groundlings" area, which is usually full of theatregoers, is now full of ACTORS of all ages (there are at least a hundred of them) from young APPRENTICES to grizzled VETERANS.

There is a close-up on one: ROBERT, the actor who had accidentally set light to The Globe, who stares up at the stage.

72. INT. BACKSTAGE OFFICE OF THE GLOBE. DAY.

SIX MIDDLE-AGED, BESPECTACLED MEN are crowded round the desk, staring at the scripts laid out in front of them.

HEMINGS (VOICE OFF):

"Some of the actors would have been employed as bookholders, or prompters, so we can get them to go through the prompt-books to decipher all the notes and stage directions that they added over the years."

THE SIX MEN - the surviving PROMPTERS - study the scripts carefully, either leaning in close to the desk or lifting the scripts up to their faces to see them.

73. INT. BEDROOM. DAY.

HEMINGS and CONDELL are sitting beside a bed.

HEMINGS (VOICE OFF):

"And of course, there is one actor who knows the plays, or at least the title roles, almost as well as Will himself."

HEMINGS and CONDELL's POINT OF VIEW: Lying back in the bed, and looking very sickly (it may well be his deathbed), is BURBAGE.

There is a script in front of him and BURBAGE (obviously with great effort) stretches out a hand to touch it: as he does so, his mourning ring - which is identical to those of HEMINGS and CONDELL - is clearly visible. BURBAGE points to a line in the script and slowly shakes his head, so CONDELL stands up, leans forward and, with a quill, scratches it out.

HEMINGS (VOICE OFF):

"After all, Burbage always thought that they were *his* plays, not Will's!"

CONDELL (laughing):

"Typical actor!"

74. INT. SHOP. DAY.

CONDELL sits at a desk, while HEMINGS leans over him, and BOTH MEN are reading a piece of paper that is laid out on the desk.

HEMINGS (VOICE OFF):

"Finally, we just have to find someone to write a dedication. (Pause.) And who better than England's greatest living playwright?"

HEMINGS and CONDELL both finish reading and look up.

Their POINT OF VIEW: Standing next to them, studying them (and their reaction to what they have read), is a large, barrel-chested MAN WITH RED HAIR.

HEMINGS (smiling):

It's wonderful, Ben.

CONDELL (nodding):

Yes, especially the line, "He was not of an age, but for all time".

The RED-HAIRED MAN - BEN JONSON - smiles ruefully.

BEN JONSON:

I suspect it's what I'll be best remembered for!

HEMINGS and CONDELL laugh, but JONSON suddenly stops smiling.

BEN JONSON:

I ought to have written a dedication in honour of you two.

HEMINGS and CONDELL look confused.

HEMINGS:

What do you mean?

BEN JONSON:

Well, Will may have written the plays, but you're the ones who *found* them, *edited* them and then *prepared* them for publication.

HEMINGS (dismissively):

It wasn't that difficult.

CONDELL:

Not once we got started.

JONSON stares at them in disbelief.

JONSON:

Gentlemen, you amaze me.

Again, HEMINGS and CONDELL both look surprised.

HEMINGS:

How so?

JONSON:

You make light of what you've done, but the truth is that most men wouldn't spend so much time, money and effort publishing their own plays, let alone someone else's. (*He scowls.*) I can't imagine that anyone would do it for me!

He stops scowling and looks at them questioningly.

JONSON:

So why did you do it for Will?

HEMINGS and CONDELL exchange a glance, then smile at JONSON.

HEMINGS:

He did so much for us.

CONDELL:

It was the *least* we could do for him.

JONSON considers this for a moment, then nods in acknowledgement.

A MAN IN AN INK-STAINED APRON approaches HEMINGS and CONDELL.

MAN:

The title-page is ready. Shall I proceed?

HEMINGS AND CONDELL (together):

Please.

HEMINGS and CONDELL follow the MAN IN THE INK-STAINED APRON and for the first time it becomes apparent that they are in a print shop: all around them (literally all around their heads), printed pages are hanging up to dry.

THE MAN IN THE INK-STAINED APRON, who is obviously a PRINTER, takes hold of the handle of a printing press with both hands. He presses the handle down, holding it in place for a moment before slowly releasing it.

Then, very carefully (so as not to smudge the ink), he picks up the page he has printed and shows it to HEMINGS and CONDELL.

Their POINT OF VIEW: It is the title page of the First Folio, the first collection of Shakespeare's plays.

It is dominated by the famous portrait of Shakespeare that shows his bald head, thinning beard and piercing eyes, which seem to stare out from the page.

Above it are the words: "Mr William Shakespeare's Comedies, Histories and Tragedies, Published according to the true original copies."

Below it are the words: "London. Printed by Isaac Jaggard and Edward Blount, 1623."

HEMINGS and CONDELL both smile broadly.

Fade to:

BLACK.

The screen remains black for a moment, then a caption appears:
"IT TOOK HEMINGS AND CONDELL SEVEN YEARS TO PRODUCE THE FIRST FOLIO - THE FIRST COMPLETE (OR NEARLY COMPLETE) COLLECTION OF SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS."

This caption fades and another appears: "WITHOUT THE FIRST FOLIO, HALF OF SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS, INCLUDING CLASSICS SUCH AS *MACBETH*, *THE TEMPEST* AND *ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA*, WOULD NOT HAVE SURVIVED AT ALL AND THE OTHER HALF WOULD HAVE BEEN AT BEST INCOMPLETE, AT WORST INCOMPREHENSIBLE."

This caption fades and another appears: "WITHOUT HEMINGS AND CONDELL, THE MAN WE KNOW AS "SHAKESPEARE" - THE GREATEST WRITER EVER - WOULD NOT EXIST."

This caption fades and another appears: "IN THEIR PREFACE TO THE FIRST FOLIO, HEMINGS AND CONDELL WROTE THAT THEY HAD ONLY PUBLISHED SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS BECAUSE HE HAD DIED BEFORE HE COULD PUBLISH THEM HIMSELF."

This caption fades and the final caption appears: "THEY ALSO WROTE: 'WE HAVE BUT COLLECTED THE PLAYS AND DONE OUR OFFICES TO THE DEAD WITHOUT AMBITION EITHER OF SELF PROFIT OR FAME, ONLY TO KEEP THE MEMORY OF SO WORTHY A FRIEND AND FELLOW ALIVE AS WAS OUR SHAKESPEARE'."

The final caption slowly fades out to:

BLACK.